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| **Chapter-39****Ministry of Railways** |

**1.0 Introduction**

1.1 The present government has created a separate ministry named as Ministry of Railways (MoR) on 04 December 2011 to ensure modernize railway sector in Bangladesh. MoR is committed to sustainable development of railway sector and improve its services to meet the present and future national need as well as regional railway traffic. Bangladesh Railway (BR) is committed to provide safe and relatively low-priced transport service to the people. Its contribution to pollution is very little, consumption of fuel is less than other mode of transport and rate of casualties in accident is negligible compared with other modes of transport. After long period of time, Bangladesh Railway came to the present stage due to administrative reforms and infrastructural development activities. Railway can play a leading role in meeting the current transport needs, but in the past, no significant activities were undertaken for the development of the railway. Considerable development opportunities are there in this sector. In an age of coordinated multidimensional communications, the railway may emerge as an important medium in sustainable economic development of the country. The improvement of rail communication and transport services has been included as a priority sector in national documents such as the 7th Five-Year Plan, Perspective Plan and Vision-2021. And more budget is being provided for the development of the railway than any time in the past. A total of 230 projects with a cost of 5,53,662 crore taka are included for implementation in six stages from July-2016 to June-2045 under the newly approved Railway Master Plan.

1.2 The constitution of Bangladesh has incorporated clauses to ensure human right and dignity of women as well as men in the fundamental principles of State Policy. The Articles 19 (3), 28 (1), 28 (2), 28 (3), 29 (1) and 65 (1) of the Constitution of Bangladesh express commitment for women to have equal access to all opportunity in all spheres of personal life and state affairs. In line with the provisions of the Constitution, Ministry of Railways is committed to providing women friendly service in various activities of railways. Women engaged in income generating activities such as farmers/entrepreneur can easily supply and sell their produce/products in different parts of the country, thus improving their socio-economic condition. In addition, different activities of Ministry of Railways contribute to enhance the participation of women in economic activities; it also facilitate their receiving of basic services including education, and medical treatment. In line with the objective of accelerating the development of socio-economic conditions through safe, cost-effective and environmentally friendly rail transport, the Ministry of Railways formulates policies and strategies. Under policy no 19.1 of The National Women Development Policy, 2011 (to prevent all forms of violence against women in family, social and work life) there is a provision to keep 30% seats reserved for women in all engine-powered public transport; Keeping this policy in mind, Ministry of railways will make work plan to reserve 30% seats for women in all trains of different routes.

1.3 Bangladesh Railway has been working relentlessly to achieve the objective of economic development, employment generation and poverty reduction of men and women of the country by building sustainable, safe and quality railway infrastructure and integrated modern public transport system. In line of the aforesaid strategic policies of the government, the Bangladesh Railway has formulated its own policy strategy, major activities and priority sectors. Steps have been taken to simplify regional and sub-regional communication including reform, maintenance, conservation, development and expansion of railway infrastructure, ensuring safe rail journey. Steps are also underway for providing easily accessible services to everyone including poor and women.

**2.0 Major Functions of the Ministry of Railways**

* Establishment and expansion of international, regional and sub-regional rail transport;
* Formulation 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 enquiries and statistics related to the Ministry.

**3.0 Strategic objectives of the Ministry and their Relevance to Women’s Advancement**

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 medium-term strategic objectives of railway ministry, women are also benefited directly and indirectly from different activities. Employment opportunities for women have been created in various projects which are being implemented by Bangladesh Railway. On the other hand, women's travel and freight transport is increasing significantly through the establishment of expanded 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 both as entrepreneurs and workers has been increased by getting access to easy, affordable and safe passengers and goods transportation which will improve their per capita income and standard of living.

**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 contributing to all types of laborious and service oriented works including general administration to specialized and technical responsibilities. As a result, women have become economically empowered which has paved way for women to contribute to family decision making process. Besides, women are becoming financially self-reliant due to their participation in construction and repair activities. The participation of women in contractor jobs is also increasing within a limited scale. Women are engaging themselves in large number in running train and in various skilled oriented activities including technical works in the workshops.

4.2 Women-friendly working environment has been ensured through a number of initiatives such as by constructing separate toilets and other facilities for women employed in the Ministry and Bangladesh Railway. As a result it has been possible to ensure social safety for women. Moreover, separate toilets, and waiting rooms have been established in the important train stations to make travel by train as women friendly. Women are encouraged to travel alone by themselves in the train as separate ticketing arrangements have been made for women.

**5.0 Priority Spending Areas and Programmes of the Ministry of Railways and their Impact on Women’s Advancement**

| **Serial No.** | **Priority Spending Areas/Programmes** | **Impact on Women’s Advancement** **(Direct or Indirect)** |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **1** | **2** | **3** |
| 1. |  Rehabilitation of Bangladesh Railway's existing infrastructure and rolling stock | The activities related to regular rehabilitation of railways and stations, locomotives, passenger cars, wagons etc. have been identified as the highest priority sector for keeping the passengers and goods transport uninterrupted as well as to reduce travel time and easy transportation. It will be possible to provide faster, secure and affordable railway connections through rehabilitation of existing infrastructure and rolling stock. As a result, women's participation in jobs, business and trade will increase and it will play a direct and indirect role in the development of women. |
| 2. | Railway modernization | Remodelling of railway station and yards, modernization of signaling and interlocking system, procurement of new locomotives, passenger carriages, wagons etc., and expansion of railway operations in regional and sub-regional areas will result in increased participation of women in economic activiities and that will contribute to development of women |

**6.0 Women’s Share in Ministry’s Total Expenditure**

(Taka in Crore)

| **Description** | **Budget 2021-22** | **Revised 2020-21** | **Budget 2020-21** | **Actual 2019-20** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Budget** | **Women Share** | **Revised** | **Women Share** | **Budget** | **Women Share** | **Actual** | **Women Share** |
| **Women** | **percent** | **Women** | **percent** | **Women** | **percent** | **Women** | **percent** |
| Total Budget |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Ministry Budget |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Development  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Operating |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |

Source: RCGP database

**7.0 Achievements of the Ministry of Railways in the Development of Women**

Ministry of Railways and Bangladesh Railway have been working together for the advancement and rights of women and to create women friendly rail transport. Women workers are being engaged in various ongoing projects. Apart from this, separate waiting rooms and toilets have been built for women at each important station. A separate coach for women passengers are kept on the local train at Dhaka-Narayanganj Section. For the convenience of women passengers at the Dhaka station (Kamalapur Station), there is a separate room for the lactating mothers. Under the e-ticketing program, the facility of getting tickets and information about train information has been introduced through mobile phones and the Internet. Besides, Dhaka, Dhaka Airport and Chittagong Railway Station have been brought under Wi-Fi network. Further closed circuit cameras have been set up for the safety of passenger at various important stations. As a result, women passengers are safe and prefer railways in communication. Adequate furniture, lighting and fans have been provided in waiting rooms for to provide comfortable services to passengers. There are separate ticket counters for women in important stations.

**8.0 Recommendations for Future Activities**

**Short term (1-2 Years):**

* To introduce separate coaches for women passengers in local Turag Express and Titas Express train running between Dhaka-Tongi and Akhaura-Dhaka sections respectively.
* Arrangement of first aid for children and women in each station and train step by step;
* Arrangement of Day-Care Center for women officials and employees.

**Mid term (3-5 Years):**

* Introducing separate coaches or seats reservation for women in various routes as per demand;
* Arrangement of safe drinking water for children and women in each station and train gradually;
* Arrangements of enough women security guards at the stations in order to make the journeys of female passengers hassle-free and easy;
* Providing separate waiting rooms and washroom with modern facilities for women in railway stations gradually.

**Long term (5+ Years):**

* Introduction of women's ticket counter at every railway station gradually;
* Building separate prayer room including toilets for women employees at railway offices.
* Providing need based separate washrooms for women step by step in passenger carriages.