

## Chapter-32

### Ministry of Religious Affairs

#### 1.0 Introduction

1.1 Religion has been an important institution since the dawn of human civilization. Religion helps to maintain the existence of society by managing various social norms of society directly or indirectly. The essence of all religions is the worship of truth, beauty and welfare. Religion brings peace, happiness, rules and discipline in a society. It is inseparable from politics, economy, social policies, art and culture as well as from the mental world of a human being. Therefore, religion is quite important for every aspect of the society and the state. Therefore, the Ministry of Religious Affairs has been working relentlessly to establish a non-communal, peaceful and developed Bangladesh.

1.2 In the Articles 12, 28 and 41 of the Constitution of the People's Republic of Bangladesh, there is a reference for secularism; prevent discrimination for religious reasons and ensuring religious freedom. Ministry of Religious Affairs and its offices/agencies are working according to the constitutional guidelines. In addition, in case of adopting projects and programs priority has been given to follow the directions of the provisions of the Constitution of Bangladesh, 7th Five-Year Plan, Sustainable Development Goals, and the implementation of the election manifesto of the government.

#### 2.0 Major Functions of the Ministry

- ❖ Extending overall co-operation and providing grants, as well as financing the activities to implement the development activities of the Islamic Foundation, Waqf Administration, Hindu, Buddhist & Christian Religious Welfare Trusts;
- ❖ Dealing with all matters relating to Hajj and Umrah, including announcement of Hajj policy and Hajj Package, signing of bi-lateral Hajj agreement and management of residential accommodation for Hajj pilgrims and religious delegations to and from foreign countries;
- ❖ Providing assistance to maintain and operate Waqf and Debottor estates/properties;
- ❖ Assisting research and publications in the field of religion and providing co-operation in the management of charitable institutions;
- ❖ Arranging and participating in international conferences, seminars and dialogues on matters relating to religion and establishing contacts and relations, improving

relations and signing contracts, agreements, conventions with different countries and international organisations/institutions;

- ❖ Ensuring social development, conducting research, preventing corruption and terrorism, strengthening fraternity and religious harmony by encouraging different activities of religious organisations;
- ❖ Providing grants-in-aid including repair/reforms of different religious organisations and institutions, matters relating to moon sighting and celebration of major occasions;
- ❖ Supporting the insolvent people for their rehabilitation with financial assistance.

### **3.0 Strategic objectives of the Ministry and their relevance with Women's Advancement and Rights**

- 3.1 Establishment of moral and ethical society:** As a result of establishing pre-primary education centers, the participation of girl children is increasing further. It is to be noted that 20% of the centers of the mosque-based children and mass education centers, 80% of temple-based children and mass education centers and 85% of pagoda-based pre-primary education centers are run by the female teachers. Employment opportunities for women will be created, including their social security and participation in social activities. Women's participation will be ensured by giving priority of women in post-literacy and continuing education programs and this will have a direct impact on overall development of women.
- 3.2 Efficient & effective management of Hajj activities:** In order to ensure proper services to female hajj pilgrims, every year a large number of female members are included in various hajj delegations that has a positive impact on women's advancement. As a result the self-confidence of both the service providers and recipients are boosted and everyone is being benefited.
- 3.3 Development & improvement of the management of religious organizations and infrastructure:** Increasing the number of religious institutions and improving the infrastructure management will create limited employment opportunities for women; and this will to increase their income. As a result of the development of religious institutions, women will be directly and indirectly benefited.
- 3.4 Improvement of socio economic status of the religious personalities and the destitute:** Zakat grant given to the insolvent people for self-sufficiency will play direct role in making extremely poor and insolvent women to become self-sufficient. Women are given priority in allocation of grant-in-aid and Zakat Fund. As a result, women's dignity will increase in family and society.

#### 4.0 Roles and Responsibilities of the Ministry of Religious Affairs for Women's Advancement and Rights

- 4.1 Under the mosque, temple and pagoda-based children and mass education programs, 11.57 lac students are getting pre-primary education, 14.35 lac students are being given the Holy Quran education in 2018 academic year through 80,518 centers across the country.
- 4.2 Through the Islamic Mission, 4 lac 54 thousand and 463 patients were provided with allopathy healthcare and 1 lac 52 thousand and 473 patients were provided with homeopathic healthcare until February of the fiscal year 2018-19; among them 63% were women. Free medicines worth of about 81 lac and 40 thousand takas were distributed in favor of women through Islamic Mission.

#### 5.0 Priority Spending Areas and Benefits for Women's Advancement

Serial No.	Priority Spending Areas/Programmes	Impact on Women Development (direct/indirect)
1	2	3
1.	Provide pre-school and religious education for children	Expansion of pre-primary and religious education is making way for women to eradicate illiteracy. As a result, the scope for the freedom of expression and employment for women is being widened.
2.	Provide training to religious personalities on socio-economic issues	Being involved in in socio-economic activities, religious personalities have been able to improve the quality of life by engaging in the mainstream of development. As well as financial progress, their traditional approach towards women has changed. As a result, they will be more sympathetic towards the rights and dignity of women, including reducing the meanness of society, increasing awareness, including demerits of various social crimes and making public awareness about these. As a result, violence against women will be greatly reduced; increase the social status and dignity of women. Besides, Hindu women votaries being self-reliant by providing them with training through the project taken.
3.	Development of Hajj and Umrah management and sending delegation teams including medical team	Development of Hajj and Umrah management by providing on-line registration, visa lodgment and modern technology. Women's participation in other delegation including medical teams has a direct impact on increasing the confidence of women. Women are performing Hajj and Umrah freely.

Serial No.	Priority Spending Areas/Programmes	Impact on Women Development (direct/indirect)
1	2	3
4.	Research and publication of books	The publication of books in the light of the interpretation of the rights of women in different religions can increase morality and values among people. Mutual respect and self-respect will increase among people. As a result, women's rights will be established in society nation as a whole and dignity will increase.
5.	Provide grant-in-aid to the poor & destitute people and extension of healthcare services	Destitute women can be self-reliant through grants-in-aid. Expansion of medical facilities in underdeveloped remote areas is creating opportunities to improve women's general and reproductive health. This will reduce mortality rate of woman.
6.	Bring mobility in library and continuing education programs for socio-economic and moral development	Under the influence of the spread of the library and the continuing education program, the opportunities for women's knowledge have been left untouched. As a result, women can easily get education and their way of becoming self-sufficient is widening.
7.	Implementation of Islamic cultural activities aimed at achieving mental development of children	Mental development of children and adolescents of schools, colleges and madrasas, especially of girl children and adolescents, will be occurred in the religious and cultural arena.

## 6.0 Women's Share in Ministry's Total Expenditure

(Taka in Crore)

Description	Budget 2019-20			Revised 2018-19			Budget 2018-19			Actual 2017-18		
	Budget	Women Share		Revised	Women Share		Budget	Women Share		Actual	Women Share	
		Women	percent		Women	percent		Women	percent		Women	percent
Total Budget	523190	161247	30.82	442541	136036	30.74	464573	136938	29.48	321861	88441	27.48
Ministry Budget	1338	29	2.18	1496	550	36.8	1168	437	37.4	877	58	6.62
Development	1074	13	1.17	1165	535	45.96	921	427	46.38	659	43	6.57
Operating	263	17	6.3	331	15	4.53	247	10	3.85	218	15	6.79

Source: RCGP database

## 7.0 Success in Promoting Women's Advancement

- ❖ **Mosque, Temple and Pagoda based child and Mass literacy program:** Since 1992, a total of 2 crore 8 lac 8 thousand and 53 students were provided education through this program. Of these, the number of female children/female students is 1 crore 48 lacs 35 thousand 7 hundred and 30; which is 71.30% of all students.

- ❖ **Islamic Mission program:** Both allopathic and homeopathy treatments are provided through this program. Since its inception in 1983 to December, 2018, this program provided allopathic treatment to 2,13,47,312 persons and homeopathy treatment to 66,00,479 persons. Among them, the number of female patients who took allopathy health services is 1,34,48,806 and the number of women who took homeopathic health services is 41,72,791.
- ❖ **Collection and distribution of Zakat among poor for self-reliance:** In the light of the guidance of the Holy Quran, Zakat Board provides assistance to the poor and miserable people in 8 sectors. In the last three years, 62,842 poor women were provided with financial assistance from Zakat Fund which is 55% of the total zakat recipients. Until February of this fiscal year, 6,860 miserable women were given grants from the Zakat Fund.
- ❖ A significant number of women votaries of temples are being made self-reliant by providing income generating training.
- ❖ All facilities including separate prayer rooms for women have been ensured in the 560 Model Mosque and Islamic Centers being built. In these mosques, there will be arrangements for the prayers of 31,400 women together.
- ❖ Activities are being taken to increase the rights and dignity of women through distribution of religious awareness building leaflets.

#### **A Teacher's Story**

Shrimati Bharati Rani, has been appointed in job as a center teacher at Nitai Gauravajan temple pre-primary center at Sultanpur village in Sadar upazila of Naogaon district under the Temple Based Children and Mass Education Program since 2008. The number of students in the center is more than 35. The area is mainly inhabited by Hindu fishermen community. After taking the charge of the center by Bharati Rani, it has been possible for bringing the underprivileged children to the school. They are getting ethical and religious education as well as general education. She has made this center lively by using texts, stories, songs, sports, physical exercise, arts and crafts, and using various educational materials. Arrangements for school uniform for all students have been made by her sincere efforts. Using interesting teaching techniques, she made the students interested to school. After completing the education from this center, the students are going to primary schools for formal education. The students of this center are achieving credentials after admitting in the local primary schools. In this way, this educational center of Naogaon district plays a special role as a model center to spread the light of education and motivate other students. A successful and bright star of this program is Bharti Rani, the center teacher.

**8.0 Recommendations for Future Activities**

- ❖ Taking steps for increasing female teachers in mosque based pre-primary education and religious education program;
- ❖ Taking initiatives in order to disseminate the proper interpretations of women rights contained in different religious books
- ❖ In all religions, women have been placed in a dignified position. This issue should be presented clearly in all forums;
- ❖ Adopting awareness programs for elimination of religious fanaticism/bigotry; and
- ❖ Taking initiatives for establishing prayer rooms for women in all public places (i.e. market, hospitals, bus /launch terminals, railway stations, office-courts etc.).