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Bangladesh*

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I. General information

A. Demographic, Economic, Social and Cultural Characteristics

Geography and Area

1. The People's Republic of Bangladesh emerged as an independent country on 16 December 1971 through a nine-month long Liberation War. It is located in Southern Asia, encircling the northern Bay of Bengal, sharing its land border with Myanmar and India. Bangladesh, a territory of about 147,570 square kilometers falls in the Northern tropical zone between 23-27 degree North latitude and 88-92 degree East longitude. It is the largest deltaic plain of the world with a 400-mile long coast line a part of which contains the Bangladesh part of the Sundarbans, the largest mangrove forest of the world. Bangladesh is a victim of climate change and more often than not it encounters natural calamities like flood, cyclone, drought, tidal waves, etc.

2. The country consists of low, flat and fertile land, except some highland in the hilly regions in the Northern and Eastern part. The country is riverine and the major rivers are Padma, Meghna, Jamuna, Teesta, Brahmaputra, Surma and Karnaphuli. Around 93% of catchment area of the main rivers falls outside of Bangladesh and flows down to the Bay of Bengal. While flowing down to the Bay of Bengal, the rivers bring with them heavy silts during the rainy seasons and thereby enrich the soil.

Demography

3. The population of Bangladesh was estimated at 165.57 million as of January 1, 2019. (SVRS 2018) Out of the total population, 82.70 million were female and 82.87 million were male. The average annual population growth rate is 1.37%. The population density was 1,103 per square kilometer. The total employed population of the country has been estimated at 63.5 million during 2016-17, of which 43.5 million are male and 20.0 million are female (Report of Labour Force Survey). Approximately, 89% of the population is Muslim, 8% is Hindu and 3% is Buddhist, Christian or other. Nearly 10% of the total population has different kinds of physical challenges. The average life expectancy at birth in the country has increased to 72.3 years in 2018 up from 72.0 years in 2017. The rate of average life-expectancy for the male has increased from 65.6 to 70.8 and for females it rose up from 68.0 to 73.8 years in between 2008 and 2018. Population aged 15-49 constitutes about 54.6% of the population. The marriageable age is 18 for girls and 21 for boys.

Economy

4. Bangladesh economy is predominantly agrarian. Agriculture is the single largest producing sector of the economy and contributes about 10.98% to the total Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of the country. This sector also accommodates around 40.6% (in 2016-17) of labour force. The economy is market-based and is classified as one of the Next Eleven emerging markets. The Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of the country is set to grow by an 8.13% rate in the current fiscal year (FY2018-19) -the highest ever in the country's economic history. Besides, the *per capita* income of the country is also set to rise up to \$1,909 in the current fiscal year, from \$1,751 of the previous fiscal year (FY2017-18).

5. Export oriented industrialization led to expansion in exports. The readymade and wikipediatextile industry of Bangladesh is the second-largest in the world employing more than 3 million women. The manufacturing sector contributes about 18% of the GDP. Growth rate of manufacturing sector is dominated by ready-made garments. Bangladesh is the fifth largest garment exporter to the European Union and among the top ten apparel suppliers to the US. In the past two decades, Bangladesh has emerged as a very successful manufacturer and exporter of ready-made garments. Other key sectors include pharmaceuticals, shipbuilding, ceramics, leather goods and electronics. The telecom industry has grown rapidly and is mostly dominated by foreign investors. The Government's emphasis on the development of software services and hi-tech industries under the *Digital Bangladesh* programme has paved the way for an increased access to overseas outsourcing market. Remittance is a major source of foreign exchange to the economy.

Remittance inflows have more than doubled up in the last five years where women's contribution is gradually increasing.

6. Bangladesh has been widely acclaimed as one of the forerunners of MDGs implementation. It made outstanding progress in the areas of poverty alleviation, ensuring food security, primary school enrolment, gender parity in primary and secondary level education, lowering infant as well as under-five mortality rate and maternal mortality ratio, improving immunization coverage and reducing the incidence of communicable diseases. Many targets were achieved well ahead of time and some others were achieved within the 2015 deadline. Bangladesh had been an active participant in formulating the post-2015 Development Agenda, the precursor of 2030 Agenda.

7. In formulating Post-2015 Development Agenda, Bangladesh proposals to the UN came up with 11 goals, 58 targets and 241 indicators. The goals concerned pressing development issues embracing human potential, poverty and inequality, food security and nutrition, health and family planning, gender equality, quality education and skills development, employment and worker rights, good governance, sustainable production and consumption, environmental sustainability and disaster management, and international cooperation and partnership. Notably, the Bangladesh proposals were consistent with the global aspirations as 9 out of 11 proposals were common to those proposed by Open Working Group (OWG) of the United Nations; other goals proposed by OWG were also there in Bangladesh proposals but as targets of achieving different goals. UN Member States including Bangladesh formally adopted the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) as a global agenda on 25 September, 2015.

8. The 7th Five Year Plan (FYP) (2016-20) of the Bangladesh government coincides with the starting time of the Sustainable Development Goals (2016-2030) that provided a good opportunity to integrate the SDGs in the 7th FYP and Bangladesh thereby became an early starter of implementation of SDGs.

9. Bangladesh is a resilient country fighting natural calamities and internal political conflicts; nonetheless, it has been staying firm on the path of development. In spite of having numerous challenges, Bangladesh is working with utmost dedication to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by 2030. The country is performing well in various areas including those of poverty reduction, gender equality, electricity, sanitation and annual GDP growth. (SDG Bangladesh Progress Report 2018). However, there remains a need for improved international cooperation and support in order to meet the targets that fall within the 17 SDGs. The efforts of Bangladesh government towards achieving each goals of SDGs is given below.

SDGs implementation in Bangladesh

Goal 1: End Poverty

10. Bangladesh adopted strategies for ensuring a rapid economic growth. There are complementary strategies and policies in place to make the growth path inclusive, responsive to needs and adaptable to the transformation process. Policies are also there to ensure that the growth is sustainable and resilient to climate change.

11. Government Social Safety Net Programs (SSNPs) helped reduce poverty and inequality through addressing risks and vulnerability (ies) of the poor and responding to shocks that people experience across the life cycle.

12. In order to ensure a safe, orderly and regular migration for all workers including women, Overseas Employment and Migrants Act 2013, and Overseas Employment Policy 2016 have been enacted and adopted. It should be noted that annual flow of migrant workers peaked at more than one million in 2017 and annual remittance inflow peaked at US\$15 billion in 2015 which constituted 7.2 percent of GDP.

13. The Government encourages women to enter the rural labor market in larger number. Specific strategies have been adopted to narrow the gender wage gap in agriculture, the predominant sector in the rural economy.

14. The Bangladesh Bank has introduced some innovative ways to promote financial inclusion of the poor who have been beyond the reach of formal financial services. In addition, Bangladesh has been consistently maintaining stable macroeconomic environment which has contributed to poverty reduction.

Goal 2: End Hunger

15. Nutrition Program of the Government has been mainstreamed through an operational plan titled National Nutrition Services (NNS) with an aim to provide regular nutritional services. Ministry of Agriculture provides extension services for different crops fortified with nutrition elements. A new variety of rice namely, 'Golden Rice', fortified with beta carotene is a major achievement, which is being extended in suitable areas.

16. Iron-folic acid supplementation among pregnant, lactating women and adolescent girls to cover iron-deficiency anemia are being distributed through health and family planning facilities. Distribution of Vitamin A capsules for children is continuing. Post-partum Vitamin-A distribution to improve vitamin A status of neonates through breast milk is being scaled up. Monitoring of salt iodization has been strengthened. Zinc, for treatment of diarrhea has been adequately adopted and promoted. To help assist exclusive breast-feeding of new born babies up to six months, maternity leave for the working mothers has been made six months by the Government.

Goal 3: Healthy Lives and Wellbeing

17. Three programs have been implemented so far and the 4th program- Health, Population and Nutrition Sector Program (HPNSP) would be implemented in between January 2017 and June 2022. The 4th HPNSP is the first of the three successive programs that would be implemented by 2030 to achieve health, population and nutrition sector targets of Bangladesh and the health related SDGs as well.

18. Community Clinics (CCs) have been established throughout the country as the first tier facility to provide Primary Health Care (PHC) and Maternal as well as Neonatal Health (MNH) services.

19. Gender, Equity, Voice and Accountability (GEVA) is the cornerstone of the sector wide program aimed at enhancing availability of quality service to women and at creating a congenial environment for women as well as adolescent girls to receive health services-with dignity, respect and privacy.

20. Bangladesh has been successful in maintaining the national coverage of fully vaccinated children by one year of age, at a level of more than 80 percent (NIPORT, 2016).

21. Bangladesh also considers the healthcare waste management as a critical issue in the context of environmental pollution. The Government has developed a Health Care Waste Management Plan (HCWMP) to effectively address this issue.

Goal 04: Inclusive and Equitable Quality Education

22. The overarching goal of the education sector is to increase access to education and training, to improve quality and relevance of education and to reduce inequality. Higher Education Quality Enhancement Project is being implemented to support quality improvement initiatives at the tertiary level in both public and private universities with the aim of delineating strategies to accelerate reforms in the education sector.

Goal 5: Gender Equality and Women Empowerment

23. Bangladesh has been a signatory to several important international conventions and agreements on women's and girls' rights and development. The Government has adopted several legal and policy measures to uphold the rights of women in the country. In 2005, the Government of Bangladesh introduced Gender Responsive Budgeting (GRB) in an effort to mainstream gender issues in all policies and decision making.

Goal 06: Clean Water and Sanitation

24. In Bangladesh, 87% of population has access to safe water sources and 61% of the total population has access to safe sanitation which was estimated in 2015. Hazaribag tannery industries have been relocated to Savar in order to improve the severely degraded water quality of Buriganga river. To preserve Halda river ecosystem, different measures have been undertaken this year.

Goal 07: Affordable, Reliable, Sustainable and Modern Energy

25. To support the accelerated growth targets from medium to long term, the Government formulated Power System Master Plan 2010 which set a target to increase installed electricity generation capacity to 24000 MW by 2021 and 39,000 MW by 2030. The Ministry of Power, Energy and Mineral Resources has prepared SDG Action Plan for the Ministry to be implemented by 2030. The Plan envisages the actions that are to be undertaken to achieve the relevant targets.

Goal 08: Sustained, Inclusive and Sustainable Economic Growth and Decent Work

26. Bangladesh has made an upward shift in the average annual growth rate to more than 7 percent in the recent years (FY2015-FY2018) from the 6-8 percent rate. The foregoing, coupled with slower population growth, led to increasing per person GDP growth and helped the country be set to achieve the targets of SDGs.

Goal 09: Resilient Infrastructure, Sustainable Industrialization and Innovation

27. Transport and communication: Government sought to develop, maintain, and manage strategic road corridors linking rural areas with National and District roads, to improve Dhaka-Chittagong highway to six lanes, to construct bridges, tunnels, overpasses, and flyovers and to reduce road accidents. Steps have been taken to improve regional road connectivity with India, Nepal and Bhutan. The initial work for connectivity to the Asian Highway network has also been started.

28. A River Protection Commission has been formed under the River Protection Commission Act 2013 to protect rivers from activities such as illegal encroachment, river pollution, and illegal construction.

29. The Government has enacted several Acts, policies and guidelines to ensure rapid expansion and secure use of Information Communication and Technologies (ICTs). The Government adopted National Science and Technology Policy 2010 which aims to meet the basic needs of the citizens by harnessing the potential of science and technology.

Goal 10: Reduced Inequalities

30. The Government has been following a pro-poor development strategy which combines promotion of economic growth and reduction of poverty and inequality. There have been some developments with regard to reducing inter-country income inequality. Bangladesh has approved Expatriates' Welfare and Overseas Employment Policy 2016 in January, with a view to ensuring and encouraging safe migration and protection of migrants and their families.

Goal 11: Sustainable Cities and Communities

31. The Government has initiated Bangladesh Pro-poor Slums Integration Project in 2016, funded by the World Bank with the objective of improving shelter and living conditions at selected low income and informal settlements in designated municipalities in Bangladesh.

32. Road communication and drainage infrastructure are being developed and maintained through Local Government Engineering Department (LGED), Water Supply & Sewerage Authority (WASAs). Dhaka WASA has developed a drainage master plan. With the support of Bangladesh Climate Change Trust Fund (BCCTF), more than 100 small scale drainage improvement projects have been undertaken by different paurashavas for strengthening their resilience to climate change.

33. The Government has decided to go for modern technology-based waste management like incineration. To this end, projects for land acquisition have already been approved by ECNEC for Dhaka North City Corporation (DNCC), Dhaka South City Corporation (DSCC) and Narayanganj City Corporation (NCC). Urban Resilience Project is also being implemented in Dhaka North, Dhaka South and Sylhet City Corporation areas.

Goal 12: Sustainable Consumption and Production Patterns

34. Policies and strategies have been adopted by the Government of Bangladesh to promote sustainable production, consumption, and disposal patterns in the economy. Many of these policies and strategies have been highlighted in the National Sustainable Development Strategy (NSDS) adopted by the Government in 2013.

Goal 13: Climate Action

35. Number of deaths, missing persons and persons directly affected by disasters per 100,000 population, now stands at 12,881 with a target of reducing to 6500 by 2020 and 1500 by 2030. Ministry of Disaster Management and Relief (MoDMR) has prepared Disaster Risk Reduction Strategies of Bangladesh (2016-2020) in line with the Sendai Framework.

Goal 14: Life below Water

36. In recent times, Bangladesh has declared two marine protected areas, one targeting Hilsa breeding ground and another targeting Cetaceans. Major success has been achieved in Hilsa protection with production almost doubling up in last 15 years.

Goal 15: Life on Land

37. In order to protect the rich bio-diversity, the country has taken many steps that include continuing moratorium on tree felling, declaring ECAs, creating special bio-diversity zones, and creating two vulture safe zones.

Goal 16: Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions

38. Appropriate measures undertaken by the Government of Bangladesh contributed significantly to the improving of human trafficking situation and phenomena of youth mental and physical abuse. Improvement has also taken place in other vital sectors. For example, number of victims of human trafficking has been decreased over the years. If the current average performance continues, majority of the SDG targets of Goal 16 can reasonably be expected to be achieved well ahead of the estimated time.

Goal 17: Global Partnership

39. The government recognizes that substantial inflow of external resources, comprising official development assistance (ODA), foreign direct investment (FDI), and remittance is critical for financing SDGs implementation in the current resource scenario vis a vis the estimated resource requirement. Until recently, progress in external resource mobilization performance indicate modest improvement though still not enough to catch up with the required rate. Economic Relations Division (ERD) of the Ministry of Planning, responsible for managing external resources in the form of development co-operation from different sources, has undertaken several strategic institutional and policy measures to harness resources to support Bangladesh's SDGs implementation.

Social and Cultural Structure

40. Bangladesh is a democratic and secular State. Its history and cultural heritage transcends international borders and encompasses the cultural diversity of all social groups. Despite Muslims being the majority, Bangladesh ensures peaceful coexistence of all ethnic groups by protecting and upholding their cultures. The Constitution enjoined the State to adopt measures to conserve the traditions and heritage of the people including that of the minority groups, and to ensure that all citizens have the opportunity to contribute towards and to participate in the enrichment of the national culture.

41. There are many groups with different identities who encounter different vulnerabilities, obstacles, and who tend to have different needs, opportunities and priorities. They include, in many cases, women, elderly, children, ethnic minorities, persons with disabilities, geographically vulnerable, and persons belonging to different castes that are communally looked down upon, transgenders, to name some. The Vision 2021 of the Government incorporates provision for development of all groups to uphold the mandate of equality enshrined in the Constitution, which is consistent with the principles of different international instruments that the country has subscribed to.

B. Constitutional and Political Structure

Constitutional Structure

42. The Constitution of the People's Republic of Bangladesh, 1972 is the solemn expression of the will of the people and the supreme law of the land. Article 7 of the Constitution states that all powers in the Republic belong to the people. Part-II of the Constitution contains the Fundamental Principles of State Policy, which are fundamental to the governance of the country, are to be applied by the State in the making of laws and which are to serve as guide to interpretation of the Constitution and of other laws. Article 10 provides for women's full participation in all spheres of national life. Article 19 assigned upon the State the responsibility to ensure equality of opportunity to all citizens and to adopt measures to remove social and economic inequality between men and women and to ensure equitable distribution of wealth and opportunities among citizens. Article 27 declares all citizens as equal and as entitled to equal protection of law. Article 28 declares principles of non-discrimination on grounds of religion, race, caste, sex or place of birth; and that women have equal rights with men in all spheres of the State and of public life. Article 31 provides right to be protected and treated in accordance with law. The Articles 31, 32 & 35(5) of the Constitution of Bangladesh enshrine the rights to life and liberty, freedom from torture, or cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment.

43. Part III of the Constitution contains Fundamental rights, i.e. right to equality before law, right to life and personal liberty (Article 32), right to freedom of thought, conscience and speech (Article 39), which are applicable for all citizens regardless of sex, race, religion or any other similar criteria. While guaranteeing non-discrimination and equal protection of law for all citizens, the Constitution makes room for affirmative action for the development of the underprivileged portions of the population like women, children and other deprived sections.

Political Structure

44. The President is the Head of the State. The Prime Minister is the Head of the Government. The Cabinet Ministers are selected by the Prime Minister. The President acts in accordance with the advice of the Prime Minister. The executive power remains with the Prime Minister.

45. The Parliament: The Jatiya Sangsad, often referred to simply as the *Sangsad* and also known as the House of the Nation, is the supreme legislative body of Bangladesh. The Parliament is a single house led by the Speaker. The current parliament of Bangladesh contains 350 seats, including 50 seats reserved for women, who are to be elected by the members on the basis of procedure of proportional representation in the Parliament through single transferable vote. Women are eligible to compete for the 300 general seats which means the reservation is merely an instance of affirmative action. There are 50 Standing Committees in the 11th Parliament to monitor activities of the ministries. Elected occupants are called Members of Parliament or MPs. The 11th National Parliamentary Election was held on 30 December 2018. Elections are held every five years unless the parliament is dissolved before that time.

46. The Cabinet: The Cabinet, formed on 7 January 2019, is the collective decision-making body of the entire Government under the Office of the Prime Minister, composed of the Prime Minister and some 24 Cabinet Ministers, 7 Advisers, 19 State Ministers and 3 Deputy Ministers. In addition to Honorable Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, there are three

other female ministers namely Dr. Dipu Moni- Education Minister, Begum Monnujan Sufian- State Minister of Labor and Employment, and Begum Habibun Nahar- Deputy Minister of Environment, Forest and Climate Change.

47. Local Government: The country has 8 divisions and 64 districts in Bangladesh, each district further subdivided into 492 *upazila* (lit. subdistricts), 4554 Unions. The lowest unit of local government is the Union Parishad which is run by elected representatives. For urban administration and development, there are 11 City Corporations and 327 municipalities.

48. Union Parishad (UP): The Union Parishad Act, 2009 provides for election of one chairperson and twelve members. Each member represents a ward (constituted by several villages). Both women and men can compete in the election. Additionally, women are directly elected in three reserved seats.

49. Upazilla Parishad (UZP): The Upazilla Parishad Act, 2009 reserved one seat for the women among the two seats of elected vice-chairpersons. The number of reserved seats for the women is one-third of the regular seats. Women can compete for the general seats as well.

50. City Corporations and Pourashavas: City corporations and the municipalities known as *pourashavas* provide elected governance in cities and townships. As per the Local Government (Pourashavas) Act, 2009, three to five seats are reserved for women depending on the size of the pourashavas. As per the Local Government (City Corporation) Act 2009, one third of the counselors' seats (10-30 depending on the size of the city corporation) are reserved for women. Women can also contest for the general seats. The administrative units consist of 8 divisions, 64 districts and 492 upazillas. The civil servants carry out the executive responsibilities of these units.

II. General Framework for the Protection and Promotion of Human Rights

A. Acceptance of International Human Rights Norms

51. The human rights provisions enshrined in the Constitution are consistent with international norms. Bangladesh is party to several international human rights treaties and is obliged to ensure their implementation. Equality before law; equal protection of the law; the right to personal liberty and security; freedom from torture and from cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment or punishment; and right to an effective remedy in case of violation are incorporated as fundamental rights in Part III of the Constitution. Bangladesh is a party to eight out of nine core human rights treaties. They are- The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, 1966 (ICCPR); The International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, 1966 (ICESCR); The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, 1979 (CEDAW); The Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, 1984 (CAT); The Convention on the Rights of the Child, 1989 (CRC); The Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, 1965 (ICERD); The International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of their Families, 1990 (CMW) and Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, 2006 (CRPD).

52. The relevant instruments ratified by Bangladesh also include: Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict 2000; Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography 2000; Convention on Consent to Marriage, Minimum Age for Marriage and Registration of Marriages 1964; ILO Convention no. 182 on Worst Forms of Child Labour 1999; Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women 1999 and Convention on the Political Rights of Women, 1953.

53. Since the last report on CEDAW in 2009, the Parliament passed legislations addressing the political, socio-economic and cultural rights of the people; especially those of the women, children, ethnic minorities, workers, and socially marginalized people in order

to realize the international human rights obligations undertaken by the country in a more fruitful manner. Upon ratifying the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Persons with Disabilities, Bangladesh has formulated laws for protecting the rights of disabled persons. Since Universal Periodic Review of 2009, the Government demonstrated its commitment by adopting a number of new policies for the promotion and protection of human rights that include Women Development Policy (WDP), 2011, National Education Policy, 2010 and others. Action plans have also been developed to implement the policies.

B. Legal Framework for the Protection of Human Rights at the National Level

54. The Constitution is the basis of the entire legal framework and all laws are to be consistent with the provisions of Part III that enshrines the fundamental rights. Any law inconsistent with provisions of Part III shall, to the extent of such inconsistency, become void. The High Court Division is empowered to give direction and/or make order, as may be appropriate, for enforcement of the fundamental rights conferred by Part III of the Constitution on the application of any person aggrieved.

55. Among the prominent laws safeguarding human rights, the noteworthy ones are mentioned here: The Dowry Prohibition Act (2018), Child Marriage Restraint Act (2017); the Children Act (2013), Persons with Disabilities' Rights and Protection Act (2013); the Torture and Custodial Death Prevention Act (2013); the Prevention and Suppression of Human Trafficking Act (2012); the Vagrants and Shelterless Persons Act (2011); the Deoxyribonucleic Acid (DNA) Act, 2014; the Maintenance of Parents Livelihood Act, 2013; the Overseas Employment and Migration Act, 2013; the Domestic Violence Prevention and Protection Rules 2013; Workers of Public Industries for the Production of Goods (Service Condition) Act; the Consumer Rights Preservation Act, 2009; the Mobile Court Act, 2009; and the Right to Information Act, 2009.

C. Framework for promotion of human rights at the national level

56. The Supreme Court: The Supreme Court (SC) of Bangladesh is the highest judicial authority and its decisions are binding on all subordinate courts, executives and judicial authorities. The SC consists of the Chief Justice and the Judges of the Appellate Division as well as the High Court Division. Judicial review is the most important judicial tool in the hands of the higher judiciary for enforcement of fundamental rights. The SC has recognized human rights in some cases not expressly incorporated in the Constitution as fundamental rights and has thereby incorporated international treaty provisions into national legal regime. In addition to the SC, there are subordinate courts at the district level, responsible for the disposal of both criminal and civil cases. At the sub-district level, the judicial magistracy operates.

57. National Human Rights Commission (NHRC): As per National Human Rights Commission Act, 2009 the National Human Rights Commission was established, consisting of seven members, of whom at least one is a woman and one representing a minority community. The NHRC led by the Chairperson is the primary institution that oversees human rights implementation and has secured 'B'-status by the International Coordinating Committee of National Human Right Institutions. The NHRC has *suo moto* investigative power 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 with the High Court Division on behalf of an aggrieved person; and exercise the powers of a civil court while conducting any inquiry. NHRC has set up an online Complaints Management System.

58. In 2010, the NHRC drafted its first five-year-strategic-plan and subsequently revised it in 2011 based on the stakeholders' feedback gathered through several workshops conducted in different parts of the country. In the first strategic plan, the NHRC identified 10 pressing human rights issues. Among them, two issues were identified as 'highest priority'. The first was enforced disappearances, torture and extrajudicial killings - termed as violence by state

mechanisms; and the second was violations of economic, social and cultural rights, including health rights, and discrimination against people with disabilities.

59. Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC): The Anti-Corruption Commission (Amendment) Act, 2013 gives ACC powers and capacity to combat corruption. The ACC has formed Corruption Prevention Committees in metropolitan areas, districts and upazillas (sub-districts) for raising awareness and promoting anti-corruption movement among citizens. Although initially, it could not bring about the desired impact, but immediately following its reconstitution in February 2007, the ACC began working with renewed vigor and impetus. This led to the accession of the United Nations' convention against corruption that had been adopted by the General Assembly back on 31 October 2003. Its framework and function is governed by Anti-Corruption Commission Act, 2004.

60. The Commission has introduced a hotline number 106 for lodging complaints. As many as 17, 18 736 calls were poured into the Hotline 106 of the Commission's Complaint Center during the year of 2018. During 2014-2018, ACC has received 70464 written allegations of corruption out of which 6138 allegations were taken up for inquires and 2771 were forwarded to the Ministries/Divisions concerned for taking necessary actions. The ACC has been able to bring illegally laundered money back to Bangladesh. The ACC has also formed 14,097 Integrity Alliances in educational institutions across the country. The Cabinet has approved the National Integrity Strategy in 2012 for a comprehensive and coordinated initiative to eliminate corruption in all spheres of national life, including the public sector.

61. Law Commission (LC): The LC is a statutory body empowered to recommend enactment, amendment or repealing of laws relating to fundamental rights and values of society. It codifies laws and advises reforms of the judicial system and consults, solicits and considers submissions from various stakeholders.

62. The Law Commission has prepared a number of reports on reform of laws for promotion of human rights, including abolition of corporal punishment, prevention of sexual harassment in educational institutions and workplaces, prevention of violence against women, protection of victims and witnesses to grave offences, ensuring speedy disposal of civil and criminal cases, and reform of Hindu family laws. The Law Commission is currently working on reports on the Protection of the Rights of the Marginalized and Disadvantaged Sections, and the enactment of new laws on medical negligence.

63. Information Commission (IC): The IC established as per Right to Information Act (RIA) is to ensure citizens' access to information under public and private domain. IC retains the power to impose legal sanctions for breach of RIA, including failure of any public or private organization to provide information to anyone who may apply. The Commission is responsible for undertaking five main types of functions- issuing directives and guidelines, conducting research and advising the Government on improving the access to information regime and compliance with international instruments, building institutional capacity, conducting promotional activities and resolving complaints.

64. In order to create mass awareness about the Right to Information Act, the Information Commission has arranged public sensitization meetings in 64 districts and 19 Upazillas; and trained 16101 Designated Officers, journalists, teachers, police officers and others. A total number of 24160 Right to Information (RTI) officers are employed till 2017 in both government and non-government organizations.

65. National Legal Aid Services Organization (NLASO): As per the Legal Aid Act 2000, the NLASO was established to facilitate poor citizens' access to justice and enforcement of their rights. The NLASO provides service through all District Legal Aid Committees (DLAC). Each DLAC reserves a legal aid fund financed by the Government. The NLASO has established hotline numbers for the people. During 2017-18, 75, 912 people received legal aid out of which 35, 824 people got support to fight for their cases. Since 2010, full-time legal aid staff has been assigned in all 64 Districts and have been trained on effective utilization of the legal aid funds.

66. Non-governmental and civil society organizations (NGO/ CSOs): The vibrant and internationally acclaimed CSOs of Bangladesh complement the Government's efforts for promoting human rights, economic development, good governance, poverty reduction,

disaster management and social protection. Collaboration with the CSOs has been strengthened for upholding human rights, law and policy making, following up of Universal Periodic Review (UPR) and implementation of international treaties. Representatives of women's organizations and eminent women activists are part of different Committees.

67. The media: A vibrant and vigilant media is an integral part of democratic institutions to ensure promotion and protection of human rights. The Government is vigilant so that media can perform its role in full freedom. Currently, there are 43 authorized TV channels in Bangladesh. The Ministry of Information had licensed 28 private organizations for FM broadcasting, and the Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulatory Commission had assigned FM broadcasting spectrum to 25 of them. The print media is private and consists of hundreds of weekly publications, presenting a vast array of viewpoints.

68. The Ministry of Information of the People's Republic of Bangladesh formulated the Community Radio Installation, Broadcast and Operation Policy 2008. Under this policy, the Ministry of Information approved 16 community radio stations for the first time in the history of the country. Moreover, there are three online radio in Bangladesh at present.

69. Citizens: Article 102 of the Constitution empowers citizens to enforce their fundamental rights through the intervention of SC. The SC, by way of interpretation, recognised the right of individuals to institute public interest litigations. In case of violation of fundamental human rights, an aggrieved person may seek shelter of law by invoking writ jurisdiction before the High Court Division of the SC.
