

Chapter-31

Ministry of Cultural Affairs

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 The glorious existence of literary works, music, drama and cultural heritage of Bangladesh provided continuous inspiration during the War of Liberation. The rich cultural heritage of this country has placed Bangladesh on a luminous position in the world. In accordance with Para 23, 23(A) and 24 of our constitution and vision 2021 of current culture friendly Government, the Ministry of Cultural Affairs (MoCA) has been working to achieve excellence in contemporary literature, arts, music, drama and all other branches of culture, and for developing a progressive and non-communal social system, free from fanaticism.
- 1.2 The Ministry is involved in the development of indigenous culture, expansion of Rabindra-Nazrul music, arrangement of seasonal cultural fairs and motivating people to use public libraries. To encourage people in science and humanitarianism, the Ministry developed goal oriented activities for the development of indigenous cultures.
- 1.3 The MoCA has been implementing various activities for the cultural recovery of smaller ethnic communities. It is also working for cultural development and attainment of excellence for the larger section of the people. Various activities have been undertaken by the Ministry that has changed the traditional view towards women. As a result, the possibility of attaining equal treatment for both women and men in the process of economic development of the country is becoming noticeable. The main activities and policies of the MoCA for women are the following:
- ❖ Upholding the cultural tradition, respecting and tolerating religious faiths of all classes and communities living in Bangladesh;
 - ❖ Preventing the loss of national culture, and coordinating cultural activities and its development along with the overall economic development of the country;
 - ❖ Developing culture of all ethnic groups living in the country and creating social harmony;
 - ❖ Preventing onset of all kinds of distorted cultures and expressing solidarity with good aspects of other cultures in tune with globalization.

2.0 Major Functions of the Ministry

- ❖ Formulation and implementation of policies on cultural issues; Collecting, preserving, publishing and nourishing development of the cultural heritage and anthropological artefacts of the Liberation War and contemporary period;
- ❖ Identifying the archaeological sites of the country and excavating, preserving and displaying those;
- ❖ Protecting copyright for the creative works;
- ❖ Establishing, expanding and developing public and private libraries to develop human resources;
- ❖ Undertaking research and publications on the language, culture and heritage;
- ❖ Celebrating various events nationally, such as, Immortal Ekushey and International Mother Language Day on 21st February, awarding Ekushey Podok, birth anniversaries of Rabindranath and Nazrul, Bengali New Year on 1st Boishakh;
- ❖ Undertaking cultural agreements with different countries, exchange of Cultural Programs and expanding cooperation in the international arena.

3.0 Strategic objectives of the Ministry and their Relevance to Women's Advancement and Rights

- 3.1 Expansion and development of native culture including mother tongue:** Establishment and expansion of fine art academies at the district and upazila levels and preservation, expansion and development of folk art and culture etc. widen the scope for women to learn about art and culture. Infrastructure development activities in the cultural field also create employment opportunities for women. These will impact positively on women's intellectual development and socio-economic condition.
- 3.2 Upholding the tradition of thousand years, history, religious faith and spirit:** Participation of women in infrastructural development programmes has consolidated their economic position in the society. Cultural activities are helping women in mental development and empowering them in society.
- 3.3 Building knowledge based society:** Women are actively participating in the infrastructural development of public and private sector libraries. Further, women will get access to books and newspapers in these libraries to improve their intellectual capability and socio- economic condition.

4.0 Roles of the Ministry for Women's Advancement and Rights

- 4.1 Arranging different programmes for expansion, conservation and development of indigenous cultures and mother tongues:** To uphold the history of the language movement (the 21st February), the International Mother Language Day, art and literature, cultural events need to be organised at regional, national and international levels. It is also necessary to organize seminars/workshops on related issues and these should be given priority since it preserves, expands and develops art and culture. Moreover, by practicing indigenous culture, more women are getting opportunities to develop their skills in various forms. Such practices have a positive impact on the overall exposure of women. Participating through various festivals, women are benefitted economically and personally.
- 4.2 Taking initiatives for increasing libraries and reading habits:** To increase education and reading habits among people, initiatives have been taken for establishing public and private libraries at upazila and district levels, and for modernizing established libraries. In order to increase students' reading habit Public Library arranged 1376 book ready completion throughout the country during last three years. Moreover, the facilities of research and reference libraries have been increased for students and users by providing E-book facilities. As a result, reading habits among people will grow and human resources will be developed through library services which will help in building a self-reliant nation.
- 4.3 Establishing museums and giving wide publicity to Begum Rokeya's literary works for encouraging women's education:** Initiatives will be taken to, carry out research on the life and literary works of Begum Rokeya, collect, preserve, publish and translate her works at national and international level so that women can know the life and literary works of Begum Rokeya, learn lessons from her life and can contribute to national development. Moreover, in order to learn more about Begum Rokeya and motivate others to learn lessons from her life, a museum will be established where a collection of Begum Rokeya's immortalized history and various elements of folk culture will be preserved.
- 4.4 Opportunities for income generation:** A sizeable number of impoverished artists are being financially benefitted by *allowances for impoverished artists*. Besides, female artists working in the cottage industry are getting income opportunities through the marketing of their own products.
- 4.5 Conservation, expansion and development of indigenous cultures and mother tongues:** Under the programme entitled "40 Years of Independence: Great Liberation War in the light of Arts" an interview-based documentary was developed

in which the Birangana (Brave Women of the Liberation War) were interviewed. Printing and publication works of 287 books have been done since FY 2014-15. Besides, the participation of women is comparatively larger in festivals like Amar Ekushey Book Fair, Victory Day, Independence Day, the birth and death anniversary of intellectuals and accomplished men, Rabindra-Nazrul Jayanti, Baishakhi-Nabanno. Women are financially benefitted and mentally strengthened through their active participation in these programmes.

- 4.6 **Upholding the tradition of thousand years, history, religious faith and spirit:** The department of archaeology is creating employment opportunities for the poorer community and women through proper preservation and development of archaeological sites for tourists. Participation of women in the infrastructural development supports them through self-employment and empowers them both socially and economically.
- 4.7 **Knowledge based society:** Establishment, extension and development of libraries are going on at the district and Upazila levels. Women are participating in this infrastructural development process. Besides, with increased access to reading in libraries, women are mentally growing which will motivate them to actively participating in the national development of the country.

5.0 Priority Spending Areas and Benefits for Women's Advancement

Serial No.	Priority Spending Areas/Programmes	Benefits for Women's Advancement
1	2	3
1.	Promotion of national art and culture and preservation and development of the mother tongue	In recent times inclusion of women in the lists of recipients of 'EKUSHEY PADAK' is noteworthy. Women along with men are getting opportunities to write. This will play an important role in their empowerment. Besides, women participation is large in numbers of festivals like Amar Ekushey Book Fair, Victory Day, Independence Day, the birth and death anniversary of intellectuals and accomplished men, Rabindra-Nazrul Jayanti, Baishakhi-Nabanno, and in the month long arts and crafts fair etc. held every year at home and abroad. By participating in various festivals women are financially benefitted and develop self-confidence.
2.	Preservation and development of national heritage, culture and history	Women directly contribute to Bengali culture, literary works, music, dramas and have also greatly contributed to the liberation war. To highlight their contribution distinctly, activities for developing and preserving Bengali history are in progress. A rich archive will be set up to preserve the documents of the struggle for education of Begum Rokeya

Serial No.	Priority Spending Areas/Programmes	Benefits for Women's Advancement
1	2	3
		and her movement for women's rights so that the downtrodden women can draw inspiration by learning from the life and works of Begum Rokeya.
3.	Establishment, expansion and development of libraries and book distribution	The reading habits among the people will grow through the library services provided by the libraries extended up to districts level, by which the country will proceed towards development of its human resources and establishment of a self-reliant nation.

6.0 Women's Share in Ministry's Total Expenditure

(Taka in Crore)

Description	Budget 2017-18			Revised 2016-17			Budget 2016-17		
	Budget	Women Share		Revised	Women Share		Budget	Women Share	
		Women	percent		Women	percent		Women	percent
Total Budget	400266	112019	27.99	317174	86586	27.3	340605	92781	27.24
Ministry Budget	417	157	37.63	366	98	26.88	421	114	27.16
Development	193	125	65.01	109	62	56.38	180	81	45.06
Non-Development	224	32	14.07	257	37	14.36	241	33	13.81

Source: RCGP database

7.0 Success in Promoting Women's Advancement:

- ❖ Reading and reference services have been provided to 1 crore 79 lakh 43 thousand and 645 readers in the last three years through the public libraries located at district levels. At the same time, a total of 3,88,250 books have been collected for these libraries. On the occasion of Victory Day, Independence Day, Intellectuals Martyr Day, Bengali New Year and the birth and death anniversary of Bangabandhu, a total of 1213 book reading competitions have been organized. As a result, the reading habits of women as well as, human resources are being developed alongside men. This is enabling Bangladesh to move forward in becoming a self-reliant nation.
- ❖ In the last three years, about 4,721 people have been trained in culture, music, dance, drama, fine arts and literature at the cultural institutes of ethnic groups where about 255 cultural functions have been arranged. It is worth mentioning that woman have outnumbered males in participating in ethnic cultural functions, which is promoting the advancement of women and the establishment of women's rights.

- ❖ During last 3 years, 1970 national and seasonal cultural competition/programs were arranged throughout the country. The play *Swapno and Droho* was staged in 64 districts. Different cultural fairs were organized. The participation of women is comparatively larger in festivals like Amar Ekushey Book Fair, Victory Day, Independence Day, the birth and death anniversary of intellectuals and accomplished men, Rabindra-Nazrul Jayanti, Baishakhi-Nabanno, and month long arts and crafts fair etc. held every year at home and abroad. By participating in various festivals women are financially benefited and are being mentally developed.

8.0 Recommendations for Future Activities

- ❖ Formulating a code of conduct or professional guidelines to prevent gender insensitive approaches in cultural arena;
- ❖ Introducing appropriate preventive laws to stop broadcasting programs that incites violence against women;
- ❖ Taking specific target-oriented activities in the publicity and dissemination of writings and creative works of prominent woman writers and cultural activists of literary and cultural arena;
- ❖ Setting up libraries all over the country and creating woman-friendly environment at the libraries to establish a knowledge-based society;
- ❖ Taking initiatives for publicity to remove family and social barriers against participation of women in cultural activities;
- ❖ Making arrangement for training of girls at the school level so that they can take part in cultural activities.