

Chapter-7

Ministry of Women and Children Affairs

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 In the era of globalized, it is necessary to involve women into the mainstream of the state and society through ensuring women's rights, empowerment and working friendly environment to establish a progressive society. The Ministry of Women and Children Affairs is working for involment of women in the mainstream of overall development through establishment of rights of women and children and women empowerment. The present government has taken different initiatives for the deveopmen of women and children to implement the Vision 2021. In light of the election manifesto of the government the Ministry of women and children affairs has taken different programmes for poverty alleviation of women. The ministry is working uninterruptedly for ensuring women's participation in all development activities relating to capacity development of women by 2021. In the present decade Bangladesh achieved considerable progress on women development especially women education and political empowerment. In the areas of women political empowerment, Bangladesh is far ahead of many developed countries. The expansion of women education and the development of women entrepreneurs in Bangladesh have positioned itself in an honorable status among the developing countries.
- 1.2 The Government of Bangladesh is committed to comprehensive development of women according to constitution. This commitment is expressed through article 27, 28, 29 and 65(3) of Bangladesh Constitution. Specially, Article 28(4) of the constitution provides for making specific law for the development of the under-developed women. Apart from this, Bangladesh is a signatory to almost all international conventions and covenants for women development. The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) is worth mentioning. Driven by the constitutional obligations and commitment to the international legal instruments, the Government has accorded special emphasis on the programmes to promote women's development in the 7th Five year Plan, Sustainable Development Goals and National Women's Policy, 2011. The National Women's Policy has set 22 targets. The overall activities of the Ministry of Women and Children Affairs (MoWCA) are closely associated with the implementation of those goals.

1.3 The MoWCA is working intensely for overall development of women in formulation and implementation of policies relating to women and children, women empowerment, prevention of oppression of women, ensuring security at workplace along with ensuring total socio-economic development of women. The MoWCA is responsible for co-ordination and monitoring of the development activities related to women and children through Women in Development focal points of different Ministries. The MoWCA works for the overall welfare of women and children, establishment and preservation of legal and social rights of women and children.

2.0 Relevant Policies and Laws Enacted by Ministry of Mowca

2.1 The Ministry of Women and Children Affairs has formulated Domestic Violence (Protection and Preservation) Rules, 2013 under Domestic Violence (Protection and Preservation) Act 2010 to ensure equal rights and to prevent all forms of discrimination in all spheres of public life and the state. In order to ensure overall development of women and children, the Government has formulated 'National Women Development Policy, 2011; National Children Policy, 2011; Early Childhood Care and Development Policy, 2013; Deoxyribonucleic Acid (DNA) Act, 2014 and Early Marriage Protection Act, 2017 and rules-2018.

2.2 'National Plan of Action' has been formulated to implement National Women Development Policy and prevention of violence against women and children. All these instruments are targeted to transform women into a capable human capital through their political, social, administrative and economic empowerment.

2.3 In the child related Acts and Rules special attention is given to the girl child. National Women Development Policy 2011 provides distinct guidelines on prevention of child marriage, removal of discrimination against disabled girls and their protection, secured and standard recreational, cultural and sports facility for the female child, and removal of mental and physical abuse of women, rape, dowry, family abuse and acid throwing. Besides, the National Child Policy 2011 accords special priority to girl child. It emphasizes counseling of the adolescent girl, provision of sanitation facilities for girls in the educational institutions and workplaces, and special security arrangements for girls during disaster.

3.0 Ministry Specific directives in the National Policy relating to Women's Advancement

3.1 The Seventh Five Year Plan (2016-2020) of the Government of Bangladesh emphasizes on pursuing strategies and actions to establish "a country where men and women will have equal opportunities and rights and women will be recognized as equal contributors in economic, social and political development". The mission of

this plan "is to ensure women's advancement as self-reliant human beings and reduce discriminatory barriers by taking both developmental and institutional measures". The framework for women's empowerment and gender equality, as mentioned in 7th FYP comprises of 4 areas of strategic objectives:

- ❖ Develop women's capacity;
- ❖ Increase women's economic benefits;
- ❖ Enhance women's freedom to express their views and women-oriented organization;
- ❖ Create an enabling environment for women's advancement.

3.2 Gender equality is an important aspect of Sustainable Development Goals-SDGs (adopted by UN General Assembly on 25 September 2015) aiming at transforming our world by 2030. SDGs consist of 17 goals. All these goals together identified 169 targets. Although a number of goals have targets on gender issues, Goal-5 especially emphasizes on gender equality and empowerment of all women and girls. The targets set against this particular goal include elimination of all forms of discrimination, violence and harmful practices, such as child, early and forced marriage against all women and girls in the public and private spheres. It also puts emphasis on recognizing unpaid care and domestic work and the promotion of shared responsibility within the household and the family. Ensuring women's full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision-making in political, economic and public life and ensuring universal access to sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights are also significant targets against this goal. Apart from these, undertaking reforms to give women equal rights to economic resources, as well as access to ownership and control over land and other forms of property, financial services, inheritance and natural resources, in accordance with national laws and enhancing the use of enabling technology, in particular information and communications technology, to promote the empowerment of women are given importance. Finally, this goal encourages for adopting and strengthening sound policies and enforceable legislation for the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls at all levels.

4.0 Strategic objectives and activities of the Ministry in relation to Women's Advancement

Sl. No.	Medium-Term Strategic Objectives	Activities
1	2	3
1.	Creation of equal opportunity for women in social and economic activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Providing women technical, vocational and income generating training, equipment for production and micro-credit to facilitate self-employment. ❖ Forming and registering voluntary social organisations, and providing assistance. ❖ Providing training and creating residential facilities so as to empower women entrepreneurs and enhance their efficiency and skill. ❖ Creating opportunities for women and children to facilitate access to modern information technology.
2.	Social protection and justice for vulnerable women and children	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ To provide allowances to lactating mothers to remove poverty; ❖ To provide food assistance and training to vulnerable women under VGD Programme and provide onetime cash assistance and production inputs instead of food. ❖ To give maternity allowances for the ultra-poor and pregnant women; ❖ To provide medical services and financial assistance to abused/distressed women and children; ❖ To provide hostel facilities for working women and day care facilities for their children; ❖ To provide medical treatment, legal assistance, counselling, safe shelter and food assistance to abused women and children; ❖ To make available residential accommodation for women, girls and children during the trial period in Courts.
3.	Social and political empowerment of women	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ To arrange training for elected female representatives and organise awareness building programs to increase women's participation in the electoral process. ❖ To increase awareness through meetings in the courtyards to prevent women trafficking.

5.0 Identifying the Gender Gaps in the Activities of the Ministry and Strategy for Removal of the Issues

5.1 The ministry has formulated a 'National Plan of Action' in 2013 with an aim of implementing 'National Women Development Policy, 2011'. To implement the action plan, concerned ministries have been requested to assess the financial needs attached to each of the items to be implemented by them. It may be mentioned that at present, there is no scope to differentiate women's development from the overall development of the state and the society. Rather, women rights are incorporated in every development plan all over the world. Based on the gender responsiveness the development policies are categorized into four heads:

- ❖ Plan which has not considered women's development (Gender Blind);
- ❖ Gender Neutral programmes both men and women would be benefitted equally;
- ❖ Activities related to women development- formulated exclusively for the development of women. (Gender Specific);
- ❖ Associate women in every activity - Policies sensitive to gender parity (Gender Responsive).

5.2 Almost all the activities of the MoWCA, for obvious reasons, are gender-responsive. But it is necessary to consider whether as a coordinator of the development activities concerning women, the MoWCA has been able to play an effective role in ensuring women's share in the overall development activities of the various Ministries, Departments and Agencies. Besides, the MoWCA is responsible for coordinating and providing advice on the plans and programs related to implementation of the 'National Women Development Policy- 2011' and National Action Plan- 2013. In the light of the National Action Plan-2013, the MoWCA is working relentlessly for women employment of women, food security, political and administrative empowerment of women, health and nutrition, housing and shelter, safety of children before and after the natural disaster, special programmes for disabled, backward and minority groups. MoWCA is taking effective steps to provide strategic assistance to other ministries and departments so that they can prepare gender disaggregated database and gender responsive budgets.

6.0 Women's Participation in Ministry's activities

6.1 Statistics of Male and Female under Different Department including MoWCA

Function Description	Officers (%)				Staff (%)			
	2016-17		2017-18		2016-17		2017-18	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
Secretariat	60.71	39.29	67.25	32.75	64.15	35.85	60.78	39.22
Autonomous Bodies and Other Institutions	67.02	32.98	27.17	69.29	69.36	30.67	71.14	28.86
Department of Women Affairs	17.54	82.42	17.98	82.02	58.04	41.96	58.69	41.30

6.2 Women are the major beneficiaries in the programmes administered by the MoWCA. Male and female participate equally in only Sisimpur, day-care programme and in the programme of empowering adolescent boys and girls by mobilizing them through formation of clubs.

6.3 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
Division's Budget	3749	2863	76.36	3457	2773	80.21	3490	2640	75.65	2433	1880	77.28
Development	648	505	78	510	318	62.38	509	395	77.63	192	84	43.93
Operating	3101	2358	73.72	2948	2455	83.29	2981	2245	75.31	2241	1796	80.13

7.0 Key Performance Indicator (KPIs)

Indicator	Related Strategic Objectives	Unit	Revised Target	Actual	Target	Revised Target	Target	Revised Target
			2016-17		2017-18		2018-19	
			4	5	6	7	8	9
1. Coverage of Social Protection Beneficiaries:								
a. Vulnerable Group Development (VGD) (87,71,000 persons)*	2	%	55.86	55.86	56.60	55.60	67.27	67.00
b. Working lactating mother assistance fund (24,20,000 persons)*			19.54	19.54	20.37	20.37	20.37	20.37
c. Maternity allowances to ultra-poor pregnant mothers (60,80,767 persons)*			18.92	18.92	20.56	20.56	30.43	30.43

Indicator	Related Strategic Objectives	Unit	Revised Target	Actual	Target	Revised Target	Target	Revised Target
			2016-17		2017-18		2018-19	
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
2. Coverage rate of micro-credit (10,12,000 persons)	1	%	17.30	17.29	18.00	18.10	19.13	19.00
3. coverage of protection against violence and trafficking of women and children	2	Persons (000)	60.00	53.82	65.82	78.48	77.50	89.48
4. Coverage of women representatives/leaders trained in civic organization (31,868)	3	%	10.81	10.50	11.00	11.00	12.53	12.53

8.0 Success in Promoting Women's Advancement

- 8.1** Maternity allowance has been provided to 18 lac poor pregnant mothers and their children to cover the shortage of nutrition during last three years. A total of 6 lac 30 thousand 3 hundred working mothers received lactating allowance. Food assistance was provided to 30 lac 80 thousand poor women under the VGD programme. All-out support has been provided to 1560 women for promoting entrepreneurship. Safe accommodation facilities were provided to 2,020 women under 'working women hostels'. In order to ensure overall development of children, the Government has formulated Early Childhood Care and Development Policy, 2013. To ensure prevention of violence against women and children 'National Plan of Action' has been formulated to implement National Women Development Policy. 529 adolescent clubs were operated for empowerment of children and adolescents. A law titled 'Deoxyribonucleic Acid (DNA) Act-2018 has been enacted and total 14,483 DNA samples were examined under 4,492 filed cases. Through the National Trauma Counseling Centre, psychological counseling services were provided to 1,516 abused women and children
- 8.2** There is no valuation of women's housework in Bangladesh's economy. Usually the work that earned no money is not considered as work. Child rearing, cooking, cleaning the house, vegetable gardening, her husband and father-in-law to look after the service, sewing etc, actions. If these households get recognition in GDP, then the position of women in society will be more respectable.

8.3 Success story of a woman who has helped to improve living through income generating (IGA) training for women at Upazila level

Maksuda Akter Koli, a successful trainee of Lalmohon Upazala of Bhola district, has taken the training through income generating activities (IGA) in the Upazila level. She was a helpless woman. With this training, she is working as a beautician in her home and Upazila Shilpakaka Academy. she has become self-reliant by earning about 20 (twenty) thousand taka a month.

9.0 Obstacles to achieve targets related to Women's Advancement and Rights

There are problems in the implementation of the programmes and activities of the MOWCA. One of the most important problem is the beneficiary selection process. In many cases nepotism is seen. Local leaders have non-cooperation in many areas. There is also obstacle in the formation of clubs for adolescent girls and boys. Religions superstition is the main obstacles in this respect. On the whole, because of prejudice and misinterpretation of religion conservatism of male dominated society, women find their freedom of speech, freedom of movement etc. restricted. The targets for women development often hits a road block as their opinion does not get importance in the decision making process of the family.

10.0 The progress on recommended activities in the previous year

Serial No.	The recommendations pursued for future course of actions	Progress
1	2	3
1.	Include targeted poor and vulnerable women in Social Security Programmes	Remarkable progresses have been achieved in this area. The number of VGD beneficiaries increase to 10.40 lakhs from 10.0 lakhs while the beneficiaries of maternity allowances have been increase to 7.0 lakhs from 6.0 lakhs. On their hand, the number of beneficiaries under lactating mother allowances has increased to 2.5 lakhs from 2.0 lakhs.
2.	Implement National Action Plan made under National Woman Development Policy,2011	Action Plan has been made with a view to empowering woman under the guidance and special initiatives of the Honorable Prime Minister, Sheikh Hasina.
3.	Prepare National Action Plan for ending child marriage	Child Marriage Restraint Act 2018 and dowry prohibition Act,2018 have been enacted.

Serial No.	The recommendations pursued for future course of actions	Progress
1	2	3
4.	Take necessary action to prevent violence against women and children	A total of 35801 women and children have received services through One-Stop-Crisis Cell and 9 One-Stop-Crisis Centre programme up to January 2019. Besides, under the program a total of 1516 women and children received services from National Trauma Counseling Centre and 1360541 women and children received psycho-social counseling through National Helpline Centre (109).
5.	Empower women entrepreneurs and train women and creating residential facilities for them	Different residential and non-residential trainings in different trades are being provided for empowering women socially, economically and politically by Directorate of Woman and Jatiyo Mohila Sanagtha. A vertical expansion project of Mirpur and Khilgaon working women hostel are under construction. Another hostel at Kaligonj Upazilla of Gazipur district is under construction.

11.0 Future Plan:

- ❖ Take necessary steps to develop a society without violence against women and children by 2030 through the proper implementation of National Action Plan to Prevent Violence Against Women and Children (2018-2030) aligned with Sustainable Development Goal.
- ❖ Implement the commitment of Hon'ble Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina in the London Girl Summit 22 July 2014 and to end the marriage of girls below the age of 15 years and to reduce the marriage of girls below the age of 18 years by one third within 2021, and to eliminate the marriage below the age of 18 years by 2041 according to the National Action Plan to End Child Marriage (2018-2030)
- ❖ Establish the National Centre on Gender based Violence as a Centre of Excellence for coordinating, monitoring and supervising the activities of violence against women and children, empowerment of women and protection of children under Ministry of Women and Children Affairs.

- ❖ Develop referral system in each government hospitals at districts and upazila level for providing comprehensive services towards women like “One-Stop Crisis Centre”.
- ❖ Expand the psychosocial services at district, upazila and union level by developing skill psychosocial counselor through government and non-government initiatives.
- ❖ Develop a National Resource Portal on Violence against Women and Children.
- ❖ Develop a Database of One-Stop Crisis Centre and One-Stop Crisis Cell.