NEWSLETTER

UN Women Bangladeshi
July-December 2024

PAVING THE WAY FOR GENDER EQUALITY: MULTISTAKEHOLDER CONSULTATION ON BEIJING+30 NATIONAL REVIEW

At a glance: Participants at the multi-stakeholder consultation on Beijing+30 national review. Photo: UN Women.

The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, adopted at the Fourth World Conference on Women in 1995, remains a visionary blueprint for equal rights for all women and girls, addressing critical areas such as education, political participation, economic empowerment, and the elimination of violence against women and girls. Women's rights organizations and civil society organizations (CSOs) worked with their respective governments for over two years to forge this political compact in favour of gender equality, women's empowerment and women's rights. Its adoption set the normative standard for action on gender equality and women's rights in every Member State of the United Nations. The forthcoming 30th anniversary of the Declaration – in 2025 – underscores the urgency of advancing beyond these commitments, with the aim to implement the corresponding actions and ensure the full delivery of Agenda 2030 within the remaining five years.

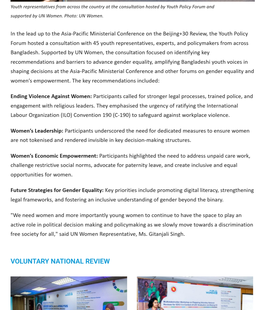
UN Women, in collaboration with Ministry of Women and Children Affairs (MoWCA), hosted a "Multistakeholder Consultation on Beijing+30 Review" on 11 November 2024, to evaluate Bangladesh's progress on the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action ahead of its 30th anniversary. The consultation brought together civil society and grassroots leaders, women-led organizations, and government ministries to discuss the 12 critical areas of concern of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, emphasising policy implementation and accountability. The national review report was presented by MoWCA highlighting the country's achievements, including policy reforms like the National Women Development Policy (NWD) 2030 and the Climate Change and Gender Action Plan, as well as initiatives such as "Tottho Apa" and "She Power" to bridge the gender digital divide. The presentation also emphasised the persisting challenges including entrenched discriminatory norms, employment gaps, and climate vulnerabilities.

Participants proposed actionable recommendations, including improving interventions to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), enacting the Sexual Harassment law, amending the Domestic Violence Act, providing comprehensive sexuality education in schools to address gender stereotypes, and strengthening mechanisms to address tech-facilitated gender-based violence (GBV). A vibrant "Women's Walk for the Future" with messages from participants symbolized their collective aspirations for a gender-equal future.

Announcing plans for rapid-response mechanisms to address GBV and initiatives targeting behaviour change, Honourable Adviser to MoWCA, Ms. Shameen S. Murshid noted that: "Children and youth are our future, and we must create inclusive spaces that amplify their voices and address their needs. Men must engage in these conversations, understand the struggles women face, and actively share the responsibility for achieving equality."

UN Women Representative, Ms. Gitanjali Singh, called for urgent collective action, stating: "Women and girls cannot wait 200 years for equality. A gender-equal world is within our reach if we choose it." This consultation reinforced Bangladesh's commitment to inclusive processes that ensure the voices of youth and grassroots communities are integral to the movement for gender equality. Watch a video.

YOUTH VOICES ON THE COMPREHENSIVE NATIONAL REVIEW REPORT FOR BEIJING+30



Youth representatives from across the country at the consultation hosted by Youth Policy Forum and supported by UN Women. Photo: UN Women.

In the lead up to the Asia-Pacific Ministerial Conference on the Beijing+30 Review, the Youth Policy Forum hosted a consultation with 45 youth representatives, experts, and policymakers from across Bangladesh. Supported by UN Women, the consultation focused on identifying key recommendations and barriers to advance gender equality, amplifying Bangladeshi youth voices in shaping decisions at the Asia-Pacific Ministerial Conference and other forums on gender equality and women's empowerment. The key recommendations included:

Ending Violence Against Women: Participants called for stronger legal processes, trained police, and engagement with religious leaders. They emphasised the urgency of ratifying the International Labour Organization (ILO) Convention 190 (C-190) to safeguard against workplace violence.

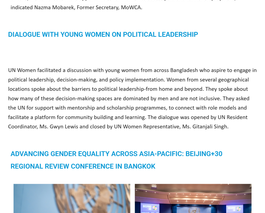
Women's Leadership: Participants underscored the need for dedicated measures to ensure women are not tokenised and rendered invisible in key decision-making structures.

Women's Economic Empowerment: Participants highlighted the need to address unpaid care work, challenge restrictive social norms, advocate for paternity leave, and create inclusive and equal opportunities for women.

Future Strategies for Gender Equality: Key priorities include promoting digital literacy, strengthening legal frameworks, and fostering an inclusive understanding of gender beyond the binary.

"We need women and more importantly young women to continue to have the space to play an active role in political decision making and policymaking as we slowly move towards a discrimination free society for all," said UN Women Representative, Ms. Gitanjali Singh.

VOLUNTARY NATIONAL REVIEW



(Left to right): Ms. Asma Akhter, Deputy Director, Demography and Health Wing, Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics delivering her remarks; Ms. Dilara Begum, Joint Secretary, MoWCA delivering her speech. Photo: UN Women.

In its commitment to achieve the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the Government of Bangladesh will present its third Voluntary National Review (VNR) to the High-Level Political Forum (HLPF) in 2025. This milestone offers a critical opportunity to evaluate the country's progress and address gaps in implementing the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Recognising the need for a gender-responsive VNR process, the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS) and UN Women hosted a consultation workshop on 3 October 2024. The workshop underscored the role of robust gender data in shaping, tracking, and guiding progress towards SDG 5 on gender equality. Attended by nearly 200 representatives from government, CSOs, development partners, academia, and youth, the consultation served as a platform for collaborative dialogue on gender data needs.

Key discussions highlighted regular data collection and analysis on violence against women and girls, intersectional approaches to uphold the Leave No One Behind principle, improved coordination between CSOs and government actors for mainstreaming and using gender data, and enabling environment and sustained financing for gender statistics.

Building on these discussions; MoWCA and UN Women held a Multistakeholder Workshop on 15 October 2024. With over 60 participants from line ministries, CSOs, youth, development partners, and United Nations agencies, the workshop focused on actionable recommendations for advancing SDG 5 in the context of Bangladesh's graduation from a least developed country (LDC) in 2026 and the Beijing+30 anniversary in 2025. Discussions centred on: checks and balances to improve gender data harmonisation and reporting; intersectional and feminist approaches to producing and using gender data; strengthening women's voice, choice, and agency by ratifying ILO C190 and withdrawing reservations to CEDAW (Articles 2 and 16.1(c)); effective implementation and reform of GBV-related laws and anti-discrimination legislation; and enhanced coordination across ministries and CSOs to advance gender equality and women's empowerment.

These initiatives reflect Bangladesh's commitment to ensure data-driven, inclusive, and actionable pathways towards gender equality as it approaches critical milestones. "Data must be disaggregated and expanded to include the voices and stories that reflect the lived realities of women, girls, and gender diverse people," noted Gitanjali Singh, Representative, UN Women Bangladesh.

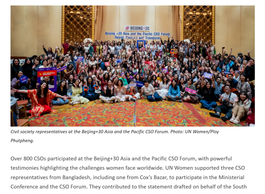
"Without sufficient resources, achieving gender equality is not possible. So, it is essential to invest in gender statistics. Only then can we effectively implement gender-sensitive policies and achieve meaningful progress," added Asma Akhter, Deputy Director, Demography and Health Wing, BBS.

"The unequal distribution of unpaid care work acts as a significant barrier to women's participation in the labour market, as it remains both unrecognized and uncompensated. By reducing the burden of care, we can create more opportunities for women to access paid and formal employment," indicated Nazma Mobarek, Former Secretary, MoWCA.

DIALOGUE WITH YOUNG WOMEN ON POLITICAL LEADERSHIP

UN Women facilitated a discussion with young women from across Bangladesh who aspire to engage in political leadership, decision-making, and policy implementation. Women from several geographical locations spoke about the barriers to political leadership from home and beyond. They spoke about how many of these decision-making spaces are dominated by men and are not inclusive. They asked the UN for support with mentorship and scholarship programmes, to connect with role models and facilitate a platform for community building and learning. The dialogue was opened by UN Resident Coordinator, Ms. Gwyn Lewis and closed by UN Women Representative, Ms. Gitanjali Singh.

ADVANCING GENDER EQUALITY ACROSS ASIA-PACIFIC: BEIJING+30 REGIONAL REVIEW CONFERENCE IN BANGKOK



(Left to right): UN Women Executive Director, Ms. Sima Bahous delivering opening remarks at the Beijing+30 Ministerial Conference; Participants at the Beijing+30 Ministerial Conference. Photo: UN Women/Pisy Phuitpheng.

The Asia-Pacific Ministerial Conference on the Beijing+30 Review, organized by UN Women Asia and the Pacific Regional Office, in partnership with the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), took place from 19–21 November 2024. The conference brought together over 1,000 delegates from governments, civil society and youth groups, the private sector and academia from around the region for the three-day conference. The Ministerial Conference set out to provide inputs into the 69th session of the Commission on the Status of Women, to be held in March 2025, and into the global review of progress made towards implementation of the 1995 Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. Participants reflected on progress made, identified challenges, good practices and lessons learned, and built regional consensus on priority actions going forward.

In her opening address, UN Women Executive Director, Ms. Sima Bahous emphasised the urgency of advancing gender equality: "As we look ahead, we must recommit to the principles of the Beijing Platform for Action. Women and girls must remain at the heart of our economic, social, and political agendas. Bold, forward-looking actions are essential to overcome today's challenges and create a thriving future for generations to come."

Read her Opening Remarks.

The report highlights the need of accelerated action across Asia and the Pacific to meet the ambitions of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the 2030 Agenda, including SDG 5 on gender equality and all other SDGs. While progress has been made in women's education, health, and, to some extent, political representation, overall gender equality is stagnating' or even regressing in areas like labor force participation. Women and girls in the region continue to face discriminatory norms, gender-based violence, and disproportionate care burdens. Political will remains insufficient, and intersecting crises—including the COVID-19 pandemic, the triple planetary crisis (climate change, pollution, and biodiversity loss), food and energy insecurity, and digital divides—have disproportionately impacted women, particularly the most vulnerable.

Please find the report here. For more information, please visit: Asia-Pacific Ministerial Conference on the Beijing+30 Review.

VOICES FROM THE FRONTLINES: BEIJING+30 ASIA AND THE PACIFIC CSO FORUM

Civil society representatives at the Beijing+30 Asia and the Pacific CSO Forum. Photo: UN Women/Pisy Phuitpheng.

Over 800 CSOs participated at the Beijing+30 Asia and the Pacific CSO Forum, with powerful testimonies highlighting the challenges women face worldwide. UN Women supported three CSO representatives from Bangladesh, including one from Cox's Bazar, to participate in the Ministerial Conference and the CSO Forum. They contributed to the statement drafted on behalf of the South Asia Caucus, which demanded strong political commitment and action to:

- *Prevent and respond to all forms of sexual and gender-based violence in online, private, public and work spaces;*
- *Ensure effective implementation of laws;*
- *Eliminate all discriminatory laws and policies; and*
- *Enact gender just laws and legislation decriminalising sex work and addressing marital rape, and END IMPUNITY NOW!!!*

The Asia-Pacific Civil Society Consultations Report submitted by the Beijing +30 Civil Society Steering Committee is available here. View photos and watch a video on the Beijing+30 CSO forum highlights.

BANGLADESH PARTICIPATES IN THE ASIA PACIFIC BEIJING+30 MINISTERIAL REVIEW CONFERENCE

(Left to right): The Bangladesh Delegation headed by the Honourable Adviser of MoWCA, Ms. Sharmin S. Murshid, at the Beijing+30 Ministerial Review Conference ; Honourable Adviser in a meeting with the CSO representatives from Bangladesh and personnel from Bangladesh Embassy in Thailand. Photo: UN Women/Phu Phuttpheng and Shararat Islam.

The Bangladesh Government delegation, led by the Honourable Adviser of MoWCA, Ms. Sharmin S. Murshid, participated in the conference, where she delivered the country statement on 19 November 2024. In her speech, she outlined key priorities for Accelerated Action: 1. Ending Gender-Based Violence 2. Closing the Economic Participation Gap 3. Climate Resilience for Women 4. Promoting Digital Inclusion 5. Strengthening Legal Frameworks. Read her Full Statement.

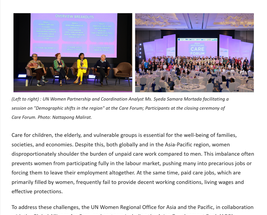
The Adviser also joined a panel discussion on "Accelerating gender equality though gender-transformative actions that bridge divides and smoothen key transitions" moderated by Ms. Christine Arab, the UN Women Regional Director for Asia and the Pacific on 19 November 2024.

BEIJING+30 REGIONAL PRACTICAL GENDER-RESPONSIVE MEDIA WORKSHOP

(Left to right) Journalists and UN Women staff from Asia and the Pacific at the media workshop; Bangladeshi journalist, Ms. Sushmita Preetha, from The Daily Star, at the press conference. Photo: UN Women/Pathumporn Thongking.

The Beijing+30 Ministerial Conference media workshop brought together 30 journalists from the Asia and the Pacific region to deepen their understanding on data and evidence-based reporting, including harmful gender stereotypes perpetuated through media messages. On behalf of the media cohort, Bangladeshi journalist, Ms. Sushmita Preetha, from The Daily Star drafted and shared a media declaration at the press conference on 21 November. The declaration focused on reaffirming their commitment to advancing women's journalists across Asia and the Pacific by advocating for greater representation, including in leadership, and amplifying historically marginalized voices. The 30 journalists who participated in the conference will continue working together to concretise the media declaration, to be presented and formalised at the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) conference in 2025. Read a special op-ed on Beijing+30 We are backtracking on our commitment to gender equality?

TRANSFORMING CARE: REGIONAL CARE FORUM



(Left to right) : UN Women Partnership and Coordination Analyst Ms. Syeda Samara Murtada facilitating a session on "Demographic shifts in the region" at the Care Forum; Participants at the closing ceremony of Care Forum. Photo: Nattapong Malirat.

Care for children, the elderly, and vulnerable groups is essential for the well-being of families, societies, and economies. Despite this, both globally and in the Asia-Pacific region, women disproportionately shoulder the burden of unpaid care work compared to men. This imbalance often prevents women from participating fully in the labour market, pushing many into precarious jobs or forcing them to leave their employment altogether. At the same time, paid care jobs, which are primarily filled by women, frequently fail to provide decent working conditions, living wages and effective protections.

To address these challenges, the UN Women Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific, in collaboration with the Global Alliance for Care, and partners including the Asian Development Bank (ADB), International Development Research Centre (IDRC), International Finance Corporation (IFC), Visa Foundation, ESCAP, and Ayat Care, convened the 2024 Asia-Pacific Care Forum.

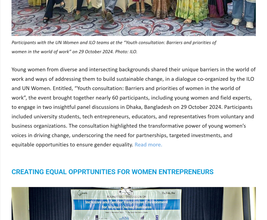
Over three days, the Asia-Pacific Care Forum brought together diverse stakeholders, including representatives from governments, the private sector, civil society, and international organizations, to discuss key topics, such as job creation in the care sector, the nexus between care and climate change, financing care-driven models, and strengthening social protection linkages. Bangladesh was prominently featured throughout the Asia-Pacific Care Forum, with participation from the private sector and development organizations, including Ayat Care, Boojnc, Parents Care, BRAC Institute of Educational Development (IED), Oxfam, and ILO.

UN Women Bangladesh organized two high-impact sessions:

- A session on demographic changes in the region, featured panelists from ILO and United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and provided evidence-based insights on the care economy.
- A session on social norms, moderated by Ms. Paro Chaujar, Policy Advisor, Social Norms, Research and Data Section, UN Women, included diverse voices from Oxfam Bangladesh, the Sex Workers Network in Bangladesh, and a mayor from Nepal, identifying cultural barriers and opportunities for reform in the care sector.

The Asia-Pacific Care Forum demonstrated increased stakeholder engagement and knowledge-sharing, highlighted by the active participation of private sector partners, development organizations from Bangladesh. Bangladesh's leadership in advancing the care agenda was recognized through multiple references and session highlights, showcasing its pivotal role in regional discussions. Overall, the forum successfully fostered dialogue, knowledge-sharing, and partnership-building, with Bangladesh playing a key role in advancing the regional agenda on care.

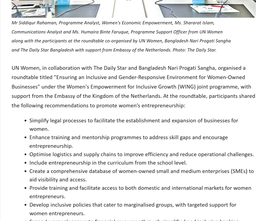
BREAKING BARRIERS: YOUNG WOMEN ADVOCATE FOR CHANGE IN THE WORKPLACE



Participants with the UN Women and ILO teams at the "Youth consultation: Barriers and priorities of women in the world of work" on 29 October 2024. Photo: ILO.

Young women from diverse and intersecting backgrounds shared their unique barriers in the world of work and ways of addressing them to build sustainable change, in a dialogue co-organized by the ILO and UN Women. Entitled, "Youth consultation: Barriers and priorities of women in the world of work", the event brought together nearly 60 participants, including young women and field experts, to engage in two insightful panel discussions in Dhaka, Bangladesh on 29 October 2024. Participants included university students, tech entrepreneurs, educators, and representatives from voluntary and business organizations. The consultation highlighted the transformative power of young women's voices in driving change, underscoring the need for collaboration between governments, investors, and equitable opportunities to ensure gender equality. Read more.

CREATING EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES FOR WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS



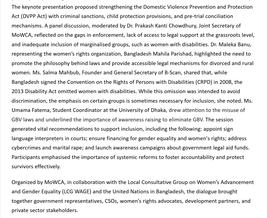
Mr Siddiqur Rahaman, Programme Analyst, Women's Economic Empowerment, Ms. Shararat Islam, Communications Analyst and Ms. Humaira Binte Faruque, Programme Support Officer from UN Women along with the participants at the roundtable co-organized by UN Women, Bangladesh Nari Progati Sangha and The Daily Star Bangladesh with support from Embassy of the Netherlands. Photo: The Daily Star.

UN Women, in collaboration with The Daily Star and Bangladesh Nari Progati Sangha, organised a roundtable titled "Ensuring an Inclusive and Gender-Responsive Environment for Women-Owned Businesses" under the Women's Empowerment for Inclusive Growth (WING) joint programme, with support from the Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands. At the roundtable, participants shared the following recommendations to promote women's entrepreneurship:

- Simplify legal processes to facilitate the establishment and expansion of businesses for women.
- Enhance training and mentorship programmes to address skill gaps and encourage entrepreneurship.
- Optimise logistics and supply chains to improve efficiency and reduce operational challenges.
- Include entrepreneurship in the curriculum from the school level.
- Create a comprehensive database of women-owned small and medium enterprises (SMEs) to aid visibility and access.
- Provide training and facilitate access to both domestic and international markets for women entrepreneurs.
- Develop inclusive policies that cater to marginalised groups, with targeted support for women entrepreneurs.
- Expand women's access to financial resources through simplified and inclusive banking processes.
- Shift focus from traditional to non-traditional products for women entrepreneurs.

Read the full supplement.

16 DAYS OF ACTIVISM TO END GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE



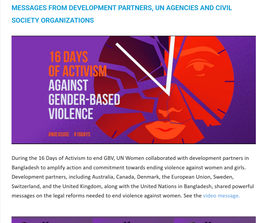
At a glance: National Dialogue on 16 Days of Activism against Gender-based Violence. Photo: UN Women/Mehedi Rahman.

NATIONAL DIALOGUE HIGHLIGHTS KEY STEPS TO STRENGTHEN LEGAL FRAMEWORKS TO PREVENT VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS

The 2024 16 Days of Activism against Gender-based Violence (GBV) was launched with a 'National Dialogue on Strengthening the Legal Framework to Prevent Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG)', emphasising accountability and multi-stakeholder collaboration to combat GBV effectively. The keynote presentation proposed strengthening the Domestic Violence Prevention and Protection Act (DVPP Act) with criminal sanctions, child protection provisions, and pre-trial conciliation mechanisms. A panel discussion, moderated by Dr. Prakash Kanti Chowdhury, Joint Secretary of MoWCA, reflected on the gaps in enforcement, lack of access to legal support at the grassroots level, and inadequate inclusion of marginalised groups, such as women with disabilities. Dr. Maleka Banu, representing the women's rights organisations, Bangladesh Mahila Parishad, highlighted the need to promote the philosophy behind laws and provide accessible legal mechanisms for divorced and rural women. Ms. Salma Mahbub, Founder and General Secretary of B-Can, shared that, while Bangladesh signed the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) in 2008, the 2013 Disability Act continues with discriminations. While this omission was intended to avoid discrimination, the emphasis on certain groups is sometimes necessary for inclusion, she noted. Ms. Umama Fatema, Student Coordinator at the University of Dhaka, drew attention to the misuse of GBV laws and underlined the importance of awareness raising to eliminate GBV. The session generated vital recommendations to support inclusion, including the following: appoint sign language interpreters in courts; ensure financing for gender equality and women's rights; address cybercrimes and marital rape; and launch awareness campaigns about government legal aid funds. Participants emphasised the importance of systemic reforms to foster accountability and protect survivors effectively.

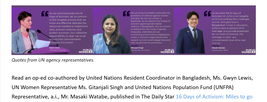
Organized by MoWCA, in collaboration with the Local Consultative Group on Women's Advancement and Gender Equality (LCG WAGE) and the United Nations in Bangladesh, the dialogue brought together government representatives, CSOs, women's rights advocates, development partners, and private sector stakeholders.

The National Dialogue reaffirmed Bangladesh's dedication to aligning national strategies with global frameworks, like SDG 5 and the Beijing Declaration, and called on all sectors of society to translate the recommendations into action, fostering a violence-free future for women and girls in all their diversity across Bangladesh. Read more.



Quotes from the Government, Development Partners, UN and Civil Society representatives.

MESSAGES FROM DEVELOPMENT PARTNERS, UN AGENCIES AND CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATIONS



During the 16 Days of Activism to end GBV, UN Women collaborated with development partners in Bangladesh to amplify action and commitment towards ending violence against women and girls. Development partners, including Australia, Canada, Denmark, the European Union, Sweden, Switzerland, and the United Kingdom, along with the United Nations in Bangladesh, shared powerful messages on the legal reforms needed to end violence against women. See the video message.

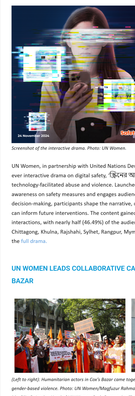
Quotes from UN agency representatives.

Read an op-ed co-authored by United Nations Resident Coordinator in Bangladesh, Ms. Gwyn Lewis, UN Women Representative Ms. Gitanjali Singh and United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) Representative, a.i., Mr. Masaki Watabe, published in The Daily Star 16 Days of Activism: Miles to go

30 years after Beijing Declaration.

Read a web-story on the critical need for a Sexual Harassment Law in Bangladesh: A step forward for women's safety in Bangladesh: The push for sexual harassment legislation.

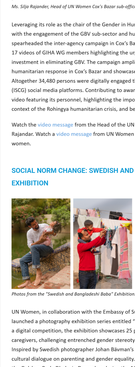
SAFETYFORHER.NET: INTERACTIVE DRAMA ON DIGITAL SAFETY



Screenshot of the interactive drama. Photo: UN Women.

UN Women, in partnership with United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), launched the first-ever interactive drama on digital safety, ছিন্নের আড়ালে (Behind the Screen), addressing technology-facilitated abuse and violence. Launched during the 16-Days of Activism, the drama raises awareness on safety measures and engages audience through dynamic storytelling. Using interactive decision-making, participants shape the narrative, offering insights into behavioural patterns that can inform future interventions. The content gained a total of 483,575 views and 230,753 interactions, with nearly half (46.49%) of the audience in the 18–24 year age group from Dhaka, Chittagong, Khulna, Rajshahi, Sylhet, Rangpur, Mymensingh and Barishal. Watch the Trailer. Watch the full drama.

UN WOMEN LEADS COLLABORATIVE CAMPAIGN AGAINST GBV IN COX'S BAZAR

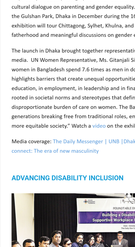


(Left to right): Humanitarian actors in Cox's Bazar came together to rally for action to end all forms of gender-based violence. Photo: UN Women/Maqlasur Rahman Shana; Screenshot of video message from Ms. Silja Rajander, Head of UN Women Cox's Bazar sub-office.

Leveraging its role as the chair of the Gender in Humanitarian Action Working Group (GiHA WG) and with the engagement of the GBV sub-sector and humanitarian actors more broadly, UN Women spearheaded the inter-agency campaign in Cox's Bazar and at the camp-level. The campaign featured 17 videos of GiHA WG members highlighting the urgent need to end impunity and increase investment in eliminating GBV. The campaign amplified the voices of different actors involved in the humanitarian response in Cox's Bazar and showcased their commitment to end all forms of GBV. Altogether 34,480 persons were digitally engaged through the Inter-Sector Coordination Group (ISCG) social media platforms. Contributing to awareness raising, UN Women Sub-Office launched a video featuring its personnel, highlighting the importance of working together to combat GBV in the context of the Rohingya humanitarian crisis, and beyond.

Watch the video message from the Head of the UN Women sub-office in Cox's Bazar, Ms. Silja Rajander. Watch a video message from UN Women Cox's Bazar personnel on ending violence against women.

SOCIAL NORM CHANGE: SWEDISH AND BANGLADESHI BABA PHOTO EXHIBITION



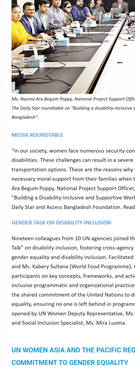
Photos from the "Swedish and Bangladeshi Baba" Exhibition. Photo: UN Women/Dot Birth

UN Women, in collaboration with the Embassy of Sweden in Bangladesh, UNDP, and UNFPA, launched a photography exhibition series entitled "Bangladeshi and Swedish Baba". Selected through a digital competition, the exhibition showcases 25 powerful images of Bangladeshi fathers as active caregivers, challenging entrenched gender stereotypes and advocates for equitable caregiving roles. Inspired by Swedish photographer Johan Bävman's celebrated work, the exhibition emphasizes cross-cultural dialogue on parenting and gender equality. The first exhibition of the series was launched at the Gulshan Park, Dhaka in December during the 16 Days of Activism against GBV. In 2025, the exhibition will tour Chittagong, Sylhet, Khulna, and Dhaka, continuing to promote positive fatherhood and meaningful discussions on gender equality.

The launch in Dhaka brought together representatives from development partners, civil society and media. UN Women Representative, Ms. Gitanjali Singh, said, "The 2023 Time Use Survey reveals that women in Bangladesh spend 7.6 times as men in domestic work. This is not just a number; it highlights barriers that create unequal opportunities and outcomes for women and girls in education, in employment, in leadership and in financial security across their life. This imbalance is rooted in societal norms and stereotypes that define fathering through an outdated lens, placing a disproportionate burden of care on women. The Bangladesh Baba exhibition showcases men across generations breaking free from traditional roles, embracing more involved parenting to create a more equitable society." Watch a video on the exhibition opening.

Media coverage: The Daily Messenger | UNB |Dhaka Tribune |Daily Star: When men cook, care, and connect: The era of new masculinity

ADVANCING DISABILITY INCLUSION



Ms. Nazma Ara Begum Poppy, National Project Support Officer, UN Women along with the participants at The Daily Star roundtable on "Building a disability-inclusive and supportive workplace culture in Bangladesh".

MEDIA ROUNDTABLE

"In our society, women face numerous security concerns, which are exacerbated for women with disabilities. These challenges can result in a severe shortage of appropriate accommodation and transportation options. These are the reasons why women with disabilities do not receive the necessary moral support from their families when they wish to enter the workforce." said Ms. Nazma Ara Begum Poppy, National Project Support Officer, UN Women Bangladesh at the media roundtable "Building a Disability-Inclusive and Supportive Workplace Culture in Bangladesh" organised by The Daily Star and Access Bangladesh Foundation. Read the full supplement.

GENDER TALK ON DISABILITY INCLUSION

Nineteen colleagues from 10 UN agencies joined the "Gender Equality Theme Group (GETG) Gender Talk" on disability inclusion, fostering cross-agency collaboration to strengthen the intersection of gender equality and disability inclusion. Facilitated by Ms. Nazma Ara Begum Poppy (UN Women) and Ms. Kaberi Sultana (World Food Programme), the session served as an orientation for participants on key concepts, frameworks, and actionable steps to address barriers and enable inclusive programmatic and organizational practices on disability inclusion. This initiative reinforced the shared commitment of the United Nations to disability inclusion as a vital component of gender equality, ensuring no one is left behind in programmatic and operational efforts. The session was opened by UN Women Deputy Representative, Ms. Navanita Sinha and closed by ILO Gender Equality and Social Inclusion Specialist, Ms. Mira Luoma.

UN WOMEN ASIA AND THE PACIFIC REGIONAL DIRECTOR'S VISIT HIGHLIGHTS COMMITMENT TO GENDER EQUALITY

At a glance: UN Women Regional Director's visit to Bangladesh. Photo: UN Women.

Ms. Christine Arab, Regional Director, UN Women Asia and the Pacific, visited Bangladesh from 3-5 September 2024. During her visit, she met with advisers to the Interim Government, civil society representatives, the UN country team, and development partners, including the Australian High Commission, the European Union, and the Embassy of Sweden, reaffirming UN Women's commitment to support Bangladesh in advancing women's empowerment and gender equality. She also visited a UN Women Multi-Purpose Women's Center in the Rohingya refugee camp, where she listened to Rohingya women, girls and gender-diverse individuals about their hopes and concerns for a better future.

CHAMPIONING WOMEN'S ROLE IN COMMUNITY-LED INITIATIVES FOR CLIMATE ACTION

(Left to right): Around 100 women-led CSOs participated at the Annual Community of Practice Network Convention held at Dhaka. Head of Development Cooperation at the Embassy of Sweden in Bangladesh, Ms. Maria Strömbaeck; Honourable Adviser of the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change, Ms. Syeda Rizwana Hasan; CSO leader Ms. Shaikh Begum, ED of Manabik Unnayan Sangstha (MUS); Ms. Shaheen Anam; UN Women Representative, Ms. Gitanjali Singh and UN Women Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) and Climate Change Programme Specialist, Ms. Diruba Haider. Photo: MSF.

Five local women leaders received the "Women's Role in Combating Climate Change Impact Award 2024," for their pioneering, community-driven climate adaptations initiatives at the "Annual Community of Practice (CoP) Network Convention" held on 6 October 2024 in Dhaka. Organized by the Manusher Jonno Foundation (MJF) with support from UN Women, the event brought together young women leaders and experts to strengthen women's leadership in climate resilience and promote collaboration among civil society organizations.

Ms. Shafali Begum, from Dewangani, Jamalpur District, was honoured for her work as a midwife and founder of a community-based organization supporting pregnant women during emergencies and ensuring safe childbirth in floods. Ms. Rahima Khatun, also from Dewangani, was recognized for her leadership as a Community Disaster Response Volunteer in crisis response during floods and cold waves. Ms. Sunoti Begum, from Dewangani, was celebrated for establishing a Personal Seed Bank to promote food security and build food resilience within her community. Ms. Rowshan Akter, from Chakaria, Cox's Bazar, was acknowledged for her leadership in large-scale tree-plantation, promoting climate-adaptive agriculture and raising awareness on sustainable farming practices; and Ms. Roshna Khatun, from Panchgachhi, Kurigram, was recognised for founding the Kuripata handicrom artisan group, empowering around 40 women and girls with skills training and economic opportunities to support their families and build resilience.

"I have been volunteering for my community since adolescence, yet I have never received recognition for my efforts," said Khatun, after receiving her award. This moment is incredibly meaningful to me, as it confirms that I have truly made a positive impact in my community. I started a small initiative with only 10 women and adolescent girls, and today we are a group of 50. I want women from every household to be empowered."

Ms. Syeda Rizwana Hasan, Honourable Adviser of the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change, highlighted the gender inequities in climate discussions. "The chapter on gender is always placed last in policy documents," she noted, stressing the often-overlooked role of women who bear a disproportionate burden of the impact of climate change. She said developed nations have a responsibility to fund climate resilience efforts in developing countries but often fall short. However, "Sweden is one of the countries that shares the appropriate amount, as per the loss and damage policy," she added.

The Head of Development Cooperation at the Embassy of Sweden in Bangladesh, Ms. Maria Strömbaeck highlighted the critical need for gender-responsive policies and community-driven initiatives to empower women and marginalized groups to take a leading role in climate adaptation efforts. She concluded her speech by reiterating the Embassy of Sweden's commitment to supporting Bangladesh in its fight against climate change, while also encouraging local leaders to take bold steps in ensuring that women's voices are at the forefront of climate resilience strategies.

Appreciating the role of grassroots women leaders, UN Women Representative, Ms. Gitanjali Singh, said: "Bangladesh has demonstrated that transformative adaptation can only happen through grassroots women's leadership. True transformation in climate resilience will only be possible if women's perspectives are integrated into policymaking at all levels."

Moving forward, UN Women will strengthen Women's Climate Action Network (WCAN) to amplify the voice and policy impact of women-led organizations.

Read more.

WOMEN'S CLIMATE ACTION NETWORK (WCAN) LAUNCHED

A Women's Climate Action Network (WCAN) was launched at the "Annual Community of Practice (CoP) Network Convention" in October 2024 under the Empower Programme. The network comprises 100 women-led civil society organizations (CSOs) dedicated to climate action and promoting gender-responsive solutions to climate challenges. This grassroots network aims to provide a unified voice to address violence and social discrimination exacerbated by climate change and to advocate for gender-responsive climate policies and actions.

PRIORITIZING WOMEN'S SAFETY AND LONG-TERM RECOVERY : UPDATED RAPID GENDER ANALYSIS ON CYCLONE REMAL

Ms. Rahima Khatun in front of her house destroyed by Cyclone Remal. Photo: UN Women/Lipika Biswas

In the aftermath of cyclone Remal in May 2024, recovery efforts were severely affected by the and civil unrest and subsequent floods. Chaired by the Department of Women's Affairs of the Government of Bangladesh and co-chaired by UN Women, the GiHA Working Group in Bangladesh updated the rapid gender analysis initially developed in June. The updated analysis focuses on five key areas namely: 1) Housing and Livelihoods 2) Health and Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) Facilities 3) Security and Gender-Based Violence 4) Community Engagement 5) Impact of the Curfew and Social Unrest. Women, girls, and marginalized communities faced heightened vulnerabilities due to widespread destruction of homes and livelihoods, escalating food insecurity, limited access to healthcare and WASH services, and increased risks of gender-based violence. Many pregnant women were unable to access to safe childbirth facilities. Damaged water points and latrines force communities to rely on unsafe water and poor sanitation. Women played key roles in community response efforts, but their participation in decision-making remained limited, further challenged by high caregiving burdens. Curfews and unrest during July-August also disrupted essential services. Immediate and long-term recommendations include targeted financial support for housing and livelihoods, improved health and WASH facilities, enhanced security measures, and increased support for women's leadership and participation in disaster recovery efforts.

Read the updated Rapid gender analysis of cyclone Remal.

POLICY BRIEF ON GENDER RESPONSIVE CLIMATE FINANCING IN BANGLADESH

UN Women published a policy brief on Gender-Responsive Climate Financing In Bangladesh that provides recommendations for integrating gender equality considerations in climate financing mechanisms to foster gender-responsive, climate-resilient, sustainable, and inclusive development in Bangladesh. The recommendations have been informed by a pre-budget consultation organized by UN Women with representatives from ministries and women's rights organizations, including grassroots civil society organizations (CSOs), non-governmental organizations, development partners, and academia.

Read Gender-Responsive Climate Financing In Bangladesh.

PARTNERING FOR GENDER EQUALITY

(Left to right): UN Women Representative, Ms. Gitanjali Singh and Swedish Ambassador, H.E. Nicolas Weeks at the signing ceremony. Photo: UN Women/Fahad Kaiser; UN Women Representative, Ms. Gitanjali Singh, Deputy Head of Cooperation of the Embassy of Switzerland, Ms. Corinne Henchoz Pignani and UNDP Resident Representative Mr. Stephan Liller at the signing ceremony. Photo: UNDP.

SWEDEN AND UN WOMEN SIGN AGREEMENT TO ADVANCE GENDER EQUALITY IN BANGLADESH

Sweden and UN Women signed a USD 7.1 million agreement to advance gender equality in Bangladesh through 2026, in line with the UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF 2022-2026) and UN Women's Strategic Note. The grant focuses on gender-responsive programming in climate change and disaster risk reduction, gender-responsive governance, and humanitarian action, including the Rohingya Response. It strengthens collaboration with government, civil society, women's rights organizations, academia, and media to advance the Agenda 2030 commitment to "Leave No One Behind".

"Sweden firmly believes that gender equality is essential for building a sustainable, democratic and inclusive society. We are excited to partner with UN Women to advance gender equality and empower women and girls in Bangladesh. By working together, we can ensure that women and girls have the opportunity to lead, thrive, and contribute to a more inclusive and just society," said H.E. Nicolas Weeks, Ambassador of Sweden to Bangladesh. Thanking Sweden for its continued support and strategic partnership, UN Women Representative Ms. Gitanjali Singh said, "It is a pivotal moment for women's rights as we mark the thirtieth anniversary of the Fourth World Conference on Women and adoption of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. This collaboration and shared accountability to gender equality with Sweden enables UN Women to continue its life-saving work in disaster risk reduction and in the Rohingya Response. It also enables UN Women to expand its efforts so that women and girls have voice and resources to influence action to make gender equality a lived reality." Sweden's support builds on its ongoing collaboration with UN Women, including disaster risk reduction, climate resilience, and humanitarian efforts that empower women and girls in refugee camps and host communities. Find media coverage: Dhaka Tribune | TBS News | The Financial Express | The Daily Star | RTV Online.

UNDP, UN WOMEN AND SDC SIGN AGREEMENT TO PROMOTE INCLUSIVE AND PARTICIPATORY DEMOCRACY

UNDP and the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC), Embassy of Switzerland in Bangladesh signed an agreement to support the Democratic Reforms through Inclusive Participation in Bangladesh (DRIP) project. The DRIP project will be implemented jointly by UNDP and UN Women to promote inclusive governance by supporting the participation of women, youth and other socially excluded groups in political decision-making processes. Media links: BSS | Daily Star | Daily Sun | Dhaka Tribune | en.samakal.com | The Business Standard | UNB.

ADVANCING GENDER EQUALITY: UN WOMEN REPRESENTATIVE TALKS TO WORLD FOOD PROGRAMME PERSONNEL

(Left to right): UN Women Representative, Ms. Gitanjali Singh with the WFP team; Participants at the session. Photo: WFP.

As part of the World Food Programme's (WFP) Women's Empowerment Series, UN Women Representative, Ms. Gitanjali Singh, engaged WFP staff in a discussion on advancing gender equality. She emphasised the critical need to close gaps in laws and policies to drive meaningful change, invest more in women's health, education and opportunities as well as support women-led organizations and end violence against women while prioritizing mental health and well-being. Concluding with a call to action, Ms. Singh encouraged women to take risks, embrace learning, and lead the way toward empowerment and meaningful change.

PROMOTING STAFF WELL-BEING AMID CHALLENGES

UN Women Bangladesh Country Office (BCO) remains committed to promoting staff well-being, with a strong focus on mental health and psychosocial safety. Efforts include group sessions, one-on-one consultations, and specialized support for staff, family members, and partners, fostering a supportive organizational culture.

Additionally, the BCO Reading Circle hosted two sessions on gender-based violence and on social norms related to care. These initiatives underscore UN Women's dedication to creating a safe and inclusive work environment.

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