

Chapter 1

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 Bangladesh stepped in attaining Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) after a tremendous success in achieving Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). The progress in some gender sensitive socio-economic indicators, particularly in female literacy and empowerment of woman is remarkable. In addition, a solid progress has been made in reducing poverty, ensuring gender parity in both primary and secondary education, increasing enrollment rate in primary education, reducing child and maternal mortality rate, increasing coverage of immunization and preventing communicable disease. The gender sensitive policies embedded in national budget preparation and implementation process have contributed a lot to these achievements. However, women are still lagging behind in some key areas including economic participation, access to education and health services. Thus, government has taken various initiatives with a view to mainstreaming them in the core development process of the country by allocating 27 percent of national budget equivalent to 5 percent of GDP on average over the last eight years.
- 1.2 Gender sensitivity has been well addressed in the policies and policy instruments made under existing legal and institutional framework of the country. The Constitution of the People's Republic of Bangladesh guarantees equal rights and opportunities for women in the Articles 19, 27, 28, and 29. Article 19(1) ensures equality of opportunity for all citizens and Article 28(1) states that the State shall not discriminate against any citizen on the ground of religion, race, caste, sex or place of birth. Article 28(4) paves the way for enactment of laws to facilitate women development. Apart from constitutional obligations, Bangladesh is a signatory to almost all international conventions and covenants on women development including the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. Driven by the constitutional obligations and commitment to the international agreements, the Government has given highest priority on social, economic and political empowerment of women in the Perspective Plan, Seventh Five Year Plan and National Women's Development Policy, 2011. Bangladesh gives highest priority to the achievement of Sustainable Development Goals and has taken coordinated plan for its implementation.
- 1.3 The existing global gender gap is still wide. The recent Global Gender Gap Report shows the average progress on closing the global gender gap stands at 68.0 percent in 2017 implying an average gap of 32.0 percent needs to be closed in future. While overall progress in closing gap in access to education and health is on track, the gap remains significant in economic participation and political empowerment of woman.

As per the projection of The Global Gender Gap Report 2017, the period of complete elimination of gap between man and woman will require at least 83 years on current trends. Thus, priority should be attached to this area to accelerate the progress in closing gender gap for the greater interest of humanity.

- 1.4 The present government has been implementing a wide range of policies and programs for ensuring gender parity since resuming power in 2009. As a result, ranking in gender gap index has been improved significantly. The overall closing of gender gap in Bangladesh was 63 percent in 2006, which increased to 72 percent in 2017. Consequently, the ranking in global gender gap index increased to 47th out of 144 countries in 2017 from 91th out of 115 countries in 2006. Bangladesh is the top-ranked countries in the South Asian region (Table-1). It is notable that Bangladesh remains in position of one of the top performers in promoting political empowerment of woman with 7th position in global ranking. Particularly, the country has improved gender parity for legislator, senior official and manager as well as professional and technical roles in 2017. On the other hand, according to Human Development Report, 2016 published by UNDP, Bangladesh's rank is 139th in human development index, but it is placed 119th in Gender Inequality Index. Remarkable progress is also observed in improving educational status of woman. Female literacy rate has increased by 23.2 percentage point to 69.9 percent in 2016 from 46.7 percent in 2006- relatively higher rate compared to the countries of similar status. Personal initiatives and guidance of Honorable Prime Minister of Bangladesh acted as tailwind behind these successes. Subsequently, Global Summit of Woman awarded "Global Women's Leadership Award" to Sheikh Hasina, Honorable Prime Minister of Bangladesh in 2018 for her outstanding contribution to the women empowerment.

Table-1: Gender Gap Index, 2016 and 2017

Country	2016		2017	
	Overall Rank	Overall Score	Overall Rank	Overall Score
Bangladesh	72	0.698	47	0.719
India	87	0.683	108	0.669
Srilanka	100	0.673	109	0.669
Nepal	110	0.661	111	0.664
Maldives	115	0.650	106	0.609
Bhutan	121	0.642	124	0.638
Pakistan	143	0.556	143	0.546

Source: Global Gender Gap Report, 2016 and 2017 World Economic Forum

- 1.5 With a view to accelerating the closing of gender gap, priority should be given to create enabling environment for woman to increase their economic participation. Expansion of woman-friendly health service is also required. Female labor-force participation rate in Bangladesh is now 36.3 percent in Bangladesh-relatively lower compared to the same in middle-income countries. Necessary initiatives should be needed to ensure wage equality for similar work and increase the number of woman in legislator, senior official and manager level positions. In the same time, favorable environment should be created to increase participation of woman in professional and technical works. Side by side, pragmatic policy actions should be needed to end child marriage and to prevent adolescent fertility rate.

2.0 The Visions and Goals of the State for Women's Advancement and Rights

- 2.1 The gender vision of the 7th Five Year Plan is that of establishing "a country where men and women will have equal opportunities and rights of women will be recognized as equal contributors in economic, social and political development." The mission of the plan is to ensure women's advancement as self-reliant human beings and reduce discriminatory barriers by taking both developmental and institutional measures. Gender equality and women's empowerment agenda for 7th Five year plan is based on pursuing strategies and actions that not only enhance women's capabilities and access to resources and opportunities but also address the structural and institutional barriers and aim at changing social norms and protecting their rights, issues like control over resources, decision making, reducing institutional bottlenecks and ensuring their mainstream integration.
- 2.2 The framework for women's empowerment and gender equality comprises 4 areas of strategic objectives:

Improve women's human capabilities: This deals with women's and girl's access to health care, life expectancy, nutrition, reproductive health, education, information, training, and other services that enables women to achieve better health and educational outcomes. This also includes women's freedom from violence and coercion.

Increase women's economic benefit: This relates to women's access to or control over productive assets, resources, services, skills, property, employment, income, information, technology, financial services, and other economic opportunities including community resources like land, water, forest etc.

Enhance women's voice and agency: This entails women's role as decision makers in public and private spheres including politics and promotion of their leadership.

Create an enabling environment for women's advancement: The socio-political environment, legal and policy support, and congenial social norms, oversight,

enforcement of laws, regular collection of sex-disaggregated data, capacity building, implementation and monitoring gender strategies are the key in this area.

To implement these strategic objectives, seven action areas have been identified that will contribute to achieving results in these four areas:

1. Increase access to human development opportunities;
2. Enhance access to and control over productive resources;
3. Increase participation and decision making;
4. Establish a conducive legal and regulatory environment;
5. Improve institutional capacity, accountability and oversight;
6. Increase protection and resilience from crisis and shocks;
7. Promote positive social norms

2.3 United Nations adopted Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) for transforming the world-free from hunger, poverty, illiteracy by 2030 in which Goal-5 is “to achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls.” Bangladesh took leading role amongst the developing world in formulating the SDGs and 11 out of 17 goals were put forward by it. Nine targets are set to achieve the goal 5:

1. End all forms of discrimination against all women and girls everywhere;
2. Eliminate all forms of violence against women and girls in the public and private sphere, including trafficking and sexual and other types of exploitation;
3. Eliminate all harmful practices, such as child, early and forced marriage and FGM;
4. Recognize and value unpaid care and domestic work through the provision of public services, infrastructure and social protection policies;
5. Ensure women's full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership;
6. Ensure universal access to sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights;
7. Undertake reforms to give women equal rights to economic resources;
8. Enhance the use of enabling technology, in particular ICT and;
9. Adopt and strengthen sound policies and enforceable legislation for the promotion of gender equality and empowerment of all women and girls at all levels.

Bangladesh has taken coordinated plan and started implementation of Sustainable Development Goals.

- 2.4 The vision for National Women Development Policy, 2011 is to create a society in Bangladesh where men and women will have equal opportunities in all spheres of life and will enjoy all the fundamental rights without discrimination. Women will be able to work alongside men to contribute to the development of the country and participate equally in the mainstream of society and economy. The main goals of the policy are to ensure equality of man and woman in all aspects of state affairs and public life, security for women in all spheres of life, participation of women in economic, political, social, administrative, judicial and all other sectors. The policy provides for elimination of all forms of violence against women and girls, access to safe housing and shelter, taking appropriate steps for disabled women, women of minority community and creating special opportunities for meritorious and creative women for utilizing their talent.
- 2.5 Violence against women is an anathema against her fundamental human rights and this phenomenon is being addressed by the Government through pragmatic policy initiatives. Government has formulated 'Domestic Violence (Protection and Preservation) Rules, 2013' under 'Domestic Violence (Protection and Preservation) Act, 2010' to ensure equal rights and to eliminate all forms of discrimination in all spheres of public life and the State. For the development of women and children, the Government has also formulated National Children Policy, 2011; Children Act, 2013, Prevention and Suppression of Human Trafficking Act, 2012, Hindu Marriage Registration Act, 2012, Early Childhood Care and Development Policy, 2013 and Deoxyribonucleic Acid (DNA) Act, 2014, House-maid Protection Policy, 2015, Child Marriage Prevention Act, 2017.
- 2.6 To provide assistance to the destitute and widow and to raise their livelihood, Government has adopted "National Social Security Strategy, 2015" giving priority to elderly women, poor mothers, widow and vulnerable women. Coverage under social protection is expanded every year with special emphasis on women's need. The Government has formulated two 'National Plan of Action' to implement National Women Development Policy in a bid to eliminate gender discrimination. The Action Plan includes all current and prospective activities for women development by ministries, government agencies, private organizations, NGOs and international organizations. It also contains the time frame for implementation, institutional arrangements and monitoring of these activities. The actions spelt out in the plans are aimed at developing women as an educated and efficient human capital, ensuring active participation of women in the national development initiatives and thus guaranteeing political, social, administrative and economic empowerment of women.

3.0 Progress in the Area of Women's Advancement and Rights

Bangladesh has made considerable progress in the overall political and social development of women. The major achievements, in this area, are as follows:

- 3.1 The Millennium Development Goals (MDG) target of eradicating poverty has already been achieved. According to Household Expenditures and Income Survey (HIES) conducted by Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, head count and hard core poverty in national level declined to 24.3 per cent and 12.9 percent respectively in 2016. Poverty gap index reduced to 5.0 in in the same time. Severity of poverty measured by square poverty gap index also reduced remarkably to 1.5 percent in 2016. However, income inequality measured by Gini-coefficient increased slightly during this period.
- 3.2 Bangladesh has undertaken various measures for improvement of female education in secondary and higher secondary level. As a result, enrolment of girls surpassed boys and the ratio reached to 53.8:46.2 in 2017. At higher secondary level too, considerable progress has been achieved with boys and girls ratio being 51:49. Girl's enrolment rate is higher than that of boys at Madrasa level as well with ratio being 44:56 in 2017. With a view to providing education for all irrespective of rich and poor, preventing the drop out, making education universal, qualitative and productive, 35.42 crore text books have been distributed in 2018 for free among students of whom more than half are female.
- 3.3 Measures have also been taken in health sector targeting women's need and requirement. As a result, life expectancy of female increased to 74.3 years recently, which is higher by 3.4 years than that of male. This gap was less than 2 years in 2007. 'Under 5' mortality rates dropped to 34.2 per thousand live births. Maternal mortality rate has also dropped significantly, to 1.7 per thousand live births. Bangladesh has been awarded by the United Nations for achieving the target of reducing the infant mortality.
- 3.4 Women Entrepreneurship Development Programme named *Joyeeta* promotes products and services of women entrepreneurs across the country with a vision of gradually establishing women friendly infrastructure. It also runs a Program named 'Bangladesh in search of Joyeetas' and rewards a total of 25 women in five categories such as 'economically successful women', 'social development contributor women', 'surviving from violence and making good start women', 'successful in education and service' and 'proud mother' of all the upazilas and districts of 7 divisions through competition. Total of 35 women were selected as Joyeeta and honored. Through this program, struggling women of grassroots level are recognized and rewarded which encourages other women to follow them. Women entrepreneurship fund is created. Department of Women Affairs, Jatiyo

Mohila Sangstha, and Women Chamber of Commerce are providing necessary skill development training for boosting women skill and entrepreneurship.

- 3.5 Rural Development and Co-operative Division (RD CD) is implementing various projects where 70 to 80 percent beneficiaries are women. Living standard of 21.83 lakh women through “One Home One Farm Project” and about 2.65 lakh women through “Comprehensive Village Development Program (Phase-2)” has been improved. Through the Char Livelihoods Program (*Char Jibikayon Prokolpa*), 7.0 lakh women living in the Brahmaputra and the Jamuna River Basin have graduated the poverty line. Economic empowerment of 6.0 lakh women in chars, haors, water logged areas, cyclone prone coastal areas, monga-affected and poverty stricken hilly areas are being ensured through the project titled “Economic Empowerment of the Poorest in Bangladesh” which are contributing significantly to women’s socio-economic advancement. As many as 77 thousand poor women are coming out of the clutch of poverty in every year through the initiatives taken in “Integrated Rural Employment Support Project for the Poor Women (IRESPPW)” project. It is being possible to increase the standard of living of 2.05 lakh and 46 thousand poor women through “*Palli Daridro Bimochon Foundation*” and “Small Farmers Development Foundation” respectively. These are all indicative of the social elevation of women.
- 3.6 Government has expanded the coverage of social safety net programs by providing ‘old age allowance’ to 35 lakh people including 17 lakh elderly women, ‘widows, deserted and distressed women’ allowance for 12.65 lakh destitute women, food assistance and support for income generating activities under VGD for 10.0 lakh working age women, maternity allowance for 6.0 lakh and lactating mother’s allowance for 2.0 lakh poor women and disability allowance for 8.25 lakh poor people. Number of beneficiaries of old age allowance will be increased by 5.0 lakh to 40.0 lakh, widow allowance by 1.35 lakh to 14.0 lakh, maternity allowance by 1.0 lakh to 7.0 lakh, and lactating mother’s allowances by 50 thousand to 2.5 lakh. It is compulsory to include 50 percent women for elderly and disabled allowance as beneficiaries. The amount of benefit for maternity and lactating mother’s allowances will be increased to taka 800 from taka 500 and time of this allowance will be increased to 3 years from existing 2 years.
- 3.7 The participation of women in implementing the Universal Primary Education Programme, hundred percent enrollment and completion of the primary education cycle has been given due priority. To reach this goal and create public awareness, ‘Mother’s Day’ is being celebrated in schools and the opinions of mothers are being used to implement the activities. Besides this, female guardians are actively involved in the School Feeding Programme. The Stipend Policy has been formulated having the provision of sending stipend to the mother of the students. At present, 1 crore 30 lakh students are getting stipend through mobile financial services.

4.0 National Women Development Policy and Gender Responsive Budget

- ❖ For the Implementation of the National Women Development Policy, gender responsive budgeting is an imperative for government to track its own financial resource and for other stakeholders to hold the State accountable on the status of the policy. The Gender Budget Report prepared by the Finance Division alongside the national budget is considered as one of the best global practices. This quantitative and qualitative process of measuring the impact of gender focused budgeting has steered national priorities and interventions in the right direction, managing resources to gender focused programs in different sectors. The gender budget report has also ensured accountability and transparency of government's initiatives for women's advancement. All ministries provide accounts of their achievements and challenges in implementing gender-responsive programs for the fiscal year that show trends and patterns on national level changes in gender equality and women's rights.
- ❖ The Government adopted Medium Term Budget Framework (MTBF) in preparing the national budget. Under MTBF, budget is prepared within a medium-term context and includes estimates and projections of revenues, financing and expenditures respectively for the next fiscal year and two subsequent years. Gender issues are embedded in the MTBF process.
- ❖ Under the MTBF approach, a strategic phase of budget planning is undertaken before the detailed annual budget estimate is prepared. Issuance of BC-1 (Budget Circular) every year in late November is the first step in that strategic phase. In the strategic phase of the budgeting cycle, ministries are required to set out their plans for the next three years. Poverty, gender and climate issues have been incorporated into BC-1 as specific items. To assist ministries' reporting capacities, specific poverty, gender and climate formats and guidelines have been developed by Finance Division. Section 3 (Part-A of BC-1) asks the MTBF ministries to consider how their strategies impact poverty, gender and climate. Form 4 (Part-B of BC-1) asks the ministries to consider the extent of poverty, gender and climate impacts of their programs and projects. An expected outcome of the implementation of the formats and guidelines is to strengthen the quality of strategic reporting and to deepen the MTBF process.
- ❖ Mainly five aspects are considered to make national budget gender sensitive which are as follows:
 - Acknowledging the economic significance of the household sector and the need for public investment in these activities;
 - Acknowledging the fact that the roles, responsibilities, and capabilities of men and women are different and must not be stereotyped with a

preconceived perception and these roles and responsibilities must not be hold rigidly;

- Recognizing that seemingly gender-neutral allocation of budgetary resources can have a different impact on men and women;
- Examining the welfare outcomes of the budget on men and women;
- Creating an enabling condition for women to participate in the economic growth process.

5.0 Progress in the Area of Gender Budgeting

5.1 In the area of gender budgeting, the Government of Bangladesh has made three important developments which are:

Introduction of gender analysis in MTBF process: The government has rolled out Medium Term Budget Framework (MTBF) in formulating the national budget. Gender issues are embedded in the MTBF process. Emphasis is given on the linkages between a ministry's stated objectives and activities and advancement of women's rights. Ministries state in section 3 of BC-1 how their strategic objectives will influence women development. To assess the impact of activities of a Ministry on women's advancement, a set of 14 standards is employed. Access to health care, education, employment, training, social safety, empowerment, increasing social status, access to law and justice etc. are included in the standard.

RCGP Model (Data base): Finance Division developed the Recurrent, Capital, Gender and Poverty (RCGP) Model or database where all expenditure items are disaggregated to indicate what percentage of allocation goes to benefit women. The gender and poverty proportioned percentage data for both recurrent and development budget is estimated separately from a standard defined logic incorporated in database. The proportion of women workforce serves as the basis for computing women's allocation in non-development budget. For the development projects, a percentage is assigned to each indicating what proportion of total expenditure will benefit directly women, based on the 14 standards for assessing gender impact. Allocation for women development for both recurrent and development budgets are generated and presented in the gender budget report for ministries and divisions.

Gender Budget Report: Each year, the government is presenting to the national parliament a gender budget report that explains the policies and strategies for advancement of women, activities of various ministries/divisions that have implications on women development, KPIs connected with female welfare attained, major achievement for uplifting women's rights, allocation for women development etc. In the first year (FY2009-10) such analysis was done for four ministries. Gender budget report of 2018-19 fiscal years contains analysis of women's advancement of

43 Ministries/ Divisions. Budgetary estimates of gender budget reports from 2009-10 till date are presented in the following table.

Table-2: Information on Gender Budget Report

Fiscal Year	Total Budget (crore taka)	Allocation for Women Dev. (crore taka)	Allocation for women compared to total Budget (percent)	Allocation for women compared to GDP (percent)	No. of Ministries/ Divisions in Gender Budget Report
2009-10	110523	27248	24.65	3.95	4
2010-11	130011	34221	26.32	4.36	10
2011-12	161213	42154	26.15	4.61	20
2012-13	189231	54302	28.68	5.23	25
2013-14	216222	59756	27.64	5.06	40
2014-15	239668	64087	26.74	4.23	40
2015-16	264565	71872	27.17	4.16	40
2016-17	340604	92765	27.25	4.73	40
2017-18	400266	112019	27.99	5.04	43
2018-19	464580	137742	29.65	5.43	43

Source: RCGP Data Base, Finance Division. Figure from 2009-10 to 2016-17 are Revised Estimates, 2017-18 Budget Estimate

Allocation for women development was Taka 27,248 crore in 2009-10, which increased to Taka 112019 crore in 2017-18. Average annual growth rate in last 7 years was around 22 percent. Allocation for women's advancement compared to total budget is 23 percent during this period. In the fiscal year 2018-19, allocation for women development is Taka 1,37,742 crore which is 29.65 percent of total budget and 5.43 percent of GDP.

- 5.2 In the present report forty-three ministries have been divided into three sections. They are (i) Empowering Women and Enhancing their Social Dignity, (ii) Improving Women's Productivity and Participation in Labor Market and (iii) Widening Women's Effective Access to General Public Sector Services and Income Generating Activities. In section (i) activities of nine gender focused ministries are analyzed. Section (ii) analysis of nine ministries which have comparatively less focused. Finally, section (iii) reflects the activities of twenty-five ministries in relation to women's advancement. The reports of nine ministries in section one however, have been presented elaborately keeping in mind their multifarious involvement in different sectors for women's development. Particularly these reports attempted to reveal the importance of the Ministries in the national economy and society and constitutional and policy obligations at the beginning. Subsequently the functions of the concerned ministries and their relevant policies with special attention to their focus on women's advancement have been discussed. Then ministry specific national policy directives in relation to women's advancement are identified as mentioned in the National Women Development Policy 2011 and in Five Year Plan. Hence, these directives are

compared with the strategic objectives and the activities of the ministry to identify gender gaps in the activities of the ministry. Then a set of recommendations are put forward to address these gaps. Some of these recommendations could be addressed simply through engendering current activities of the ministry and the rests could be attained through further initiatives.

5.3 The ministries included in the Gender Budget Report 2017-18 are as follows:

Section 1: Empowering Women and Enhancing their Social Dignity

1. Ministry of Primary and Mass Education
2. Secondary and Higher Education division
3. Technical and Madrasah Education division
4. Health Services Division
5. Medical Education and Family Welfare Division
6. Ministry of Women and Children Affairs
7. Rural Development and Co-operatives Division
8. Ministry of Agriculture
9. Ministry of Fisheries and Livestock

Section 2: Improving Women's Productivity and Participation in Labour Market

1. Ministry of Social Welfare
2. Ministry of Labour and Employment
3. Ministry of Youth and Sports
4. Local Government Division
5. Ministry of Textiles and Jute
6. Ministry of Water Resources
7. Ministry of Disaster Management and Relief
8. Ministry of Expatriates' Welfare and Overseas Employment
9. Ministry of Chittagong Hill Tracts Affairs

Section 3: Widening Women's Effective Access to General Public Sector Services and Income Generating Activities

1. Office of the Prime Minister
2. Election Commission
3. Ministry of Public Administration
4. Ministry of Commerce
5. Law and Justice Division
6. Public Safety Division
7. Security Services Division
8. Ministry of Science and Technology
9. Information and Communications Technology Division

10. Ministry of Housing and Public Works
11. Ministry of Information
12. Ministry of Cultural Affairs
13. Ministry of Religious Affairs
14. Ministry of Industries
15. Energy and Mineral Resources Division
16. Ministry of Environment and Forest
17. Ministry of Land
18. Ministry of Food
19. Road Transport and Highways Division
20. Ministry of Railways
21. Ministry of Shipping
22. Ministry of Civil Aviation and Tourism
23. Posts and Telecommunications Division
24. Power Division
25. Ministry of Liberation War Affairs