

Chapter-39

Ministry of Railways

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 Rail transport is considered as the most popular and consumer friendly mode of transport in Bangladesh. Bangladesh Railway as a cost-saving, environment friendly, comfortable and safe transport system is playing its important role in passengers and goods transportation. The demand for railway transportation is continuously increasing in Bangladesh as a densely populated country. Considering continuous increasing demand, the development and expansion of railway infrastructures gets priority areas of investment for overall development of the country. Developed rail connectivity will play its role in cheaper and easier passenger and goods transportation, increase mobilization in supplying of raw materials of production and commodities and easier marketing of produced items. Business will flourish, employment opportunities for both men and women will create, decentralization of industrialization will occur and stability will come in market price with the improvement of rail transportation. As a result, there will be a socio-economic development of the people, especially women, with the reduction of poverty, which will affect the advancement of women empowerment. Realizing the importance of the rail transport, a separate ministry named Ministry of Railways has been established on 4 November, 2011. Railway sector has been given the highest priority in the outline of the 7th Five Year Plan and Perspective Plan of Bangladesh 2010-2021: Making Vision 2021 A Reality' of Bangladesh and allocation funds has been increased than the past for the development of railway. A target of implementing 235 projects amounting taka 2,33,944 crore has been fixed for spending under 4 phases according to the 20-Year Railway Master Plan.
- 1.2 Bangladesh Railway has around 2,877 kilometer of network which connects 44 District and almost all the important places of the country. Necessary steps have been taken to renovate existing rail tracks, purchase of locomotives, wagons and new coaches and modernization of signaling system and level crossing gates, bring reform in railway and collection of Diesel Electric Multiple Unit (DEMU). In the financial year 2017-18, around 44 investment and TA projects are going to be implemented by the ministry. New districts will be brought under the rail network and national and international connections such as Trans Asian Rail Network, SAARC and other network will be established through these development activities which will help to improve the overall transport facilities of the country including easing the traffic congestion of Dhaka.

- 1.3 Bangladesh Railway is performing all the activities including carrying of passengers and goods by ensuring an easier, faster and safer passenger and goods transport. The mass population of the country both men and women especially female and children are benefiting from comfortable and safe rail communication system. Considering the safety and comfort of train journey compare to other modes of land transport, women and children give preference in the rail system while choosing travelling mode. As a result of the improvement and expansion of the rail network, producers (male and female) will be able to sell their farm products more easily at fair prices and cheaper costs which in turn help them to improve their socio-economic status along with the standard of living. Consequently, all women including the poor ones are increasingly involving themselves in the economic activities. This is also helping them get essential services like education and health more easily. Ministry of Railways formulates policies and strategies to ensure safe, cheaper and environment friendly rail communication system leading to accelerate socio-economic development. Ministry of Railways has been performing various activities including policy formulation, monitoring and evaluation of policies relating to railways and rail transport; development, expansion and maintenance of railway related systems; coordination of national and international railway systems; formulation and implementation of security policies relating to railway transportation etc.
- 1.4 Bangladesh Railway is continuing its endeavor for the economic development, creation of employment opportunities and poverty alleviation for all through developing a modern, integrated, sustainable, safer and quality communication system which leads to socio-economic development of the country. Priority has been given on the development of easy and safe rail infrastructure among all other transport communication to ensure employment for all and poverty alleviation. Ministry of Railways has selected its own priority based on the policy and strategy documents which targets repair, renovation and modernize rail infrastructure, easing the internal and international rail communication, safe rail journey, ensuring the service for women and poor etc.

2.0 Major Functions of the Ministry

- ❖ Establishment and expansion of international, regional and sub-regional rail transport;
- ❖ Determination of policy/strategy for Bangladesh Railway;
- ❖ Development and maintenance of Bangladesh Railway;
- ❖ Evaluation, monitoring and survey of Railway transportation;

- ❖ Improvement of co-operation and transport management in Railway transportation;
- ❖ Matters related to development and revenue budget of Bangladesh Railway;
- ❖ Determination and enforcement of safety indices; and
- ❖ Any kind of query and statistics related to the Ministry of Railways.

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

- 3.1 Modernization of railway services through the development of rail infrastructure across the country:** As a result of the implementation of the activities taken for the purpose of achieving the first two goals of the medium-term strategic objectives of railway ministry, women are also benefiting from direct and indirect benefits in different processes. Employment opportunities for women have been created in various projects under implementation of Bangladesh Railway. On the other hand, train transport and freight transport is increasing significantly by women involved in working and economic activities through the establishment of broad and modernized railway services. Women involved in economic activities, especially women in cottage industries and small businesses get the opportunities to market their goods by using easy access to easy, reliable and affordable rail transportation services.
- 3.2 Improvement of railway services through ensuring efficient and safe rail services:** Women are also directly and indirectly enjoying benefits as a part of the general public through the implementation of the activities taken for the purpose of achieving medium-term strategic objectives of the Ministry of Railways regarding the efficient and safe rail service. As a part of ensuring efficient and safe rail services, introduction of improved, reliable and safe passenger and transport services for women passengers such as arranging separate restroom, washroom and ticket counters, introducing online ticketing system to reserve e-ticket from home, enhancement of overall security measures activities have been implemented. As a result, passengers and goods transportation by women have been increased a lot. In this regard the participation of women in both the sectors as entrepreneurs and workers has increased by getting access to easy, affordable and safe passengers and goods transportation which will improve their per capita income and standard of living accessing easy, cheap and safe passengers and goods transportation system of railway which will increase the per capita income and improve the quality of life.

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

- 4.1 Female staff and officers in Bangladesh Railway have been participating in all types of laborious and service oriented works including the general administration to specialized and technical responsibilities and their contributions are significant to the performance of the Ministry. As a result, women are becoming economically self-sufficient and opportunities are created for women to contribute in family decision making process. The participation of women in the income generating activities such as working in the railway workshops, railway operation and also as contractor is increasing day-by-day. Recently women are engaged in large number in running train and in various skilled oriented activities including technical works in the workshops.
- 4.2 Social safety for women is ensured through variety of initiatives by Ministry of Railways to create a women-friendly working environment. To ensure the welfare of the women in the workplace, some facilities like separate toilets, rest rooms, prayer rooms have been installed. Moreover, to make the train travel easy, comfortable and women friendly separate waiting rooms, toilets, ticket counters etc. are being established in the important train stations. Women are encouraged to travel alone by themselves in the train as separate ticket counters are established for the Women.

5.0 Priority Spending Areas and Benefits for Women's Advancement

Serial No.	Priority Spending Area/Programs	Benefits for Women's Advancement (Direct and Indirect)
1	2	3
1.	Rehabilitation of existing infrastructure facilities and rolling stocks of Bangladesh Railway Benefits for Women's Advancement (Direct and Indirect)	Transportation of passengers and goods around the country at a reasonable cost and in a safe and timely manner depends on the smooth operation of the railway system. This is why procurement and rehabilitation of rolling stocks has been given the highest priority. Women's employments are generated through engaged in the rehabilitation and maintenance of rolling stocks, rail lines etc.
2.	Modernization of railway	Modernization of railway transport improves the safety and comfort of passengers. This is why remodeling of stations and station yards, modernization of signaling and interlocking system and expansion of railway operations in the regional and sub-regional areas has been given the second highest priority.

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	16135	7122	44.14	12075	4853	40.19	12053	4800	39.83
Development	13001	6915	53.19	9278	4669	50.33	9115	4614	50.62
Non-Development	3134	207	6.6	2797	183	6.56	2938	187	6.35

Source: RCGP database

7.0 Success in Promoting Women's Advancement

Ministry of Railways and Railway Department are working together for the advancement and rights of the women and to create women friendly rail transport. Women are largely engaged in various development projects of railway. Moreover, facilities of separate waiting rooms and toilets have been kept in the important train stations so that women can feel ease while waiting for the train. Ticket collection and train information are made easy and available through e-ticketing and internet on mobile. Besides, Dhaka, Dhaka Biman Bandar and Chittagong stations have been brought under the wi-fi zone and close circuit camera has been installed in important railway stations for the security to passengers. To provide better service to the passengers, new furniture, fan and lights etc. have been installed in the train stations. Women feel comfortable while travelling in the train.

8.0 Recommendations for Future Activities

- ❖ Arrangement of safe drinking water for children and women in each station and train gradually;
- ❖ Arrangement of first aid for children and women in each station and train step by step;
- ❖ Introducing separate coaches or seats reservation for women in various routes as per demand;
- ❖ Providing separate washrooms for women step by step in every train considering the demand;
- ❖ Introduction of women's ticket counter at every railway stations gradually;
- ❖ Providing separate waiting rooms and washroom with modern facilities for women at every railway station gradually;

- ❖ Arrangements of enough women security guards at the stations in order to make the journeys of female passengers hassle-free and easy;
- ❖ Arrangement Day-Care Center for women employees;
- ❖ Building separate prayer room including toilets for women employees at railway offices.