

Chapter-20

Prime Minister's Office

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 49 percent of total population of the country is women. In spite of having detached from the mainstream of development, it has been possible to include women in all important positions including in the Air forces and Arm forces due to the willingness and sincerity of the government. The government, in its election manifesto, is committed to deliver quality public services to the citizen, develop skilled human resources, ensure women empowerment at every stage of society, and to ensure transparency and accountability in overall governance. With all these, Bangladesh is thriving to become one of the developed countries in the world. For achieving these purposes, Prime Minister Office has taken different programs and initiatives to create investment-conducive environment through Public-Private Partnership (PPP), establish economic zones and rehabilitate landless and marginal population.
- 1.2 With the vision to transform Bangladesh into a middle income country within 2021, to attain the goal of SDG's within 2030 and transform it into digital Bangladesh, 'Vision 2021', enumerates the Government's commitment to develop human resources through expansion and multifarious use of information and communication technology, promote social equity and provide services through private–public partnership.

2.0 Major Functions of the Prime Minister's Office

- ❖ Provide secretarial assistance to the Honorable Prime Minister in discharging her duties and responsibilities related to political, administrative, parliamentary affairs and other related functions;
- ❖ Liaise with international organizations and execute treaties and agreements with different countries and international organizations related to the functions of the Prime Minister's Office;
- ❖ Ensure security of the Honorable Prime Minister and arrange protocol and ceremonial events for different Heads of State and Heads of Government, dignitaries and foreign delegates;
- ❖ Undertake special programs for small ethnic community living in the plain lands in order to improve their socio-economic condition;
- ❖ Rehabilitate the homeless, impoverished, poor and vulnerable families by providing ownership over homestead under Ashrayan Project;

- ❖ Coordinate with stakeholders regarding activities related to NGO Affairs Bureau;
- ❖ Coordinate matters relating to Bangladesh Investment Development Authority, Export Processing Zone (EPZ), Private Export Processing Zone and Bangladesh Economic Zone Authority (BEZA);

3.0 **Strategic objectives of the Prime Minister's Office and their Relevance with Women's Advancement and Rights**

3.1 Prime Minister's Office has identified the following strategic objectives that have both direct and indirect impact on women's development:

- ❖ **Building a Digital Bangladesh:** The scope of employment has been created for trained entrepreneurs in the management of Union Digital Centre's of whom 50Percent are women. Besides, women's access to private and public services and participation in the training of information technology and different forums has increased.
- ❖ **Conducive investment climate:** At present women constitute about 64Percent of the labor forces employed in different Export Promotion Zones. Women's participation in labor market as well as in income generating activities will have an impact on their empowerment and promotion of social security. Through implementation of World Bank assisted Northern Areas Reduction of Poverty Initiatives (NARPI) project, women in *monga* prone areas of northern districts have been employed in different industrial organization through training. Initiatives have been taken to establish economic zones in all suitable areas of the country that will create greater scope for women's employment and promotion of the quality of life and socio-economic conditions. It is mentionable that initiatives have been undertaken to establish 21 (8 Government & 13 Private) Economic Zones in different areas of the country. For the investor of the economic zones area one stop service for 17 items has been approved.
- ❖ **Increase in private sector participation for infrastructure development:** Economic growth, infrastructure facilities and employment opportunities will be ensured through PPP activities. Both man and women will be the beneficiaries of PPP activities. Already the implementation of 45 projects has been started under PPP.
- ❖ **Ensure transparency and accountability of NGO activities:** Different projects and programs are being implemented through NGOs. These are ensuring women's access to health services, nutrition, education, training, microcredit, legal aid and protection against torture and violence.

❖ **Improved living standards of the marginal and small ethnic community:** The Ashrayan Project aims to provide public resources and services in joint name of husband and wife. Fifty percent of the beneficiaries of the project are women. Distribution of public resources to women is increasing their social security, dignity and participation in different social forum. Women's participation is ensured in large scale income generating projects undertaken for minor indigenous community living in plain land. Along with boys, girl students of the said community are being provided educational assistance.

4.0 Roles and Responsibilities of the Prime Minister's Office for Women's Advancement and Rights

- 4.1 The *Ashrayan* Project provides women ownership in government resource which promotes their social security, dignity and pride. Land, housing, training, health and family planning services, income generating activities facilities for pure drinking water, supply of electricity, development of internal communication system, construction of community centres, construction of steps at pond, afforestation facilities have been given through this project that largely benefit women. Besides, different development activities such as construction of sanitary latrines, installation of tube-wells, construction of community centres, construction and renovation of religious infrastructures etc. undertaken for indigenous community are promoting their quality of life, particularly of women.
- 4.2 The first-ever data-bank in Bangla "Jatiyo -Tathyakosh" (www.infokosh.gov.bd) contains all information on agriculture, education, health, legal affairs, human rights, tourism, employment, citizens service, non-farm activities, environment, disaster management, industry and commerce, science and ICT and so on. Information is available in formats like text, animation, image, audio and video etc. Among the 10,000 different topics in the "Jatiyo e-Tathyakosh", 310 topics are related to women rights. Besides, a corner named "Jagoron" has been initiated through a2i program to prevent women violence.
- 4.3 Eight Export Processing Zones have been established for promotion of export and attracting Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) where an estimated 4.68 lakh people have been employed out of whom about 64 percent are women. At least 30 percent women's participation in the Workers' Welfare Associations of Export Processing Zones has been ensured. Through a2i program, in 4,554 unions, 325 municipalities and 407 wards have been set up with a Digital Centres. Every month on average 60 lakh rural people are receiving various information and services through these centers, of which 23.4 lakh beneficiaries are women. Through these "Digital

Centres” 25 crore 76 lac (2016) services have been provided (birth registration, mobile banking, payment of utility bills, computer training, online application, land records etc. are mentionable), among which 39% service receivers are female. Through these services, Digital Centre has earned BDT 263 crore and 60 lac.

- 4.4 During 2009-2016, under the NGO Affairs Bureau’s registered NGO, educational facilities were provided to about 3 crore and 74 lakh students through 91,000 educational institutions each year. Under Ashrayan-2 Project (July 2010 - June 2017) provision has been kept to build pucca barracks for coastal/cyclone prone areas, semi pucca barracks for other regions and specially designed houses for ethnic communities. The project has targeted to rehabilitate 50,000 landless, homeless and impoverished families from July 2010 to July 2017. During 2009-2016, 48,107 families were rehabilitated and loan facility worth tk. 26 crore was disbursed to rehabilitated families under 720 running projects. Simultaneously, trade based training was offered to the rehabilitated families for income generating activities. Electrification and tree plantation programs are also included in the project. Women, being half of the total population, are benefitting through this Project. Under development support program, 364 large scale income generating projects such as animal husbandry, fish cultivation, computer training center, sewing training center, pan baraj, rickshaw-van, vehicle project, nursery, poultry, handloom projects, shoe making project, shrimp culture etc. were implemented in 310 Upazilas in between 2009 to 2016. Majority of the beneficiaries of these projects are women. Besides scholarship of education has been given to the higher level educating students from whose 50% are female student.

5.0 Priority Spending Areas and Benefits for Women’s Advancement

Serial No.	Priority Spending Areas/Programmes	Impact on Women’s Advancement (direct/indirect)
1	2	3
1.	Establish Digital Bangladesh and promote good governance by ensuring transparency and accountability	Citizens can now easily collect information regarding government forms, notices, passport-visa applications, national e-tathyakosh, agriculture, education, health, legal issues, job-related, citizen certificates, and public examination results from Union Digital Centres established at Union level. Apart from regular services, these centres are providing online electricity, gas and phone bills payment service; download English lessons and consultation with a doctor remotely through mobile phones, delivery of public examination results. Approximately, 9 crore female beneficiaries have received services from 5,286 Digital Centres and the centres have created employment for 5,286 women. Moreover, local female entrepreneurs have been created who are working as data entry and computer operators in various public and private organisations. Over 7,000 female bloggers (female entrepreneurs, and local and field level officers) are writing on Union Digital Centre Blog (http://uiscbd.ning.com) and solving problems collaboratively. 40,400 women have registered for

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1	2	3
		<p>migration to Hong Kong and Singapore through Union Digital Centres, from whom; many women have been selected for the migration.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ To ensure the empowerment and the rights of women a2i has created "Gender Strategy". The aim of "Gender Strategy" of a2i is to ensure the equal participation of disadvantaged women and men in all developmental program. ❖ a2i initiated 12 Women focused and 13 Women lead projects which are comprised of one third of total SIF funded projects. Some of these projects are: Projukti Hate Joyeeta, Joy, Aparajita Jessore, SMS Based Certification to stop child Marriage, Connecting Bangladesh, Magic Room Heater, Virtual Gallery of National Museum and E-Service Delivery with Digitalization etc. Moreover, innovative projects such as Joyeeta Virtual Shop, mobile application on women's security, hotline for legal help, are being piloted through a2i's Service Innovation Fund (SIF) initiative. ❖ Joyeeta Virtual Shop of a2i has been working for empowering the women. In Joyeeta, more than 16000 women entrepreneurs are connected across the country. ❖ a2i through "National E-tathykosh" is providing information to the women in various issues (www.infokosh.gov.bd). ❖ a2i is playing important role for the development of women's skills. SME foundation, BIWTA and a2i are working jointly with goal of making ICT freelancers have given training 3000 rural women on freelancing. In addition, a2i assisted by the Microsoft Foundation has given training 5000 female entrepreneurs of Digital centres on hardware and software servicing.
2.	Accelerating Economic Growth by Increasing Investment	<p>Eight EPZ have been established to promote exports, attract FDI and contribute to overall development. About 3.58 lakh people have been employed in EPZ of whom 64Percent are women. Government has targeted to transform the country into a middle income one within 2021 through industrialization, employment creation, increase in production and exports. In order to achieve the target, government has planned to establish at least one economic zone in each division. The Economic Zones can be potential. Honorable Prime Minister has been already inaugurated 10 economic zones.</p>
3.	Improve the Living Standard of poor and Indigenous People	<p>For the socio economic development of the ethnic minority living in plain land 364 income generating project implemented from 2011-12 to 2015-16 FY. Total beneficiaries of these projects are 80 thousand of which 50% are female. Ashrayan-2 projects has been taken for the rehabilitation of poor landless people. Micro credit and training have been given to 20 thousand families through this project of which 50% are women. Besides 14080 females are rehabilitated Land and house ownership are given collectively to husband wife. All the women under these projects are the member of registered co-operative society. So far 1,40,000 women have been trained and loaned through the Ashrayan Project. Female are</p>

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		encouraged for income generating activities. Within 2017, 145000 families and women will be rehabilitated.

6.0 Women's Share in Prime Minister's Office'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	1458	280	19.18	1271	337	26.49	1322	261	19.77
Development	969	255	26.33	845	314	37.13	909	236	25.99
Non-Development	488	24	4.98	426	23	5.43	413	25	6.06

Source: RCGP database

7.0 Success in Promoting Women's Advancement

7.1 Success History

Women's empowerment through Apprenticeship Program

Sharmin Akter, the elder daughter of a poor farmer named Monir Hossain Sheikh from the Balia village of Chandpur Sadar Upazila. Her poor family is consisted of her parents as well as five brothers and sisters. Her father has earned very little and struggled a lot to maintain the family with seven members. In this situation, after the HSC examination, Sharmin's study has been stopped and she became a burden for her family, as she could not able to help her family financially. He had to spend a miserable life. Besides, she had the stress of wedding at this early age. She could not understand what she should do. At this miserable situation, the "Apprenticeship Program" has brought her to the light from gloom. In November 2016, Sharmin has informed that Sewing related Apprenticeship Program is going to be started by the initiative of a2i program of Prime Minister's Office in Chandpur Sadar upazila's Balia Training Center. After completing this practical training, international standard certificate there will be awarded along with opportunity of working. Then, she has decided to receive the training after discussion with her family. She has been admitted in November 2016 session for 6 months long practical training on making different types of dresses including salwar-kamiz. At the end of the training, she has purchased two sewing machines by the allowance of the training and has started working in a Tailor's shop. Sharmin's success story has started from this point. She is now

the maker of various types of dresses with many colors and designs; She is also making dresses of her family members. And with this savings, she is earning BDT 8000 per months. Now, Sharmin is bearing the expenses and the cost of education of her brothers and sisters with this money. Her family is quite happy now. Furthermore, Sharmin is dreaming to take higher education by admitting in Open University. Sharmin is hopeful that many people of her village will follow her to improve their socio-economic condition. This training will not only change her situation but also will transform the picture of the area and even the whole Bangladesh.

7.2 Women's Development through Asrayan Project (1997-2017)

- ❖ 1.45 lakh landless, homeless and helpless poor women have been rehabilitated;
- ❖ 1.40 lakh poor women have been provided with credit and training for income generation;
- ❖ About 7,570 women were rehabilitated by building houses in their own land under the project named "Houses for All".
- ❖ 1.25 lakh women have been awarded ownership and possession of homestead;
- ❖ Safe drinking water have been ensured through installation of around 14,000 tube wells;
- ❖ During FY 2013-2014 to 2016-17 the number of poor families that were rehabilitated are 7,379.

8.0 Recommendations for Future Activities:

- ❖ Coordination, monitoring and policy support for women development programs by various ministries.
- ❖ Encourage participation of women in the implementation of SDG.
- ❖ Encourage women to participate in higher levels of administrative structure.
- ❖ To facilitate appointment of women in constitutional, administrative and policy making decision;
- ❖ To include 100% female for rehabilitation as per the direction of Honorable Prime Minister;
- ❖ To ensure development and empowerment of the women belonging to small ethnic communities and disadvantageous segment of the society;
- ❖ To promote daycare centers in all work places.
- ❖ To ensure safety of woman in all workplace.