United Nations CEDAW/C/BGD/6-7

Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women

Distr.: General
12 January 2010

Original: English

ADVANCE UNEDITED VERSION

Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women

Consideration of reports submitted by States parties under article 18 of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women

Combined sixth and seventh periodic report of States parties

Bangladesh*

* The present report is being issued without formal editing.

Contents

Page

List of Abbreviations Used 4

Introduction 6

Outline of the Report 12

Section I: Background Framework 13

1. General Information 13

A. Demographic, economic, social and cultural characteristics 3

B. Constitutional, political and legal structure 20

2. General Framework for the Protection and Promotion of Human Rights 22

C. Acceptance of international human rights norms 22

D. Legal framework for the protection of human rights at the national level 23

E. Framework within which human rights are promoted at the national level 24

F. Reporting process at the national level 25

3. Information on Non-Discrimination and Equality and Effective Remedies 26

Section II: Convention-specific Document 27

1. Implementation of Concluding Observations on Fifth Periodic Report 27

2. Additional Legal and other Appropriate Steps and Measures Undertaken **47**

A. Part I 47

Article 1: Discrimination 47

Article 2: Policy Measures 47

Article 3: Guarantee of Basic Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms 50

Article 4: Special Measures 56

Article 5: Sex Role Stereotyping and Prejudice 61

Article 6: Suppression of Exploitation 62

B. Part II 63

Article 7: Political and Public Life 63

Article 8: Representation 64

Article 9: Nationality 65

C. Part III 65

Article 10: Education 65

Article 11: Employment 66

Article 12: Health 68

Article 13: Economic and Social Benefits 69

Article 14: Rural Women 69

D. Part IV 70
Article 15: Law 70
Article 16: Marriage and Family Life 70
3. Remaining and Emerging Obstacles and Measures Envisaged 70
4. Impact of Measures Taken 73
5. Different Groups of Women 75
6. Fundamental Changes in Political and Legal Approach 76
7. Optional Protocol 77
8. Outcomes of UN Conferences, Summits and Reviews 77
A. Beijing Platform for Action 78
B. MDGs 78
C. Others 79
Annex-A 80
List of Tables 112
Reference Documents 113

List of Abbreviations Used

AIDS	Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
ASF	Acid Survivors Foundation
BC	Budget Call Circular
BDHS	Bangladesh Demographic and Health Survey
BLA	Bangladesh Labour Act
BMET	Bureau of Manpower, Employment and Training
BWG	Budget Working Group
CDC	Community Development Committee
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All forms of Discrimination Against Women
CMNS	Child and Mother Nutrition Survey
DC	Deputy Commissioner
DNA	DeoxyriboNucleic Acid
DPHE	Department of Public Health Engineering
DSS	Department of Social Services
ECCE	Early Childhood Care and Education
FP	Focal Point
FMRP	Financial Management Reform Project
FY	Financial Year
GAD	Gender and Development
GE	Gender Equality
GIO	Gender Issue Office
GM	Gender Mainstreaming

GoB	Government of Bangladesh
GRB	Gender Responsive Budgeting
GRP	Gender Responsive Planning
HIES	Household Income and Expenditure Survey
HNPSP	Health, Nutrition and Population Sector Program
ICPD	International Conference on Population and Development
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
IEC	Information, Education and Communication
LGED	Local Government Engineering Department
LGI	Local Government Institution
LPUPAP	Local Partnerships for Urban Poverty Alleviation Project
MDG	Millennium Development Goal
MoE	Ministry of Education
MoEWOE	Ministry of Expatriates' Welfare and Overseas Employment
MoF	Ministry of Finance
MoFDM	Ministry of Food and Disaster Management
MoHA	Ministry of Home Affairs
MoHFW	Ministry of Health and Family Welfare
MoLJPA	Ministry of Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs
MoI	Ministry of Information
MoLGRDC	Ministry of Local Government, Rural Development and Cooperatives
MoP	Ministry of Planning
MoPME	Ministry of Primary and Mass Education

MoRA	Ministry of Religious Affairs
MoSW	Ministry of Social Welfare
MoWCA	Ministry of Women and Children Affairs
MTBF	Medium-Term Budget Framework
NAP	National Action Plan for the Advancement of Women
NCWD	National Council for Women's Development
NCWCD	National Council for Women and Child Development
NFBE	Non Formal Basic Education
NIPORT	National Institute of Population Research and Training
NPWA	National Policy for Women's Advancement
NSAPR	National Strategy for Accelerated Poverty Reduction
PFA	Platform for Action
RMG	Readymade Garment
SAARC	South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation
SEI	Socio Economic and Infrastructure
SERWTCI	Self Employment of Rural Women Through Cottage Industries
TIP	Trafficking in Persons
VAW	Violence Against Women
WBGNS	World Bank Gender Norms Study
WID	Women in Development

6th and 7th Combined Report (2001~2009)Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women Bangladesh

Introduction

Bangladesh, a signatory to the Convention on Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and Beijing Platform for Action (BPFA) has been committed in attaining the objectives of ensuring gender equality and empowerment of women. Bangladesh Government has been actively engaged in formulating proactive policies and taking affirmative actions for accelerating the implementation process in achieving the goal of holistic empowerment of women.

Over the last two decades the initiative to ensure equal rights of women and non-discrimination has gained momentum in Bangladesh and has been successful in mobilizing and coordinating women to stand up for their rights. However, relentless endeavour is underway on the part of the Government by way of adoption of policies, legislation, strategies, national action plans and programs for realization of empowerment of women. The pro-women policies, strategies and measures of the Government undertaken in the last decades have positively influenced the reduction of poverty of women. A number of Programs were undertaken by Government that includes safety net, development activities, etc. The NGOs have micro credit programs for production and business by women. Private sector generated employment for women especially in garments sectors. All these

have contributed to greater poverty reduction for women. Progress of women can be traced from their increasing economic participation through employment in various sectors including garments, shoes and cosmetics industries in formal sector and also self-employment in non-formal activities. Women also work in agricultural sector; women are employed in crop production, in livestock, in forestry, in fishery. There is a growing trend of women working in construction sites. Positive indicators of women's advancement in the country are reflected in continuing gender parity in school enrolment, gradually lowered infant mortality and decrease in maternal mortality rates. There has been significant progress in health and education areas. The improved health services through implementation of Health, Nutrition and Population related Programs have contributed to improved health especially of women. Nutrition situation has also improved. The proportion of non-pregnant mothers in the chronic energy deficiency situation declined from 44.2 percent in 2000 (BDHS 2000) to 32.2 percent in 2005 (CMNS 2005). Maternal mortality decreased to 3.37 per 1000 live births in 2006 from 3.65 in 2004.

In carrying forward CEDAW commitments, Government of Bangladesh formulated the National Policy for Advancement of Women in 1997 in the light of the Constitution of Bangladesh, CEDAW Convention, BPFA and broad based consultation with the stakeholders including human rights organizations, women's rights activists, non Governmental organizations and the civil society. The said Policy is under review and will be

implemented in an updated manner. National Action Plan for Women's Advancement was adopted in 1998 projecting the strategy of mainstreaming gender in all Governmental policies by the sectoral Ministries.

The CEDAW Committee in its Concluding Comments on the Fifth Periodic Report of Bangladesh congratulated the Government for achieving gender parity and dramatic increase in the enrolment of girls in primary and lower secondary level in schools. This was possible by the innovative steps taken by the Government of making substantial investments in both primary and secondary education of girls by giving scholarships, stipends and introducing free education.

The Committee praised the initiative of the Government in reaching out to rural poor women in providing maternal health care and services through community and mobile clinics which resulted in decrease of maternal mortality rate. The Committee further observed that while the prevalence of HIV/AIDS in Bangladesh remained low, the Government continued to take urgent measures to prevent any possible epidemic through various awareness raising programs.

The Committee concluded by observing that Bangladesh was marching ahead with the correct mindset and progress on all socioeconomic fronts including women's empowerment was palpable.

The journey to ensure empowerment of women began since the independence of Bangladesh in 1971. Constitution of Bangladesh

guarantees women equal rights with men in all spheres of the State and public life as a fundamental right. (Article 28(2)) Constitution states that State shall not discriminate against any citizen on grounds only of sex and nothing in this Article shall prevent the state from making special provision in favour of women or children or for the advancement of any backward section of citizens. The Constitution further provides that steps shall be taken in ensure participation of women in all spheres of national life as a fundamental principle of state policy (Article 10).

A new era of democracy has ushered in Bangladesh with the Parliamentary Elections in December 2008. The newly elected Government has declared "Vision 2021". Bangladesh Government is committed in mainstreaming gender issues in order to incorporate them within the framework of macroeconomics and formulation of policies to effectuate effective, substantial and visible changes to the lives of women at all levels and in all spheres.

Empowerment and Development of Women

Economic empowerment of women is a high priority agenda of the Government. Eradication of poverty being the focal point, Government strongly emphasizes that features of women's poverty require a gender perspective in the pro-poor growth strategy.

Women being the most important agents of economic and social development and proportion of ultra poor being higher in female headed

households in comparison to that of male headed ones, “Steps Towards Change: National Strategy for Accelerated Poverty Reduction-II (NSAPR-II)” has been formulated reflecting the commitment of the Government in its Election Manifesto and also in the light of the Millennium Development Goals, with particular emphasis in reducing feminised poverty. NSAPR-II stresses the need for reducing feminised poverty by providing support for Small and Medium Enterprise (SME) initiative of women by resource mobilization; providing credit facilities to women on easy terms; creating market linkages for women to market their products through cooperatives; providing skill development training for facilitating employment opportunities. It further envisages facilitating increased participation of women in labour force and ensuring equal wages for them. It purports to foster Rural Non-Farm Activities (RNFA) as an effective poverty reduction activity for women. In order to make this sector more vibrant, certain interventions have been identified as necessary, for example - improving marketing capacity by providing sales centres in Growth Centre markets (GCM) and peri-urban markets; providing training on food processing activities; providing basic skills about business management and steps linking them to markets; setting up vocational training institutes in rural and peri-urban areas etc.

Keeping in view the special aspects of women’s poverty, it has been recognized that women frequently experience poverty differently and therefore different poverty reduction priorities need to be identified and

different development interventions are required. In empowering women to become equal partners of development, “Vision 2021” reflected in NSAPR-II aims to enhance women’s participation in mainstream economic activities; creating opportunities for education and marketable skills training, enabling them to participate; incorporating women’s needs and concerns in all sectoral plans; promoting enabling environment at the work place. Investment in women’s education and training has proven to deliver large social and economic returns.

In ensuring social safety net protection for vulnerable women in extreme poverty, Vulnerable Group Development Program (VGD) is providing extreme poor and distressed women food assistance along with development package training. Skill development training on income generating activities as well as nutrition, primary health, HIV/AIDS etc. is being given. Micro-credit programs are helping women develop self employment. Similarly, there is Widow Allowance, Elderly Persons Allowance, Maternity and Lactating Mothers allowances. Women with disability are also given support.

Notable progress has been made in attaining gender parity in primary education. Special emphasis has been given to girl child’s education. Stipend for girls, free education up to primary level have resulted in increased enrolment of girls and decreasing dropout rates. Positive results have been achieved in reducing maternal mortality and infant mortality through effective institutional measures.

Measures to Combat Violence Against Women

In preventing violence against women legislations are in place - Prevention of Cruelty to Women and Children Act, Acid Crime Control Act, Dowry Prohibition Act, Child Marriage Restraint Act etc.

The draft Bill on Prevention of Domestic Violence is at the stage of finalization and steps are being taken to enact the same shortly. The Hon'ble High Court Division of Supreme Court of Bangladesh has recently given directives detailing a set of guidelines for action in cases of sexual harassment of women in academic institutions, workplaces and organizations. Steps are being taken to implement the directives of the Hon'ble Court. A Committee has already been formed by the Ministry of Women and Children Affairs in compliance with the directives of the Hon'ble Court.

One Stop Crisis Centres are operating in six Divisions of the Country where women victims of violence receive medical treatment, police assistance, legal support and rehabilitation service. National Trauma Counselling Centre has been established by MoWCA and there is help line support.

Legal assistance is provided by "Cell for Prevention of Violence Against Women" in the Ministry of Women and Children Affairs and Department of Women Affairs and Jatiyo Mohila Sangstha.

Ministry of Women and Children Affairs is initiating a Gender Responsive Community Policing Program to ensure security for women and girls, to address vulnerability to domestic violence and facilitate access to justice.

Awareness raising programs and advocacy are conducted with specific focus on engaging men and boys in prevention of violence against women and changing stereotype mind set. Policy Dialogues are held in different districts throughout the country at the grass root level emphasizing the role of men and boys in preventing violence against women. There are teenagers clubs wherein boys and girls take part in many learning activities, sports and cultural activities in a friendly environment.

In eliminating discrimination against women, Bangladesh Parliament enacted Citizenship Amendment Act, 2009 giving Bangladeshi woman the right to transmit her citizenship to her children.

Recognition of mother's identity has been a milestone in promoting the cause of women's empowerment by directing inclusion of mother's name in the Passport and other official documents.

Significant steps have been taken in effectuating political empowerment of women:

- Under the Local Government Act, 1997 three seats have been reserved for direct election of women.
- The Representation of People's Order 2008 provided for two elected Vice-Chairman, one of which must be a woman.
- The Hon'ble Prime Minister is a woman, Opposition Leader, Deputy Leader of House, six Members in the Cabinet are women holding important portfolios - Ministry of Home, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Agriculture, Ministry of

Labour and Employment, and Ministry of Women and Children Affairs, which demonstrates strong political will to place women in leadership position.

- The Representation of People's Order, 2008 further recommends that political parties nominate 33% women to contest directly in parliamentary elections. In order to ensure effective implementation, monitoring and evaluation, following steps have been adopted by the Government:
- Being a cross-cutting issue, programs are implemented by Sectoral Ministries while Ministry of Women and Children Affairs (MoWCA) as lead Ministry coordinates the functions.
- WID focal points mechanism exists through which MoWCA follows up implementation by Sectoral Ministries addressing 12 areas of concern of BPFA and commitments under CEDAW Convention. In each Ministry there is a WID Focal Point and an Associate WID Focal Point. Meetings are organized quarterly by MoWCA where information is given by all other sectoral Ministries. At District and Sub-district level there are coordination committees.
- Highest Policy Making Body - There is National Council for Women and Children Development, headed by Hon'ble Prime Minister monitoring and evaluating implementation and activities and providing guidelines.
- Under medium term budgetary framework (MTBF) 32 Ministries spending 60% of total national budget are required to answer about how their spending affects women and poverty.
- Gender responsive budget has been formulated with particular emphasis on four Ministries which will be broadened. Sex-disaggregated data base is being prepared.

However, there are many remaining challenges. Emerging challenges need to be addressed to protect women and children as vulnerable and worst sufferers of climate change and disaster situation. We need to continue to work in facing these challenges together – Government, non-Governmental agencies, developing partners and friends and it is hoped that through concerted effort of all, it will be possible to create an enabling environment for women - free from poverty, free from violence and free from discrimination. Under the able leadership of Hon'ble Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, Bangladesh will succeed in achieving gender equality, development and non-discrimination for women.

Outline of the Report Prepared in the Light of Harmonized Reporting Guideline and the New Convention-Specific Reporting Guidelines of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women

This 6th and 7th Combined Periodic Report has been prepared in the light of the Harmonized Reporting Guideline (on the form and content of reports to be submitted by States parties to the international Human Rights treaties) HRI/GEN/2/Rev.5, 29 May 2008, and the new Convention-Specific Reporting Guidelines of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, CEDAW/SP/2008/INF/1, 8 July 2008. The previous (Fifth) Periodic Report was considered by the CEDAW Committee in July 2004, and this Report covers the period August 2004~December 2009.

The Report consists of two parts: Section I and Section II

- Section I: Background Framework (Common Core Document) containing information of a general and factual nature.
- Section 2: Convention-specific Document that Specifically Relates to the Implementation of the Convention.

Section I: Background Framework (Common Core Document)

1. General Information

A. Demographic, Economic, Social and Cultural Characteristics

The Country Profile: Area, Geography and Population

1. Bangladesh achieved independence in 1971 under the leadership of the Father of the Nation, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. It has a territory of about 147,570 square kilometres and is home to 142.6 million people (2007), with a population density of 966 people per square kilometre, making Bangladesh as one of the most densely populated countries in the world[1]. Approximately 90 percent of the Bangladesh population are Muslims, 9 percent are Hindus and the others constitute about one percent. The overwhelmingly dominant sector of the economy is

[1] Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, November 2008, Report on Sample Vital Registration System, 2007.

agriculture, occupying 80 percent of the total population and contributing 25 percent of gross domestic product (GDP)[2].

2. According to Population Census 2001, the male/female ratio is 103.8 compared to 106 as reported in Population Census 1991. This data indicates a movement towards better balance of male and female in the society. Life expectancy at birth has increased from 64.2 in 2001 to 65.4 in 2006. Female life expectancy increased from 64.5 in 2001 to 65.9 in 2006. During the same reference period for male, it increased from 64.0 to 64.7.
3. Statistics from the Household Income and Expenditure Survey (HIES) 2005 and Population Census 1991 indicate that the percentage of population under 5 years of age went down from about 16 percent (16.15 percent male and 16.78 percent female) to 11.58 percent (11.92 percent male and 11.77 percent female). The percentage of male population in the 0-14 age group decreased from 45.3 percent in 1991 to 38.2 percent in 2004. During the same reference period, percentage of female population in this age group went down from 44.8 to 37.6.
4. The overall infant mortality rate (per thousand live births) declined from 71 in 1995 to 45 in 2006 and to 43 in 2007. Infant mortality for girl child declined from 70 in 1995 to 43 in 2006, and for boys, it declined from 73 in 1995 to 47 in 2006.
5. The annual labour force growth rate for the period 2002-2003 to 2005-2006 stands at 2.21 percent. During the same period, growth rate of women labour force was 5.45 percent and for male it was 1.23 percent per annum. While labour force participation

[2] World Bank 2005, Attaining the Millennium Development Goals in Bangladesh (p. 5), cited in Bangladesh Gender Profile, German Development Bank 2004

(refined activity) rate in general increased from 57.3 percent in 2002-2003 to 58.5 percent in 2005-2006, women labour force increased at a more accelerated rate from 26.1 percent to 29.2 percent during the same period[3].

Economic Progress

6. Per capita GDP in Bangladesh was about US$ 621 in 2008-2009 and US$ 559 in 2007-2008. GDP growth rate was 5.88 percent in 2009[4]. The contribution of agriculture and manufacturing sectors to the GDP was 17.13 percent and 15.40 percent respectively in 2008-2009.
7. Employment and foreign exchange earning of the country are dominated by Readymade Garments (RMG) industry, where over 80 percent of the 2 million workers are women. Over the past few years, increasing number of migrant women workers have also contributed to remittance inflow.
8. Manufacturing, service units of the modern and organized sectors are to be found mostly in the urban areas. There has been some reform in recent years such as reduction of control over investment, pursuing policies of denationalisation and privatisation of public enterprises.
9. Liberalization of trade and tariff, and creation of congenial environment for private investment have contributed towards economic transition. The RMG and the shrimp export are now facing serious constraints from global economic slowdown. Increase in remittance by expatriate Bangladeshi workers in recent years contributed to arrest the affect of global recession. This, coupled with domestic resource mobilization,

[3] Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, April 2008, Labour Force Survey 2005-2006.

[4] National Income Statistics, Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, May 2009 in the website www.bbs.gov.bd

enabled the Government to finance over one third of the development budget requirements from its own resources in recent years.

10. Sample Survey on Agriculture Census in 2005 showed that absolute landlessness in rural Bangladesh increased from 10.18 in 1996 census and 8.67 in 1983-84 Census to10.66. Proportion of marginal farmers in rural areas increased to 38.08 in 2005 from 28.45 in 1996 and 24.06 in 1983-1984. The proportion of female-headed holdings out of the total holdings in rural Bangladesh decreased from 3.48 percent in 1996 to 2.58 percent in 2005[5].

11. Migration rate (per thousand population) at aggregate level (male and female) is 32.29, with women migration registering 36.47 and male, 28.25. Of 100 rural to urban migration for women, 30.56 are job-related, 9.71 for marriage, 2.92 for education and 56.81 for other reasons. For males, of the 100 rural to urban migration, 55.69 are job-related, 6.07 for education, 1.29 for marriage and 36.95 for other reasons[6].

12. There are indications by labour force surveys and also micro studies that the growth of rural non-farm sector has accelerated in recent years and has absorbed a part of the growing landless labour force and helped in the reduction of poverty.

1.1. Status of Women in Bangladesh

Socio-Cultural

13. Women's participation in economic activity depends on education, training, health and the socio-economic enabling environment. Significant positive changes have

[5] Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (June 2006), Agriculture Sample Survey of Bangladesh 2005

[6] Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (December 2006), Report on Sample Vital Registration System (SVRS) 2004

been observed over the years in relation to socio-economic condition of women along with men in Bangladesh. Gender parity has been achieved in the primary and secondary education level. Special education facilities for girl students, increasing involvement of women workers in the readymade garment sector, and more women in the political leadership at various levels reflect the positive socio-cultural change in women's life in Bangladesh.

14. More women were in poverty situation compared to men in the period preceeding 2005. According to HIES 2005, about 35.4 percent of female-headed households were in poverty compared with 34.2 percent of male-headed households in 2000. The proportion of female-headed households has been reduced to 21.9 percent in 2005. Women's poverty has other dimensions. They become poor when they lose the male earning member of the family because of abandonment, divorce, or death. The HIES 2005 reveals that about 29.6 percent of divorced/widowed women were in poverty against the national average of 25.1 percent women in poverty. While poverty affects the household as a whole, women bear a disproportionately greater burden in managing household production and consumption under conditions of severe scarcity.

15. There are incidences of discrimination of women within the household in terms of ownership of resources such as physical, financial and information.

Education

16. The literacy rate (7 years and above) of women in 2004 was 46.2 percent as compared to 53.7 percent for male. Literacy rate of women in 2007 increased to 52.7 percent as compared to 59.4 percent for male. Government undertook various

measures for increasing literacy rate and education especially of women. The achievements in this field were the result of Government's pro-active programs like the female students' stipend programs in primary, secondary and higher secondary levels. A stipend program in higher education for 30 percent female students from poor families is going to be introduced.

17. Three women polytechnic institutes were set up for attracting the girls in technical education. An International University for Women at Chittagong has been established for further facilitating higher education of girls. University of Dhaka introduced Women Studies Department for creating specialized expertise in the country on gender issues. Initiatives were taken to promote sports activities among young women and provide computer-training programs for women.

18. However, there exist differences in the quality of education in rural-urban areas. Still, there is a gender gap at the technical/vocational and the tertiary education levels. Only 26 percent female students are enrolled in the technical/vocational training institutes. Available data during 2004-2006 show that performance of female students in the public examination is improving both at secondary (percentage of pass increased from 45.98 to 57.32) and higher secondary education (percentage of pass increased from 46.78 to 63.52) levels.

Health

19. Women's health has been considered by the Government as one of the indices of human development. An improvement in women's health requires a change in the socio-cultural dimensions of society and overall improvement in women's situation. Improvement in women's health and nutrition includes human resource

development, reduction of maternal and child mortality, primary health care services, reproductive health care services, men's responsibility in reproductive health, adolescent girl's reproductive health, breast feeding, safe drinking water, ageing women's health etc. Maternal mortality ratio (per thousand live births) decreased from 3.65 in 2004 to 3.51 in 2007.

20. Improvements in health services through implementation of the Health, Nutrition and Population Sector Program (HNPSP) have contributed to improved health especially of women. Initiation of community clinics was also a praiseworthy move in giving health service to women. For example, the nutritional status of women has improved as evidenced by the decline in the proportion of non-pregnant mothers in the chronic energy deficiency situation from 44.2 percent in 2000 (BDHS 2000) to 32.2 percent in 2005 (CMNS 2005). Life expectancy at birth for women increased from 64.4 years in 2004 to 65.5 years in 2006.

Employment

21. Women's participation in employment has increased as a result of Government's support to education, training, health and the socio-economic enabling environment including access to resources (SME policies, credit facilities etc.). Women's economic participation in formal labour market has increased significantly due to changes in economic expansion, rural livelihood patterns, and rural-to-urban migration. Their participation in the labour force has increased from 26.1 percent in 2002-03 to 29.2 percent in 2005-06 as compared to 86.8 percent for men in 2005-06.

22. Government is emphasizing marketable skills training for women on Information and Communication Technology (ICT), agricultural extension etc. The women

friendly health services, nutritional knowledge and interventions are crucial for women's engagement in economic activities. The financial services are being geared to the needs women farmers and entrepreneurs for developing all types of enterprises including agro-based small industries. Market information and facilities for women, both for farm and non-farm activities are being made gender sensitive. Transport services are being made conducive for participation of women in economic activities.

2.1. National Policies and Strategies for Gender Mainstreaming

23. National Policy for Women's Advancement (NPWA) was adopted in 1997 through a wide consultative process with stakeholders, women rights groups, human rights activists, and in the light of the CEDAW Convention, Beijing PFA, and Constitution of Bangladesh. It may be noted that after signing Beijing PFA in 1995, Bangladesh was one of the first countries adopting NPWA in 1997 and the NPA in 1998, reflecting its staunch commitment as a State-party to the regional and international laws. While activities and programs were underway inconformity with NPWA 1997, the said Policy was subsequently revised in 2004 and 2008. Presently, the Government is in the process of reviewing and reinstating the 1997 Policy, as clearly spelt in its election manifesto after holding consultation with the stakeholders. The Policy clearly spells out the commitments for promoting human rights, education and training, health and nutrition, political empowerment of women, administrative reform, and preventing violence and oppression against women.

24. Women's needs and interest have been considered in various development plans of Bangladesh in order to ensure gender equality. The first NSAPR (2005-2008) addressed gender equality issues from a human rights perspective as well as for

achieving pro-poor growth and poverty reduction[7]. The NSAPR document included extensive discussion on the gender-related dimensions of poverty. Steps Towards Change: NSAPR II (2009-2011) formulated by the present Government in the light of its Election Manifesto and MDGs puts forward the gender agenda with more emphasis in gender mainstreaming through integration into planning and budgeting. This has been reflected through the Medium-Term Budget Framework (MTBF) that considers gender concerns in budget preparation process to minimise the gaps through Gender Responsive Planning (GRP) and Gender Responsive Budgeting (GRB).

25. NSAPR II has been formulated placing poverty reduction at the forefront of its development strategy. The special aspects of women's poverty have been emphasized. The total number of poor women is higher than that of poor men. 'Hard core' poor are largely women and the number of ultra poor and extreme poor is higher in female-headed households than in male-headed households. HIES 2005 shows that about 29.6 percent of divorced/widowed women live below the poverty line against the national average of 25.1 percent. Moreover, women's social subordination makes them more vulnerable to poverty. Women have few rights and choices in taking personal decisions regarding education, marriage, child bearing, family expenditure pattern, and participation in labour market and income generating activities. Discrimination against women at the social level is reflected in their movement limited within the homestead, lack of mobility in the public space, early marriage (average age of marriage for women is 20.2 years while that for men is 27.6

[7] Planning Commission (October 2005), National Strategy For Accelerated Poverty Reduction (NSAPR)

years) and the practice of dowry. Women have weak protection socially and legally in the event of break-up of marriages. They fall easily in the trap of trafficking.

26. NSAPR II has outlined strategies to address the critical areas for pro-poor economic growth including support to women involved in small and medium enterprises (SMEs) through increase in the flow of formal credit to women entrepreneurs and making the SME policies and strategies sensitive to the needs of women entrepreneurs. The Women Entrepreneurs Forum in SME Foundation would be used as a channel to safeguard women's interests as equal partners in business development activities. The strategies also call for addressing the issue of a smaller share of women employment through promoting decent employment including employment-based social safety nets through public works programs, expanding and diversifying vocational training courses and facilities for women, undertaking initiatives for exporting women workers, reviewing labour policy to remove discrepancy between male and women wages for same work and productivity, and enforcement of labour laws especially those relating to women labour.

27. NSAPR II has emphasized Women's Advancement and Rights under its supporting strategies and takes into account that women frequently experience poverty differently, have different poverty reduction priorities and are affected differently by development interventions. In addressing gender based discrimination, NSAPR II follows a two-pronged approach – firstly, gender is integrated into all thematic policy matrices covering sectoral interventions; and secondly, there is a specific matrix dealing with gender equality commitments.

28. In addition, all international commitments (CEDAW, PFA, MDGs) as well as national policy (NPWA) and NAP have been reflected in the NSAPR II with concerned Ministry specific responsibility as per sector/theme. A significant step was taken by MoWCA towards institutionalisation of GE/GM concerns in the policies, programs, systems and operations through WID Focal Point mechanism. Currently, there are approximately 98 WID FPs and Associate WID FPs in 49 Ministries/Divisions/Departments and having regular quarterly meetings for follow up on the implementation status of NAP within their Ministries and Agencies.

29. The overall development goal for women's empowerment covers: (i) promoting and protecting women's rights; (ii) eradicating the persistent burden of poverty on women; (iii) eliminating discrimination against women; (iv) enhancing women's participation in mainstream economic activities; (v) creating opportunities for education and marketable skills training to enable them to participate and be competitive in all economic activities; (vi) incorporating women's needs and concerns in all sectoral plans and programs; (vii) promoting an enabling environment at work place: setting up day are centres for the children of working mothers, career women hostels, safe accommodation for working women; (viii) providing safe custody for women and children victims of trafficking and desertion, and creating an enabling environment for their integration in the mainstream of society; (ix) ensuring women's empowerment in the field of polities and decision making; (x) taking action to acknowledge women's contribution in social and economic spheres; (xi) ensuring women's social security against all vulnerability and risks in the state, society and family; (xii) eliminating all forms of violation and exploitation against women; (xiii)

developing women's capacity through health and nutrition care; (xiv) facilitating women's participation in all national and international bodies; (xv) strengthening the existing institutional capacity for coordination and monitoring of women's advancement' (xvi) taking action through advocacy and campaigns to depict positive images of women; (xvii) taking special measures for skills development of women workers engaged in the export-oriented sectors; (xviii) incorporating gender equality concerns in all trade-related negotiations and activities; and (xix) ensuring gender sensitive growth with regional balance; and (xx) protecting women from the adverse effects of environmental degradation and climate change.

B. Constitutional, Political and Legal Structure

Constitutional Structure

Constitution of the People's Republic of Bangladesh, 1972 is the solemn expression of the will of the people and the supreme law of the land. If any other law in inconsistent with the Constitution that other law shall to the extent of such inconsistency be void. Part-II of the Constitution contains the Fundamental Principles of State Policy, fundamental to the governance of Bangladesh to be applied by the State in the making of laws and serve as guide to interpretation of the Constitution and of other laws.

Part-III contains Fundamental Rights i.e. fright to equality before law, right to life, right to equal protection of law etc. Article 28 (1) provides that State shall not discriminate against any citizen on grounds only of sex. Article 28 (2) specifically provides that "Women shall have equal rights with men in

all spheres of the State and public life". Article 7 is the Pole Star of the Constitution stating that all powers in the Republic belong to the people.

Political Structure

30. Bangladesh has a parliamentary form of Government headed by Prime Minister. Parliament consists of 300 members who are directly elected and 45 women members from reserved seats as enshrined in the Constitution, constituting a total of 345 members of Parliament. It may be mentioned that 19 members are women who have been directly elected which makes the number of women Parliamentarians 64 (45+19). The local Government representatives are responsible for local level development. The country is administratively divided into 6 divisions consisting of 64 districts, 467 Upazilas (sub-districts) and 4,480 Union Parishads. The lowest unit of local Government is the Union Parishad run by elected representatives. Districts are the main administrative units. The civil servants carry out the executive responsibilities of these administrative units.

31. The women can directly participate in all elections at the national level and local level Government. As equity measure, the Constitution of Bangladesh contains provision for quota of women in the national and local Government representations. The reserved seats for women in the Parliament were increased from 30 to 45 in 2006 and they are elected by the Parliament Members of the general seats. In 1997, one-third of the local Government seats of members/councillors were reserved for women who would be elected by the direct vote of the people. This has become a milestone for women's participation in the political empowerment process.

32. At the second tier of local elected bodies, Upazila Parishads, one of the two elected Vice Chairman has to be a woman. Accordingly, 475 women have been elected as Vice Chairman out of 1,936 women who contested during elections held in January 2009.

33. The newly elected Government in January 2009 led by a woman Prime Minister has appointed five women to the cabinet (three as full ministers and two as state ministers) responsible for key portfolios such as agriculture, home affairs, foreign affairs, women and children affairs, and labour and employment. The Leader of the Opposition in the Parliament is also a woman (former Prime Minister). For the first time, a woman has been appointed as the Deputy Leader of the House in Parliament and a woman MP has been appointed as the Chairperson of the Parliamentary Standing Committee on MoWCA.

34. An increasing number of women voters have participated in successive elections with 50.87 percent in 2008 as compared to 48.2 percent in 2001.

35. As per Local Government (City Corporation) Ordinance 2008, under section 5, sub-section (2), in each City Corporation, one third of the total number of Councillor posts is reserved for women.

36. As per Local Government (Pourashava/district head quarters) Ordinance 2008, under section 7, sub-section (1), in each Pourashava, one third of the total number of Councillor posts is reserved for women.

Legal Structure

The Supreme Court of Bangladesh comprises of the Appellate Division and the High Court Division. In addition to the Supreme Court there are subordinate Courts as envisaged under the Constitution.

2. General Framework for the Protection and Promotion of Human Rights

C. Acceptance of International Human Rights Norms

37. As reported earlier, Bangladesh is party to a number of international human rights treaties that make it obligatory to ensure the rights to equality before law and to equal protection of the law, as well as the right to personal liberty and security, freedom from arbitrary arrest and detention, to freedom from torture and cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment or punishment, and to an effective remedy in case of violation of any of these rights. These rights are enshrined in Part III of the Constitution of Bangladesh as Fundamental Human Rights.

During this reporting period, Bangladesh has continued to demonstrate its seriousness regarding the issue of human rights promotion and protection. Ratification of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities 2006 and its Optional Protocol reflects the commitment of Bangladesh in fulfilling its international obligations as State Party.

38. According to Article 27 (Bangladesh Constitution) “All citizens are equal before law and are entitled to equal protection of law”; Article 28 (1), “The State shall not discriminate against any citizen on grounds only for religion, race, caste, sex or place of birth”; and Article 28 (2), “Women shall have equal rights with men in all spheres of the State and of public life”. Article 31 provides right to be treated in accordance with law. Furthermore, Part III of the Constitution contains right to life and personal

liberty (Article 32), right to freedom of thought, conscience and speech (Article 39) that are equally applicable for women. Fundamental Principles of State Policy contained in Part II of the Constitution also provides in Article 10, Participation of Women in National Life to the following effect – "Steps shall be taken to ensure participation of women in all spheres of national life".

D. Legal Framework for the Protection of Human Rights at the National Level

39. The Constitution of Bangladesh contains fundamental human rights in Part –III. All existing laws inconsistent with provisions of this Part, shall to the extant of such inconsistency become void. The State shall not make any law inconsistent with any provisions of this Part, and any law so made, shall to the extant of such inconsistency, be void.

40. Article 1.2 (1) provides that High Court Division on the application of any person aggrieved, may give such direction and or order as may be appropriate for enforcement of any of the fundamental rights conferred by Part III of the Constitution.

41. In addition, there are specific legislations for protection to women and ensuring non discriminatory treatment towards them and upholding their rights such as Prevention of Quietly to Women and Children Act, Acid Control Act, Dowry Prohibition Act, Child Marriage Restraint Act.

42. Among the new laws introduced during the reporting period is the Citizenship (Amendment) Act, 2009 enacted by the Parliament amending Section 5 of the Citizenship Law of 1951 to give a Bangladeshi woman the right to transmit her citizenship to her children.

43. The revised Bangladesh Labour Act, 2006 provides for equal pay for equal work, work friendly environment, maternity leave, redress against harassment at the workplace etc.

44. Draft of a new law on Prevention of Domestic Violence as The Domestic Violence (Prevention and Protection) Law, 2009 is nearing completion.

45. The National Machinery for Women's Advancement includes the National Council for Women and Child Development (NCWCD), WIDFPs, Women Development Implementation and Evaluation Committee, District and Upazila WID Coordination Committees.

46. Progress in the area of gender governance is significant. There is an increasing awareness about the need to integrate gender concerns into the sector policy framework and various initiatives are being undertaken at various levels and sectors. All the sectors and Ministries are responsible for addressing WID issues. There are increased gender capacities among officials. Highlights of some of the changes in gender governance are discussed below.

National Council for Women's Development and National Policy for Women's Advancement

47. National Council for Women's Development (NCWD) was established in 1995 consisting of 49 members including Ministers and Secretaries, representatives of civil society, women's organizations, with Honourable Prime Minister as the Chair. Government has adopted National Policy for Women's Advancement (NPWA) within the framework of the CEDAW and as a follow-up to the Beijing Conference on Women. The policy goal is to eliminate all forms of discrimination against

women by empowering them with abilities to be equal partners of men in the development process. Until recently there were two separate Councils – NCWD for women and NCCD for children – that have been merged to form NCWCD.

Ministry of Women and Children Affairs

48. Over the years, MoWCA has evolved and has emerged as an important lead institution in gender governance. MoWCA and its implementing agencies have been implementing policies and programs and acting as the focal point and catalyst for actions on issues of women's equality and for developing and promoting comprehensive and consistent responses to the needs and priorities of women in activities of all Government agencies.

E. Framework for Promotion of Human Rights at the National Level

49. In case of violation of fundamental human rights, aggrieved person may seek shelter of law by invoking writ jurisdiction under Article 102 of the Constitution before the High Court Division of Supreme Court of Bangladesh. There are specific legislation for protection of women and there is scope to file cases under those legislation before the Police of by file complaint case before the Magistrate.

50. National Human Rights Commission Act, 2009 authorizes the setting up of a Human Rights Commission, constituted by seven members, of whom at least one will be a woman and one will be from a minority community. The Commission is mandated to investigate violations of human rights and can make recommendations to the Government for submission of reports on human rights violations.

51. Women's participation in the formal labour market continues to increase as a result of changes in economic expansion, rural livelihood patterns and rural-to-urban migration.

52. Inclusion of mother's name with that of father is mandatory for primary school applications, documents, certificates, passports etc.

53. Ministry of Education has allowed the use of mother's name for the purposes of registering a student for public examination such as SSC and HSC.

Cooperation with the Civil Society

54. Consultation and active collaboration between the Government and non-Government organizations is a continued process. The Government has developed strong linkages with the broader civil society through a process of continuous consultation. Representatives of women's organizations and eminent women activists, writers, and researchers are part of the National Machinery such as the NCWCD.

F. Reporting Process at the National Level

55. In August 2007, MoWCA convened a Roundtable Discussion on CEDAW reporting process and preparation. This activity was followed in April 2008 by circulating a reporting format to WID Focal Points (WIDFPs) to report on the implementation status on the concluding observations made by the UN CEDAW Committee in July 2004 on the earlier submission by Bangladesh (i.e. Fifth Periodic report of December 2002) as well as reporting on the 16 Articles.

56. Subsequently, in May 2008, a working group of eight MoWCA officials was formed to coordinate the process of information collection and report preparation.

Since women development is a cross-cutting issue, WID Focal Points mechanism was used as a vehicle for collecting relevant information and sharing multi-sectoral issues at inter-ministerial level and achievements in the area of Women's Advancement relevant for CEDAW reporting.

57. A preliminary Draft Report was prepared in December 2008 that highlighted the requirement of further information related to progress status that GoB made and the difficulties that GoB encountered to implement the CEDAW commitments. The highlights of this preliminary Draft Report was first shared in the inter-ministerial WID Focal Points meeting on 6 May 2009, and based on information received from several Ministries, a second draft report was prepared in June 2009.

58. The need to provide further information was also discussed at the meeting of the Associate WID Focal Points on 15 June 2009.

59. A stakeholder's consultation meeting was organized on 16 September 2009 with representatives of GoB (WID Focal Points), NGOs and civil society to share the revised reporting structure and to collect further information, where the State Minister, MoWCA was present.

60. On 22 October 2009, a Divisional Consultation Meeting was held at Khulna followed by another at Sylhet on 4 November 2009 to collect sub-national level information. The participants included representatives from Government agencies, locally elected women representatives, NGOs, civil society, professional bodies (lawyers, doctors, journalists), ethnic minority etc.

61. A third Draft of the Report was prepared in October 2009 with inputs received from the various meetings and consultations. The salient features of this version was

shared with relevant stakeholders at a final national consultation meeting in Dhaka on 5 November 2009 for further refinement of the report through additional inputs of relevant GOs, LGIs, CSOs including NGOs, women's organizations, key women leaders, gender advocates/activists etc. where the State Minister, MoWCA was present. Subsequently in December 2009, MoWCA finalized the report for submission.

3. Information on Non-Discrimination and Equality and Effective Remedies

62. A new law Citizenship (Amendment) Act, 2009 has been passed by the Parliament amending Section 5 of the Citizenship Law of 1951 to give a Bangladeshi woman the right to transmit her citizenship to her children.

63. The revised Bangladesh Labour Act, 2006 provides for equal pay for equal work, work friendly environment, maternity leave, redress against harassment at the workplace etc.

64. Draft of a new legislation on Prevention of Domestic Violence as The Domestic Violence (Prevention and Protection) Law, 2009 is nearing completion.

65. The Government has taken a positive step in directing that the mother's name be included in all official documents. In 2009, the High Court ruled that the mother's name be inserted in school admission forms, either alone or with that of the father.

Section II: Convention-specific Document

Section II of the Report contains the Convention-specific document.

1. Implementation of Concluding Observations on Fifth Periodic Report

66. This sub-section of the Report provides information on the measures adopted for implementation of concluding observations (particularly ‘concerns’ and ‘recommendations’) to the Fifth Periodic Report and explanations for the non-implementation or difficulties encountered.

67. **Observation** 18**: The Committee urges the State Party to expedite the decision on withdrawal of the remaining reservations to the Convention within a concrete timeframe.**

68. Withdrawal of the reservations relating to article 2 and article 16 (1) (c) is under consideration. Despite the reservations. the Government has taken several positive steps that may be considered to be inconformity with withdrawal of the reservations. NSAPR II (Steps towards Change)[8] specifically mentions policy agenda related actions for 2009-2011 that include among others, withdrawal of reservations and full ratification of CEDAW.

69. Observation **20: The Committee requests that the definition of discrimination against women be brought into conformity with article 1 of the Convention, and in particular that the State party’s responsibility to eliminate all forms of discrimination against women be extended to discrimination perpetrated by private actors.**

70. The definition of discrimination against women as laid down in article 1 of CEDAW is well reflected in the Constitution of Bangladesh. According to Article 27 (Bangladesh Constitution) “All citizens are equal before law and are entitled to equal protection of law”; Article 28 (1), “The State shall not discriminate against any

citizen on grounds only for religion, race, caste, sex or place of birth"; and Article 28 (2), "Women shall have equal rights with men in all spheres of the State and of public life". Article 31 provides the right to be treated in accordance with law. Furthermore, Part III of the Constitution contains all fundamental rights including right to life and personal liberty (Article 32), right to freedom of thought, conscience and speech (Article 39) that are equally applicable for women. Fundamental Principles of State Policy contained in Part II of the Constitution also provides in Article 10, participation of women in national life to the following effect – steps shall be taken to ensure participation of women in all spheres of national life.

71. Reflection of all these Articles is considered in the formulation of related laws in Bangladesh.

72. **Observation 22: The** Committee **calls upon the State party to incorporate without delay the provisions of the Convention into its domestic law and requests the State party to ensure that the provision of the Convention be fully reflected in the Constitution and all legislations.**

73. In Bangladesh Constitution and in some of the related laws, Articles of CEDAW are well reflected. The Constitution does not only provide equal rights to women it also contains the provision for taking appropriate measures for the development and advancement of women in Bangladesh. By dint of these provisions, State has formulated and adopted some Laws and Acts accordingly. It included in the 'Fundamental Principles of State Policy', Part II of the Bangladesh Constitution that,

[8] GED, Planning Commission, August 2009, Policy Matrix 14: Social Inclusion and Empowerment – (a) Women's Advancement and Rights

"Steps shall be taken to ensure participation of women in all spheres of national life". (Article 10).

74. As per Local Government (City Corporation) Ordinance 2008, under section 5, sub-section (2), in each City Corporation one third of the total fixed number of Councillors are kept as reserved seats for women.

75. As per Local Government (*Pourashava*/district headquarters) Ordinance 2008, under section 7, sub-section (1), in each Pourashava one third of the total number of fixed Councillors are kept as reserved seats for women.

76. National Human Rights Commission Act, 2009 authorizes the setting up of a Human Rights Commission, constituted by seven members, of whom at least one will be a woman and one will be from a minority community. The Commission is mandated to investigate violations of human rights and can make recommendations to the Government for submission of reports on human rights violations.

77. Right to Information Act, 2009 entitles all citizens to obtain information from Government agencies. A three member Commission includes one woman.

78. Representative People's (Amendment) Ordinance, 2008 requires political parties to amend party Constitutions by reserving at least 33 percent of all committee positions for women including the central committee and successively achieving this goal by the year 2020.

79. Village Courts Act, 2006 replaces Village Courts Ordinance, 1976 and provides for an institutional form of informal justice, to ease pressure on the formal court system and to provide alternative remedial procedures. The Court is constituted of five members, including 3 elected Union Parishad members.

80. Constitution (Fourteenth Amendment) Act, 2004 established 45 reserved seats for women in the National Parliament that were to be allocated among different political parties in proportion to the number of seats they held in Parliament.

81. Subsequently, Jatiyo Sangsad Reserved Seats for Women Election (Amendment) Act, 2005 repealed the earlier Ordinance of 2004 to reflect the amendment to the Constitution.

82. Muslim Marriages and Divorces (Registration Amendment) Rules, 2005 to enforce registration of marriage by the *Nikah* registrar within 30 days from the date of solemnization. The bridegroom is responsible for ensuring registration, within 30 days, where the marriage is solemnized by a person other than a *Nikah* registrar. Failure to do so is liable to simple imprisonment for a maximum of two years or a fine extending to taka 3,000 or both. Such offences shall be tried by the Court of a First Class Magistrate.

83. Birth and Death Registration Act, 2004 made birth registration compulsory for all citizens of Bangladesh. Birth certificates are now required for school entry, passports, employment etc.

84. The Government has taken a positive step in directing that the mother's name be included in all official documents. In 2009, the High Court ruled that the mother's name be inserted in school admission forms, either alone or with that of the father.

85. The Parliament has passed the Citizenship (Amendment) Act, 2009 amending Section 5 of the Citizenship Law of 1951 to give a Bangladeshi woman the right to transmit her citizenship to her children.

86. Ministry of Land implements development projects for rehabilitation of homeless and landless people through allocation of *khas* land that is registered jointly in the names of husband and wife; and with widows getting entitlement in their own name.

87. **Observation 24: The Committee urges the State party to accord priority attention to the adoption of a comprehensive approach to address violence against women and girls, taking into account its general recommendation 19 on violence against women. The Committee calls on the State party to ensure the effective implementation of the existing legislation to combat all forms of violence against women and to adopt specific legislation on domestic violence within a clear time frame, in order to ensure that women and girls who are victims of violence and sexual harassment have access to protection and effective redress, and perpetrators of such acts are effectively prosecuted and punished. The Committee also recommends gender sensitive training on violence against women for public officials, particularly, law enforcement personnel, the judiciary and health services providers. It further encourages the State party to take effective measures to protect women against fatwa-instigated violence. It calls on the State party to establish shelters where women victims of, or threatened by, violence can be accommodated on a voluntary basis. The Committee also calls on the State party to take measures towards changing social, cultural and traditional attitudes that remain permissive of violence against women.**

88. As reported in the previous periodic report, the most significant law to combat violence against women was The Prevention of Cruelty against Women and Children

Act, 2000 that was amended in 2003. This Act contains punishment against different offences like rape, acid throwing, trafficking of women, and instigating to commit suicide and death because of pressure for dowry. Another major law is the Acid Crime Control Law, 2002 that was amended in 2006 for prevention/control of acid throwing. Under this law, provision for highest punishment is death sentence.

89. With regard to the issue of addressing domestic violence, two drafts of a new law have been submitted to the Government (by the Law Commission in 2005 and by women's and human rights organizations in 2008) based on which MoWCA has prepared draft of The Domestic Violence (Prevention and Protection) Law, 2009. MoWCA has organized three sharing sessions chaired by its Secretary and State Minister in July and October 2009 respectively. MoWCA is finalizing the draft in the light of the suggestions and recommendations received from the stakeholder consultations and will initiate the process of presenting the Draft Bill before the Parliament in its next Session beginning in January 2010.

90. In May 2009, a landmark judgement by the Honourable High Court on sexual harassment has provided guidelines for action in cases of sexual harassment of women at every academic institution, workplace and organization. The Court has directed the Government to treat these guidelines as law until a law is enacted. Further directive calls for the formation of five-member harassment complaint committees at each institution, to be headed by a woman. MoWCA has already formed such a committee and initiatives are underway to formulate a law.

91. **Observation 26:** The **Committee recommends the formulation of comprehensive strategy to combat trafficking in women and girls that should**

include the prosecution and punishment of offenders. The Committee also encourages the State party to pursue increased international, regional and bilateral cooperation with other countries of origin, transit and destination for trafficked women and girls. It recommends the stepping up measures aimed at improving the economic situation of women so as to eliminate their vulnerability to traffickers, the introduction of education and employment initiatives for vulnerable group, including teenage girls and provide support, rehabilitation and reintegration measures for women and girls who have been victims of trafficking. It calls on the State party to ensure that the trafficked women have the support they need to enable them to provide testimony against traffickers. It urges the training of border police and law enforcement officials in order to provide them with the requisite skills to recognize and provide support for victims of trafficking. The Committee further urges the State party to include in its next report comprehensive information and data on the issue and on the impact of measures taken.

92. From 2003 to 2004, MoWCA carried out a series of consultative workshops with eight relevant Ministries and drafted a Country Framework to combat human trafficking, which included prevention, protection, and curative approaches for addressing the trafficking related problems. Relating to the issue of taking measures for medical and socio-legal support services by the State party, Government has taken up various projects and programs that are implemented by the Ministry of Women and Children Affairs, Ministry of Home Affairs, Ministry of Social Welfare and a number of reputed NGOs working for combating human trafficking. The issues

of stepping up measures aimed at improving the economic situation of women so as to eliminate their vulnerability to traffickers have been taken care of through various projects and programs of different Ministries ensuring participation of women in the mainstream economic activities. NSAPR-II has emphasized in the policy matrices of relevant Ministries about effective mainstream economic activities for the vulnerable women and girls. Introduction of safety net scheme is one of the key steps on this issue. The Ministry of Education has taken an approach to target the vulnerable group of population including women and girls. As a strategy, both the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare have sub contracted NGOs to reach the vulnerable groups for targeting them with education projects and to ensure health service facilities. NSAPR-II has given due importance specifically to address the social and economic needs of women and girls. The Ministry of Expatriates' Welfare and Overseas Employment introduced for the first time in Bangladesh, the Overseas Employment Policy,2006 that would enable a favourable environment for safe women labour migration and combating trafficking of women and girls. The Ministry of Home Affairs has been implementing three projects for training of the border security forces, and other law enforcement agencies at different levels. The course on anti trafficking issue has been integrated in the regular training curricula of police training institutions. A group of master trainers have been developed for imparting training on this issue. Considerable number of IEC materials has been produced by MoWCA and MoHA for raising awareness level of the law enforcing agency officials to combat trafficking, and to encourage safe women labour migration. To control illegal migration and to facilitate legal migration, the

Ministry of Expatriates' Welfare and Overseas Employment has set up a separate desk at Dhaka International Airport. BMET has introduced different need based skill s development training courses for the out-going migrant workers at their national and sub national centres; so that women workers would not face problems to perform their job responsibility as per their contract.

93. MoWCA has been providing legal aid support services through its two bilateral projects. To respond to the needs of the survivors, MoWCA has sub-contracted several reputed NGOs to provide legal aid, particularly psycho-social support services. There is a separate National Plan of Action (2002) against the Sexual Abuse and Exploitation of Children including Trafficking in which strategies and activities have been formulated.

94. The Ministry of Home Affairs (MoHA) has taken the lead role in coordinating anti trafficking activities with different line Ministries and their implementing agencies extending their cooperation. The institutional mechanisms in place are as follows:

95. An inter-ministerial/inter-agency committee led by the Secretary MoHA has been formed to monitor the progress of activities undertaken by different Ministries and agencies to combat trafficking in Bangladesh. This committee meets monthly with different stakeholders.

96. A GO-NGO national coordination committee for combating trafficking has been formed and it is composed of representatives of MoHA, MoFA, MoWCA, Attorney General's office, various NGOs, international organizations, UN bodies etc. This

committee is involved in monitoring and implementing programs to combat trafficking. Secretary MoHA chairs the committee and it meets once a month.

97. A monitoring cell for anti trafficking has been set up at the Police Headquarters. This Cell collects information and intelligence regarding trafficking and monitors the movement of criminals, rescue of trafficked persons, assists in prosecuting relevant cases, rehabilitates trafficked persons, and regularly follows up progress of disposal of court cases.

98. The three international airports at Dhaka, Chittagong and Sylhet have a three-stage screening process comprising of (i) screening of persons at the airline check-in counter where passport, visa and air ticket are checked for validity and genuineness, (ii) then, screening at the immigration counter, and finally, (iii) checking before boarding the aircraft by the airline's passport checking unit.

99. A draft guideline for Bangladesh missions abroad to combat trafficking in persons was developed and circulated by MoFA to prevent and protect human trafficking, and punish culprits.

100. Partnership with foreign agencies (such as Unicef, IOM, US Embassy and other development partners) has been strengthened through regular meetings in MoHA.

101. The Government has formulated an Action Plan for Combating Trafficking in Women and Children in Bangladesh and a national policy was launched in 2005 with the aim of creating mass awareness of all classes of people. GOs, NGOs and INGOs are implementing programs under the national policy. The various Ministries involved include MoWCA, MoLGRDC, MoRA, MoE, MoPME, MoI, MOHA, and MoSW.

102. Data from the Monitoring Cell for Combating Trafficking in Women and Children at the Police Headquarters reveal that during the reporting period, 582 women victims were trafficked, of whom 468 were recovered and rehabilitated with their parents and shelter homes run by Government and NGOs. As many as 1,153 traffickers were involved, of whom 686 were arrested by police and surrendered to the court. In terms of disposal of 197 under trial cases relating to women trafficking, 71 ended in conviction (with 124 accused convicted) and 126 ended in acquittal (with 436 accused acquitted). The nature of conviction included 5 death sentences, 71 life term, and 48 other terms and fine. Thus the existing laws provide harsh penalties, including capital punishment, for those who are convicted of trafficking.

103. With a view to pursue increased international, regional and bilateral cooperation with other countries of transit and destination of trafficked women and girls, Bangladesh supports regional efforts under the aegis of SAARC; at bilateral level with USA, through strengthening anti trafficking policy reforms and law enforcement agencies to prosecute trafficking crimes and support TIP victims and public awareness campaigns.

104. Measures to provide support, rehabilitation and reintegration of women and girls who have been victims of trafficking include steps taken by MoHA for quick and smooth repatriation of such victims; Bangladesh Embassies continue to operate safe houses in key destination countries; victim support centre has been established by police to provide shelter, counselling, medical and legal assistance; Government and NGO-run safe homes provide physical and mental treatment, psycho-social counselling, shelter, food, clothing, legal aid and training on skills development for

economic and social reintegration. Local civil administration, police, NGOs and different committees have been advised to regularly monitor the condition of recovered and rehabilitated trafficked persons and report back to MoHA.

105. Information and data on the issue and on the impact of measures taken are provided below:

Year	**Number of cases**	**Number of convictions**	**Number of acquittal**	**Number of victims**	**Victims rescued**
2004	134	37	31	222	206
2005	164	40	82	236	203
2006	116	30	48	242	199
2007	126	13	31	167	114
2008	145	20	17	309	255

106. During the period June 2004 to February 2009, 2079 persons were accused of whom 1,269 were arrested, 231 convicted (comprising 8 sentenced to death, 170 to life term imprisonment, and 53 to other forms of punishment).

107. TIP Report of 2008 published by US State Department has commended Bangladesh's significant efforts for combating trafficking in persons and has ranked the country as tier 2. The report has positively highlighted the role of MoFA and Bangladesh missions abroad in protecting victims of trafficking.

108. On going activities supported by various development partners include provision of training to personnel of LGIs and sensitising police for gender responsiveness; community mobilisation and engagement of boys and men to address gender based

violence (GBV); mapping of programs and institutions for addressing GBV; efforts to establish a VAW data bank; formation of adolescents', fathers' and mothers' forum for empowerment and protection of children; and victim support centre. A recent meeting organized by MoWCA with the development partners that are supporting GBV in Bangladesh decided to form a core group to develop the modality of coordinated programs under the Ministry to address GBV and undertake a comprehensive mapping of the existing programs under various Ministries, civil society, and NGOs.

109. **Observation 28: The** Committee **urges the State party to undertake measures to design and implement comprehensive awareness raising programs to change stereotype attitudes and norms about the roles and responsibilities of women and men in the family and society, and take measure to discourage polygamy. It also calls upon the State party to periodically review the measures taken and assess their impact in order to identify shortcomings and make necessary changes to improve them.**

110. MoWCA and MoSW have been implementing several innovative women development programs that include awareness raising activities to change stereotype attitude and norms about the roles and responsibilities of women and men in the family and society. In case of MoWCA major awareness raising initiatives are Vulnerable Group Development, Vulnerable Group Development for the Ultra Poor, Maternity Allowance Program, Women Support Centres and Safe Custody for Women, Children and Adolescent girls, Early Learning for Child Development, Empowerment and Protection of Children, Promotion of Gender Equality and

Women Empowerment etc. These development activities involves poor distressed and disadvantage women as well as engage man and boys. Development initiatives of MoSW include awareness building and change of attitude through motivation, group meetings, leaflets etc. The monthly progress review and quarterly reporting system for such projects assesses the performance and shortcomings of the interventions.

111. The New Education Policy, 2009 is currently under finalisation and it specifically addresses the issue of changing stereotype attitudes and norms about the roles and responsibilities of women and men in the family and society.

112. **Observation 30: The** Committee **urges the State party to adopt without delay a Uniform Family Code that fully implies with the provisions of the Convention and general recommendation 21 on equality in marriage and family relations, as away to protect the rights of all Bangladeshi women in matters related to marriage, divorce, custody, alimony and property inheritance. It recommends that the State party steps up its efforts to provide awareness raising and training, including on the importance of a uniform Family Code and State party's obligations under the Convention, to community leaders.**

113. This issue is under consideration by the Government.

114. NSAPR II specifically mentions policy agenda related actions for 2009-2011 that include among others, adoption of a Uniform Family Code in order to protect the rights of all women. It is also stated that section 1(2) of the Family Courts Ordinance, 1985, will be amended to include the whole of Bangladesh.

115. **Observation 32: The** Committee **urges the State party to ensure that a new Citizenship Law, which in line with article 9 of the Convention, is adopted without delay, in order to eliminate all provisions that discriminate against women in the area of nationality.**

116. The Parliament has passed the Citizenship (Amendment) Act, 2009 amending Section 5 of the Citizenship Law of 1951 to give a Bangladeshi woman the right to transmit her citizenship to her children.

117. Recently, the Ministry of Education has allowed the use of mother's name for the purposes of registering a student for public examination such as SSC and HSC.

118. **Observation 34: The** Committee **recommends the adoption of a comprehensive gender sensitive migration policy and the conclusion of bilateral and multilateral agreements with destination countries, in order to ensure the promotion and protection of the human rights of Bangladeshi women migrant workers. The Committee also urges the State party to strengthen its information activities so as to ensure that potential women migrants are fully aware of their rights, as well as of potential risks of such employment**.

119. According to Articles 20 and 40 of the Bangladesh Constitution, the state is committed to provide both men and women, assistance in human development and in creating employment according to qualification without discrimination. Recognizing the close linkage between migration and manpower export with economic development, the Government established an independent Ministry in 2001. Considering the important contributions of migrant/expatriate workers to the national economy, the Ministry of Expatriates' Welfare and Overseas Employment

(MoEWOE) introduced the National Overseas Employment Policy[9] in August 2006. This was developed following a participatory process with the key stakeholders including women migrant workers. The objectives of the Policy are to assist both men and women migrant workers to independently choose dignified employment in available job markets abroad, to expand the foreign labour markets, and bring more regulations to this sector for migrants' welfare. This Policy kept the provision of protecting rights of migrant workers, protecting the existing labour markets and discovering new labour markets, human resource development etc. This Policy emphasized on the role of MoWCA in promoting and protecting human rights of women migrant workers. A nine point strategy document for the development of migrant workers has been formulated that includes several programs aimed at safe migration of women workers. MoEWOE has signed a few Memorandums of Understanding (MoUs) on the recruitment of Bangladeshi workers with some labour receiving countries. (Malaysia, Korea etc).

120. To protect the dignity and human rights of the women migrant workers, the Ministry gave special directives to the concerned officials and recruitment agencies while sending women migrant workers to Middle Eastern countries including Saudi Arabia to serve as house maids.

121. A women migrant workers' information centre for awareness building has been established by BMET with support from Unifem. Other activities include training of district level officials of Directorate of Labour, BMET and Deputy Commissioner's official responsible for expatriate welfare; production and dissemination of posters,

[9] This Policy mentions the provision of training to increase opportunities for overseas employment of women in

leaflets, radio and TV documentary and drama, jingle, and workshop to raise awareness on safe migration of women workers.

122. MoWCA has initiated an innovative intervention for supporting the rehabilitation of women and adolescent girl survivors of trafficking and VAW through their management and operation of a restaurant known as *mukti* cafe.

123. **Observation 36: The Committee recommends that the State party establish a monitoring mechanism to ensure the enforcement of legislation requiring employers to provide equal pay for equal work, ensure that maternity leave is available in all public and private employment, especially through the enactment of a law on maternity leave, and expand the number of crèches available for working mothers.**

124. The Bangladesh Labour Act, 2006 mentions that there is to be no discrimination in payment of wages with regard to sex of the workers, ensures the minimum wage and there is no scope to violate this in regard to pay of the workers, ensures the maternity benefits that have been increased from 8 to 16 weeks and qualifying service length has been decreased to six months instead of previous nine months, and ensures the facility for children of the working mothers by increasing the number of crèches.

125. Fifteen monitoring teams have been working on the issues of equal pay for equal work, maternity benefits, number of crèches, and implementation of the other labour laws in both public and private sectors. These teams have been formed by the

professions such as nurses, domestic workers, elderly care, child care etc.

officials of the Department of Labour and the Department of Inspection for Factories and Establishments.

126. As per recommendation of Minimum Wage Board, the Government has declared minimum wage for readymade garments (RMG) workers in 2006. To supervise the implementation and other aspects of RMG factories, 15 special inspections and monitoring team have been working in the RMG factories. According to their report, about 96 percent RMG factories have implemented the declared minimum wage by this time. After five years, the minimum wage will be reviewed and revised according to the ability of the RMG factory owners and market price.

127. NGOs have also adopted policies to address these issues.

128. **Observation 38:** The **Committee recommends that the State party adopt proactive policies for women's increased participation at all levels and when necessary, adopt temporary special measures and establish effective policies and time table to increase the number of women in decision making positions in all spheres. It also calls upon the State party to introduce legislation providing for the direct election of women to the national Parliament rather than through selection by Member of Parliament. The Committee furthermore calls on the State party to sensitise Government officials on the issue of gender discrimination in order to promote a women–friendly environment that would encourage the participation of women in the public life of the country**.

129. Representation of People's Order (RPO), 2008 requires political parties to nominate 33 percent women to contest parliamentary elections as well as to include 33 percent women in all party committees and decision making bodies. RPO 2008

also provides for two elected Vice Chairman in the second tier of local elected bodies, Upazila Parishad, and one of them has to be a woman. Accordingly, 475 women have been elected as Vice Chairman out of 1,936 women who contested during elections held in January 2009.

130. The newly elected Government in January 2009 led by a woman Prime Minister has appointed five women to the cabinet (three as full ministers and two as state ministers) responsible for key portfolios such as Agriculture, Home Affairs, Foreign Affairs, Women and Children Affairs, and Labour and Employment. The Leader of the Opposition in the Parliament is also a woman. For the first time, a woman has been appointed as the Deputy Leader of the House in Parliament and a woman MP has been appointed as the Chairperson of the Parliamentary Standing Committee on MoWCA. There are 57 women members in various Parliamentary Standing Committees. A woman MP is also performing as Whip in Parliament.

131. With regard to women in non-elected decision making positions, there are several women in civil service at the Secretary level such as in MoWCA and MoSW. There are also women Government officials at the Additional Secretary level. There are also several women officials working at the Joint Secretary level in various Ministries. MoWCA has the highest percentage (62) of women officers in grades I and II, followed by 22 percent in MoLJPA, and 14 percent in MoE.

132. The party in power stated in its election manifesto to increase the number of reserved seats for women in Parliament to 33 percent.

133. An increasing number of women voters have participated in successive elections with 50.87 percent in 2008 as compared to 48.2 percent in 2001.

134. As per Local Government (City Corporation) Ordinance 2008, under section 5, sub-section (2), in each City Corporation, one third of the total number of Councillor posts are reserved for women.

135. As per Local Government (*Pourashava*/district head quarters) Ordinance 2008, under section 7, sub-section (1), in each Pourashava, one third of the total number of Councillor posts are reserved for women.

136. Various projects and programs implemented by MoLGRDC (such as Rural Maintenance Program, Roadside Afforestation Program and Vulnerable Group Feeding Program) have ensured women's participation in public places for livelihood upliftment. There have also been changes at the institutional level as local Government bodies have taken initiatives to project a positive image of women leaders and in raising awareness against oppression of women. The Ministry officials are also executing the Government's decisions on compulsory birth registration.

137. LGED has been working in various sectors such as urban, rural and water, for promotion of women's standard of living (through increasing their access to markets and their economic and social empowerment) and supporting them for participation in decision-making processes (through inclusion in various implementation, maintenance and management committees). Other related activities of LGED included development of gender equity strategy and gender action plans, gender development forum, sex disaggregated monitoring format, gender friendly MIS system, gender awareness training to officials at all levels, day care centre at head office etc.

138. Empowered group members of SERWTCI Trust under Ministry of Industries are playing an important role in family/household level decision-making and the group leaders are included in village arbitration (*salish*) committees. Several members are also involved as elected members of Union Parishads (local Government council).

139. In Ministry of Information, out of 12 Departments, two are headed by women. In the newly formed Information Commission, out of three Commissioners, one is a woman.

140. There are six women judges in the Honourable High Court Division of the Supreme Court of Bangladesh.

141. In case of primary school management committees (SMCs), at least three of the total members must be women (two guardians and Head Teacher/Teacher). For payment of stipend money, provisions have been made to open the bank account in mother's name so that the money can be utilized in a better way.

142. **Observation 40: The Committee urges the State party to enact into law the proposed Child Marriage Restraint, Act 2002, and ensure its enforcement, in order to eliminate child marriage.**

143. Enactment of the Act is under active consideration of the Government.

144. **Observation 42:** The **Committee urges the State party to put in place measures for ensuring that safe drinking water is available to all, and particularly to affected rural women and their families. The Committee calls on the State party to prepare without delay a plan of action containing preventive and remedial measures, and prioritising technologies favoured by rural women, their families and local communities that are risk-free, cost effective and**

provide alternatives to underground water withdrawal. The Committee recommends that the State party launch an awareness campaign and proactive health, nutrition, and social programs for affected rural women, their families and local communities. The Committee also calls on the State party to encourage all other actors, who directly or indirectly caused the arsenic crisis, to share in the financial burden of compensating the victims.

145. The existing policies and strategies have recognized the visible role of women in managing safe water supply and sanitation. MoLGRDC has taken various steps to provide safe drinking water to rural women and their families through involving women in development projects implemented by Department of Public Health Engineering (DPHE). Other related activities of DPHE include promotion of women-friendly technologies (such as hand operated pump) and R&D activities related to arsenic contamination of ground water and preference for surface water.

146. There are 133 Community Development Committees (CDCs) led by women under a development project of Local Government Division under Khulna City Corporation. All those CDCs were formed by the Local Partnerships for Urban Poverty Alleviation Project (LPUPAP) and these women were trained to run savings and credit program and implement infrastructural activities in their communities. With the support of LPUPAP, they have installed 616 deep tube-wells and constructed 5,406 sanitary latrines in their communities. The capacity of these women as leaders of CDCs has improved to a great extent.

147. In December 2006, the Ministry of Water Resources has adopted a Gender Equity Strategy and Gender Action Plan from 2006-2011 that included the issue of ensuring

water availability for rural women and women participation in water resources management. This Strategy document has reflected all the strategic needs of women in water sector.

148. NGOs are active in advocacy and service delivery.

149. **Observation 44: The Committee recommends the development of a comprehensive data compilation methodology and urges the State party to include relevant sex disaggregated statistics so as to be able to assess the trend and the impact of programs on country's female population, and to include such data and related analysis in its next periodic report.**

150. In May 2008, MoWCA published 'Database on Women and Children Issues' through compilation of data collected from various secondary sources of the Government with an objective of providing easy access of sex disaggregated data. GoB is planning to further revise its routine/regular statistical publications to reflect sex disaggregated data and integrating gender dimensions in statistics.

151. MoWCA has developed a sex-disaggregated database on several relevant socio economic issues related to women and children. A group of officials were trained on excel software operation to maintain the updated information on the sex disaggregated database.

152. In response to request from the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC), MoWCA has developed a Gender Data Base and sent to SAARC Secretariat in Nepal.

153. The Ministry of Post and Telecommunications has developed a gender disaggregated data collection method to collect information from field level. This field level information has been sent to MoWCA as per their reporting requirement.

154. The Ministry of Labour and Employment has been maintaining sex disaggregated information and sending to MoWCA for periodical reporting both at national and international levels.

155. The Ministry of Health and Family Welfare was working to establish a Central Monitoring Cell within the Ministry through which sex disaggregated data would be compiled.

156. BBS is mainly responsible for publishing public sector data and public sector employment data is maintained by the Ministry of Establishment. BBS conducted a study titled Social and Gender Statistics that compiled some important indicators showing participating ratio of women and men in various sectors of development. In May 2009, BBS has published 'Gender Statistics of Bangladesh 2008' that includes sex disaggregated data for different socio-economic sectors.

157. To institutionalise the concept of gender equality and gender mainstreaming, 32 Ministries have been implementing their projects and programs using gender responsive budgeting process under the Medium Term Budget Framework (MTBF) led by the Ministry of Finance (MoF). There is an obligation for the implementing Ministries to report progress of work periodically to the General Economics Division (GED) of the Planning Commission through which Government assesses the results of its efforts on gender equality issue. GoB has sub-contracted several NGOs to implement awareness raising activities down to the grassroots levels as an effort for

changing attitudes of the rural society towards women's rights and access to equal opportunities. Availability of sex –disaggregated statistics will contribute to make the ongoing MTBF process to be more effective.

158. The Ministry of Women and Children Affairs and the Ministry of Finance have been implementing two projects towards institutionalisation of gender mainstreaming approach to gender equality. They have been using some tools for engendering planning, engendering budgeting, engendering monitoring; and review of project proposals from a gender perspective. The key officials of MoWCA, MoHFW, MoI and MoF have received capacity enhancement training to institutionalise gender-based analysis in to GoB systems and mechanisms.

159. NGOs have also started practicing similar gender responsive budgeting; MoWCA and Ministry of Information have been active in awareness raising of the mass population; NGOs are active in popularising CEDAW among grassroots people; Citizens Initiative for CEDAW is active in preparing and submission of alternative periodic report.

160. **Observation 45: The Committee encourages the State party to withdraw its declaration made in accordance with article 10, paragraph 1, of the Optional Protocol.**

161. The withdrawal of the declaration is under active consideration of the Government.

162. **Observation 47:**Taking **accounts of the gender dissemination of the declarations, programs and platforms for action adopted by relevant United Nations conferences, summits and special session such as the special session of**

the general assembly to review and apprise the implementation of the program of Action of the International Conference on the Population and Development (the twenty first special session), the special Session of the General Assembly on children (the twenty-seventh special session) the conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance, and the second World Assembly on Ageing, the Committee requests the State party to include information on the implementation of aspects of those documents relating to relevant articles of the Convention in its next periodic report.

163. The Government is reviewing the concept note on the draft general recommendation on older women and protection of their human rights as discussed at the 44th session of CEDAW Committee held in August 2009. MoFA has already written to MoWCA in this regard. Some support facilities have been established under private initiatives.

164. **Observation 48: The Committee notes that State's adherence to the seven major international human rights instruments, i.e. the International Convention on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (CESCER), the International Convention on Civil and Political Rights (CCPR), the International Convention on Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (CERD), the Convention on All Forms of Discrimination Against Women(CEDAW), the Convention against Torture and other cruel, Inhuman or degrading Treatment or Punishment (CAT), the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), and the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of their Families (MWC) enhances the enjoyment by**

women of their humane rights and fundamental freedoms in all aspects of life. Therefore, the Committee encourages the Government of Bangladesh to consider ratifying the treaty to which it is not yet a party, i.e. the International Convention on the Protection of Rights of All Migrant Workers and their Families.

165. Government has enacted several progressive laws to further equal access to justice for women such as National Human Rights Commission Act, 2009; Right to Information Act, 2009; The Representation of People's Ordinance, 2008; The Village Courts Act, 2006; Muslim Marriages and Divorce (Registration) (Amendment) Act, 2007; and The Citizenship Act, 2009.

166. **Observation 49: The** Committee **requests wide dissemination of the present concluding comments in order to make the people of Bangladesh, and particularly Government official, politicians, Parliamentarians and women's non-Governmental organizations aware of the steps that have been taken to ensure de jure and de facto equality for women and the future steps required in that regard. It also requests the Government to continue to disseminate widely, in particular to women's and human rights organizations general recommendations, the convention and its Optional Protocol, the Committee's general recommendations, the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the results of the twenty-third special session of General Assembly, entitled "Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century".**

167. MoWCA organized a Round Table Discussion in 2007 for raising awareness on the concluding observations made by the CEDAW Committee on the presentation of the Fifth Periodic Report. This was organized for two reasons: one to make the different Ministries aware about their obligations to take the appropriate measures; and secondly, to collect the information from the relevant Ministries about progress against each concluding observation.

168. A reporting chart was prepared by MoWCA and distributed during the WID Focal Points meeting in August 2007; and in 2008, a reporting format on Article 2-16 of CEDAW was distributed among the WID Focal Points to facilitate the next reporting status. As a result, substantial information has been collected from WID Focal Points in different Ministries. The initiative for dissemination was continued during the sub-national and national stakeholder's consultations. WID FP mechanism continues to work on this through various programs.

169. There were two sub-national Divisional level dissemination and consultations at Khulna and Sylhet. In addition, two national level stakeholder consultations were held in Dhaka, where the State Minister, MoWCA was present.

170. Both the Government and NGOs are active in dissemination among grassroots people.

2. Additional Legal and other Appropriate Steps and Measures Undertaken

This sub section of the Report provides information on additional legal and other appropriate steps and measures undertaken towards the implementation of the Convention. The information below is structured so

as to follow the main clusters (Parts I-IV) of the Convention, and deals with every Article (1 to 16).

A. Part I

Article 1: Definition of Discrimination

171. Definition of discrimination as per Convention is contained in the Constitution of Bangladesh. All Government documents such as policies, strategies, action plans etc. are in line with such definition.

172. **Article 2: Obligations to eliminate discrimination against women by all appropriate means, e.g. policy, legislative, institutional, practical and other measures**

173. Bangladesh Government has taken several steps to eliminate discrimination against women in the different socio economic sphere of women's lives. To achieve international gender equality policy commitments made in CEDAW, PFA and MDGs, Bangladesh Government has adopted, under the coordination of the Ministry of Women and Children Affairs (MoWCA) the National Plan of Action for Women's Advancement for the implementation of PFA's twelve concerns. Under the coordination of General Economics Division (GED) of the Ministry of Planning (MoP), Government has adopted its National Strategy for Accelerated Poverty Reduction (NSAPR) I and II to implement the international commitments made in CEDAW, MDGs and PFA. These two important GoB instruments have emphasized on various strategies and activities to eliminate discrimination against women.

174. MoWCA, through the WID Focal Points Mechanism regularly follows up the implementation of NAP and NSAPR. The second NSAPR has also been approved

recently where gender mainstreaming has been reflected in all sectoral and line Ministries' Policy Matrices. To implement these national strategies and action plans, GoB has been piloting an activity known as the Medium Term Budget Framework (MTBF) exercise under the Financial Management Reform Project (FMRP). This activity is being piloted in a phased manner in 32 Ministries facilitated by the Ministry of Finance (MoF) where poverty reduction and gender equality for women's advancement have been indicated as key issues. All 32 Ministries prepare their projects and programs following the format of Budget Call Circular 1 (BC1) provided by the Ministry of Finance. Within MoF, a total of 14 Budget Desk Officers have been assigned to review the project and program documents submitted by 16 Ministries. In BC1, section 3 and Form 4 have concentrated to report on the impact on women's advancement through GoB interventions. This exercise included projects and programs under both development and revenue budgets of GoB. This intervention is indeed a paradigm shift in the GoB budget preparation process. MoWCA and MoF, through two bilateral projects have been providing technical assistance to build the capacity of the officials belonging to the Budget Working Group (BWG) and Budget Management Committee (BMC) of selected Ministries. An informal group under the Chair of Finance Division/MoF has been formed in 2007 to follow-up, particularly poverty and gender themes in the BC1.

175. As part of the process to introduce a gender sensitive budget, Ministry of Finance has taken the initiative to disaggregate the budgets and beneficiary data on a gender basis for four important Ministries – Education, Health and Family Welfare, Social Welfare, and, Food and Disaster Management. This initiative by the Government

will also cover other Ministries in future. The respective Ministries have addressed women's advancement and rights issues in their respective activities and with the decision-making structure from a gender perspective while looking at the employment structure and salary distribution.

176. In case of MoE, it was estimated that in 2008-2009, 22.89 percent (Tk. 15,410.4 million) of the Ministry's budget was utilized for the benefit of girls and women. The corresponding figure for 2009-2010 is 24.91 percent (Tk. 18,472 million). More specifically, the annual development program budget (ADP) for 2009-2010 has allocated 46.68 percent for women's development.

177. In case of MoHFW, it was estimated that in 2008-2009, 65.44 percent (Tk. 40,615.4 million) of the Ministry's budget was utilized for the benefit of girls and women. The corresponding figure for 2009-2010 is 63.7 percent (Tk. 44,594.7 million). More specifically, the annual development program (ADP) budget for 2009-2010 has allocated 48.88 percent for women's development.

178. In case of MoSW, it was estimated that in 2008-2009, 21.39 percent (Tk. 2,167.5 million) of the Ministry's budget was utilized for the benefit of girls and women. The corresponding figure for 2009-2010 is 21.38 percent (Tk. 2,786 million). More specifically, the annual development program (ADP) budget for 2009-2010 has allocated 48.69 percent for women's development.

179. Department of Social Services (DSS) under MoSW has been implementing several programs for the upliftment and empowerment of women including social safety net programs. In pursuance of the recommendation of the parliamentary

standing committee on MoSW, the Ministry is going to lower the age limit of women from 65 to 62 years for entitlement for old age allowance.

180. In case of MoFDM, it was estimated that in 2008-2009, 52.01 percent (Tk. 26,954.4 million) of the Ministry's budget was utilized for the benefit of girls and women. The corresponding figure for 2009-2010 is 52.34 percent (Tk. 30,748 million). More specifically, the annual development program (ADP) budget for 2009-2010 has allocated 42.3 percent for women's development.

181. Through MoWCA, GoB has developed in-house institutional capacity to address gender equality through gender mainstreaming in seven Ministries (MoWCA, MoHFW, MoP, MoF. MoE, MoI and Local Government Division).

182. MoWCA trained approximately 30 members of Budget Working Group of MoWCA, MoHFW, MoP and 20 Budget Desk Officers of MoF on poverty and gender themes of the Budget Call Circular 1 (BC 1). This has been done to build the capacity of concerned officials on engendering the budgeting process in accordance with the GoB's policies and strategies on GE/GM.

183. To reiterate the obligation of the Government to fulfil its commitments, MoWCA trained more than 200 officials from MoWCA, MoHFW, MoP and MoF on the national and international policy commitments of GoB on GE/GM issues through Gender Responsive Budgeting (GRB) training and workshops.

184. MoWCA had taken an activity together with the Ministry of Planning to introduce a Guideline for preparing and reviewing Technical Project Proposal (TPP) and Development Project Proforma (DPP) from gender responsive planning and gender responsive budgeting perspectives.

185. In case of MoPME, to reduce gender disparity and ensure wide participation of women in development activities, 60 percent posts of teachers have been reserved for women. As a result, the overall percentage of women teachers in primary schools has already reached 50 percent. A policy to increase the number of women officials at various levels of the management of primary education is being pursued. Textbooks are reviewed in the context of gender and necessary revisions have been made.

186. **Article 3: All Appropriate Measures in the Political, Social, Economic and Cultural Fields to Ensure Full Development and Advancement of Women**

187. MoWCA and its two agencies (Department of Women Affairs and Jatiyo Mohila Sangstha) implement various programs aimed at poverty reduction, employment creation and providing social safety nets. These include:

- Vulnerable Group Development (VGD) covering 750,000 distressed and ultra-poor women who receive food assistance and development package training
- Vulnerable Group Development for Ultra-Poor (VGDUP) covering 80,000 women who are provided life skills training on income generating activities, nutrition, primary health, human rights, HIV/AIDS, reproductive health, gender and rights issues, environment etc. In addition, the women benefit from subsistence allowance, savings creation and asset transfer.
- Micro credit programs for poor and distressed women to develop their socio-economic condition through self-employment.
- 18 Day Care Centres in Dhaka and five other divisional towns.
- Grants to women volunteer social welfare centres.
- Grants for poor and distressed women and children.

- Widows Allowance covering 0.9 million distressed widows and divorced women in 2008-2009.
- Maternity Allowance covering 60,000 poor pregnant women in 2008-2009 with the objective to reduce mortality rate of mother and child, and to increase breast feeding.
- 8 Hostels for working women in Dhaka and four divisional towns accommodating 1,403 women.
- Distribution of sewing machines to poor and trained women for making them self-reliant.
- Sales and Display Centre in Dhaka to promote marketing of products produced by women entrepreneurs.
- Women Support Centres for distressed shelter less and helpless oppressed women for their rehabilitation and facilities for food, health and clothing.
- Safe custody for women, adolescent girls and children during their trial in courts.
- Employment Information Centre for educated, skilled and unskilled women.
- Cell for the prevention of VAW.

188. 180. The Ministry of Primary and Mass Education has carried out some important activities such as:

- Provision for registration of both mother’s and father’s names during enrolment in primary schools.
- For the payment of stipend money for primary education, the bank account has to be opened in mother’s name.

- To encourage more women to join primary schools as teachers, steps have been taken to increase the residential capacity of the women's hostels at the Primary Training Institutes (PTIs).

189. The pro-women policies and major activities of MoHFW include improvement of mother and child health, improvement of reproductive health, provision of general health care services, provision of specialized health care services, control of communicable and non-communicable diseases, ensure nutrition status and safety of food, increase the efficiency of the drug sector, and develop personnel in the health sector.

190. The pro-women policies and major activities of MoSW include old-age allowance scheme, allowance for distressed persons with disabilities, programs for the orphans, and educational stipends for students with disabilities. For two of the largest programs, 60 percent of the beneficiaries are women and on average, 59 percent of the total funds for programs go to women.

191. Department of Social Services (DSS) has been implementing poverty alleviation programs through provision of micro credit to over 954,000 women for job creation, need based skill training to over 971,200 women for their self employment and wage employment, and increase in standard of living. These programs include Rural Mothers' Centre (covering 12,956 villages in 318 sub districts), Rural Social Services, Urban Community Development, and Rehabilitation for Acid Burnt and Physically Handicapped Women. DSS also undertakes programs to prevent dowry through awareness building, change of attitude through motivation, group meetings, leaflets etc. Over 358,000 persons have been covered by the anti dowry program and

9,455 DSS employees have committed not to take or give dowry from their families. DSS also implements training and rehabilitation programs for vagrants and 2,108 socially disadvantaged women have been rehabilitated/integrated in their families and in the society.

192. The pro-women policies and major activities of MoFDM include building adequate levels of food stock to ensure food security, stabilizing the market price of food grain and ensuring a fair price for farmers during harvesting, easing food/cash availability for the poor during periods of food crisis and unemployment, developing national policy and institutions, strengthening/integrating disaster management and risk reduction capability, and constructing physical infrastructure in response to disasters.

193. As media has been playing a key role in changing the attitudes and belief of peoples' sentiment on various social issues, the Ministry of Information has been portraying the role of women positively in national electronic and print media. They have been producing different articles on women and poverty, women's contribution to the family and national economy. The Ministry of Information has been using opportunities of International Women's Day in March; Labour Day in May, Girl Child Day in October, and Begum Rokeya Day in December. During the celebration of the above-mentioned national days, both MoWCA and MoI have been publicising the country's situation, Government and non-Government initiatives in the areas of political, social, economic and cultural fields. The Ministry undertakes awareness creation programs through drama, talk show, documentary, song, miking, community meeting, feature, training, workshop, seminar etc. organized by its various agencies.

These interventions cover women rights, women trafficking, dowry, early marriage, reproductive health, HIV/AIDS, and overall behaviour change towards women in the society. In 2008, the Ministry produced four documentaries through its agency, Department of Films and Publications, in safe motherhood, curse of dowry, AIDS prevention, child labour, and sanitation. The Department of Mass Communication is broadcasting these films. Bangladesh Television and Bangladesh *Betar* (Radio) broadcasts 350 minutes of programs every day on issues related to women and children development from 12 regional stations. The Ministry has also initiated exchange of views with NGOs/CSOs on women development issues.

194. In 2007, the Ministry of Information developed a gender responsive training module and conducted a Training of Trainers (ToT) course through which a pool of trainers has been developed. These trained officials and journalists of Press Institute of Bangladesh (PIB) and Press Information Department (PID) have been imparting training courses for the journalists located at sub national geographical areas, to transfer knowledge and skills of writing articles related to gender mainstreaming and gender equality issue, and to build up gender based analytical skills of journalists.

195. The Ministry of Information conducted 4 training courses on Gender and Media for the officials of the Press Institute of Bangladesh (PIB), Press Information Department (PID) and the Ministry of Information (MoI) itself. Some of the journalists have already produced and published their articles on gender equality issues in some national and sub national daily newspapers.

196. Agencies under the Ministry of Industries have undertaken the following activities:

- SERWTCI Trust, initiated in 1986 as a development project and registered as a trust in 1996, is an autonomous organization for socio-economic development of distressed women. Its activities include mobilization, group formation, social awareness raising, skill development training, and self-employment through credit support. The social and economic development of these women has also contributed to their political and cultural awareness. As a result, many women have contested the local Government elections at union and upazila levels, and several have been elected as members of Union Parishads.
- Bangladesh Small and Cottage Industries Corporation (BSCIC) provides support to women entrepreneurs and development and expansion of their micro enterprises through provision of skill training, design training, entrepreneurship development training, credit, technical advice and motivation. Advice is also provided to promote marketing of products made by women entrepreneurs through exhibitions. Women entrepreneurs are encouraged and motivated to set up their enterprises in BSCIC industrial estates.
- SME Foundation has established Women Entrepreneurship Development section that supports institutional capacity development of the women trade bodies, encourages women entrepreneurs, and works towards removing their regulatory barriers.

197. Ministry of Post and Telecommunications has included gender development curriculum in different training institutions under the Ministry. Postal Department, an agency under the Ministry, has released postal stamps on International Women's Day and International Women Migrants' Day. Bangladesh Telecommunications

Company Ltd., owned by the Government, has promoted women friendly slogans on monthly telephone bills.

198. Bangladesh Rural Development Board (BRDB) under the Rural Development and Cooperatives Division of MoLGRDC, has implemented projects to support 2,028,461 rural women formed into 53,973 cooperative societies through provision of Tk. 32,287 million as credit. This credit amount has been utilized for various income-generating activities for their own sustainability. A total of 639,949 women have also been provided with training on skill development, human development, health, nutrition, family planning, and women development. 2,850 women officials and staff have also been trained.

199. Bangladesh Academy for Rural Development (BARD) also under the Rural Development and Cooperatives Division of MoLGRDC, has implemented two projects – Education, Income and Nutrition Development of Women, and Gender Rights Operation and Violence Elimination – for raising awareness on resisting family level preference towards boys and violence against children. Training has also been provided for counselling, motivational activities and establishing linkages as support towards legal aid.

200. Rural Development Academy (RDA) also under the Rural Development and Cooperatives Division of MoLGRDC, has provided training on skill development, awareness building, orientation courses, on-the job and functional courses to 1,387 women. It has conducted research on seven women and gender specific topics and over 3,036 women have been involved.

201. Bangladesh Milk Producers' Cooperative Union Ltd. (known by their brand 'Milk Vita') has two primary milk producers cooperative societies comprised exclusively of women. These two societies were formed in 1983 and 1992, and currently there are 130 and 230 members owning 2,485 and 3,426 cows respectively.

202. The Ministry of Religious Affairs carried out through its agency (Islamic Foundation) some awareness raising activities to change the attitudes of the society towards women and to upgrade women's position in the society. This Ministry introduced some IEC materials on women's rights issues and distributed these at different social and religious functions.

203. The following activities are being implemented by the Ministry of Religious Affairs:

- Under mass education programs of Islamic Foundation some education centres for adult and disadvantaged women have been established to provide education support.
- An awareness raising program is being implemented for improving women's social status and dignity where the issues of social dignity, importance of women education, status of health and nutrition of women, importance of family planning, prevention and protection from AIDS, responsibility of keeping the social harmony and peace, discouraging child marriage, social and cultural norms and safe motherhood are covered. This program is implemented under the Human Resource Development project.
- Under the pre-primary education project, the Ministry encourages male and female children to attend schools and to reduce school drop out rate.

- Through its training academy for *imams*/religious leaders, sessions were carried out on women participation in the socio-economic development and establishment of their social rights in the society. The women centres established by the Ministry are conducting discussion sessions and seminars on housing, sanitation, fundamental human rights, and mother and child health.
- To upgrade social status of poor and disadvantaged women, financial assistance has been provided from *Zakat* fund through Islamic mission.
- During observation of religious events such as *Eid-e-Miladunnabi*, series of discussions were carried out for fifteen days on norms of women behaviour, prevention of dowry, child marriage etc. with a view to solve women's various problems.
- During the holy Friday (*Juma*) prayer time at the Baitul Mokkaram National Mosque in Dhaka, discussions were held on role and responsibilities of women decided by state and society, women's justified rights, family harmony, and divorce, to sensitise religious leaders to perform their proper role to reduce the oppression of women.
- Books and articles on establishment of women's rights, economic value of women's labour, elimination of dowry, demerits of early marriage, protection of women's heath and safe motherhood have been published.

204. **Article 4:** Temporary **Special Measures to Accelerate De Facto Equality Between Women and Men**

205. Most of the Ministries of the Government of Bangladesh have taken different temporary special measures to accelerate GoB's interventions towards gender equality issue.

206. MoWCA and its two agencies (Department of Women Affairs and Jatiyo Mohila Sangstha) have been implementing various projects for human resources development. These include:

- Handicraft and Agricultural Training Centre for 200 women for provision of training on improved handicrafts, sewing, embroidery, food processing, poultry, farming, livestock, pisciculture, horticulture etc.
- District based Women Computer Training for 4,800 women in 30 district towns.
- Urban based Marginal Women Development project covering 26,700 poor and unemployed women in Dhaka and five divisional towns for provision of training on sewing and embroidery, block-*batik* and screen printing, *nakshi kantha* and cutting, poultry farming, food processing and preservation, leather crafts making, soap and candle making, binding and packaging, mobile engineering and house keeping.
- Rural Women Development project covering 11,700 poor and distressed rural women in 2008-2009 for training and credit for taking up income generating activities.

207. MoWCA and its two agencies (Depart of Women Affairs and Jatiyo Mohila Sangstha) have been implementing various projects for gender equality, legal and social empowerment of women, and to address violence against women. These include:

- Policy Leadership and Advocacy for Gender Equality (PLAGE II) project supports the Government in implementing its national and international policy commitments particularly focusing on NSAPR, MGDs, CEDAW, and NAP. The project is led by

MoWCA and works with six partner Ministries (Planning, Finance, Information, Local Government, Education and Health).

- Promoting Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment project organizes training, workshops, coalitions and support services for women victims through legal, medical support and shelter. Though this project, policy dialogue sessions involving men and boys are organized to motivate them towards gender equality.
- Multi-Sectoral Program on VAW has set up six one stop service centres (OCCs) where women victims of violence receive medical treatment, police assistance, legal support, psychological counselling, rehabilitation service and shelter. The program has also set up a DNA Profiling Laboratory in Dhaka Medical College and a National Trauma Counselling Centre in Dhaka.

208. The Ministry of Primary and Mass Education carried out the following activities:

- Basic Education with skill training is being provided to 0.2 million children and adolescents in six divisional cities under Basic Education for Hard to Reach Urban Working Children Project, 60 percent of which are girls.
- Skill training linked with income generating activities has been provided to 0.97 million neo-literates out of the targeted 2.9 million under Post Literacy and Continuing Education Project, 50 percent of which are women.

209. The Ministry of Women and Children Affairs (MoWCA) held four quarterly WID Focal Points meetings on NSAPR monitoring, NAP monitoring and CEDAW reporting, which created a learning momentum among the WID Focal Points. Approximately 60 WID Focal Points and Associate WID Focal Points participated in

those meetings. MoWCA supplied an electronic version of NAP to 36 Ministries to provide information related to implementation status of NAP/PFA progress.

210. MoWCA has carried out a feasibility study in 2007 to find out a strategy for enhancing the capacity of gender-based analysis, planning, implementation and monitoring of the officials of Jatiya Mohila Sangstha (JMS), Department of Women Affairs (DWA) as well as MoWCA. To address the outcome of the feasibility study, MoWCA has under taken an initiative to build capacity of a core group of officials to act as Trainers of the National Women Training Academy and the Regional Training Centres.

211. In 2007, to enhance the capacity in gender responsive planning, implementation and monitoring, under the leadership of MoWCA, 22 senior officials (in two batches) from the Ministries of Planning, Finance, Health and Family Welfare, Information and Women and Children Affairs participated in a "Study Mission" to Canada on GE/GM issues, and some learnings have already been introduced in the Ministries of Finance, Planning and Women and Children Affairs.

212. MoWCA has introduced a compiled document, electronic and printed, related to sex disaggregated ‘Database on Women and Children Issues’ from already generated data by different Government institutions. To maintain this database, 22 staff members of MoWCA were trained on Excel software operation to work regularly on database updating.

213. MoWCA produced and disseminated information materials for raising awareness among the Government and non-Government stakeholders on GoB’s initiatives for gender mainstreaming within Government system and mechanism. In March 2008,

MoWCA has established Begum Rokeya Documentation Centre (BRDC) outside the Bangladesh Secretariat with reports, books and other IEC materials to make information available to the relevant stakeholders, academicians, researchers and practitioners in the field of women's development. MoWCA and MoI also produced quarterly publications/newspaper supplements commemorating special days (Begum Rokeya Day, International Women's Day, and May Day/Labour Day).

214. The Ministry of Finance and MoWCA jointly conducted a GO-NGO Consultation on Gender Responsive Budgeting under Medium Term Budget Framework (MTBF). Inputs were provided by the eminent NGO officials to improve the process of engendering national budget as well as preparing the proposals of different MTBF Ministries. More than 60 representatives participated in the consultation, which provided important insights and suggestions for future cooperation.

215. During the period 2006-2007, MoWCA carried out 5 one-day basic training courses on Conceptual Clarity on Gender and Development issues and integration of the learning into existing plans and programs of MoWCA, MoI, MoHFW and Health Wings of SEI Division/MoP. More than 100 officials received this training.

216. Under a project of MoWCA, a technical team carried out an informal survey on 'Gender Mainstreaming Good Practices within the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare (MoHFW)' and shared the draft findings for validation with the senior officials of Planning Wing, Gender Issue Office (GIO) and Health Directorates. This short survey was carried out to generate lessons learned for reference of other partner Ministries. MoHFW has established significant institutional arrangements in the area of gender mainstreaming. There is a GIO under revenue budget and Gender, NGO

Stakeholders Participation (GNSP) Unit under development budget. There is an Advisory Committee in MoHFW established to provide advice in the area of gender equity issues. The Ministry itself has a Gender Equity Strategy, which has been reflected in its major sector program - Health, Nutrition and Population Sector Program (HNPSP).

217. MoHFW in collaboration with MoWCA conducted a 2-day in-depth workshop with the senior officials of MoHFW on Gender Responsive Monitoring Indicators of HNPSP. The 62 Monitoring Indicators were reviewed by the senior officials of MoHFW to engender the existing indicators.

218. From 2007, the Ministry of Post and Telecommunications has implemented some significant activities to raise awareness about the promotion and protection of women's human rights. They carried out awareness raising programs through releasing postal stamps in celebrating the International Migration Day, International Women's Day and World AIDS Day. This Ministry also introduced training on women and development and gender issues in its regular professional training courses. The training institutions are Postal Academy and Telephone and Telegraphs Staff College. To ensure participation of women employees in different national and international forums, instruction has been introduced for equal facilities and equal participation for male and women staff in the decision-making process and to provide similar facilities to women.

219. The Ministry also introduced sex-disaggregated database for collecting information and for reporting purposes.

220. Ministry of Information and its several agencies such as Radio Bangladesh, Bangladesh Television, Department of Mass Communication, Department of Films and Publications, Press Information Department, Press Institute of Bangladesh, National Institute of Mass Communication and Bangladesh Sangbad Sangstha have all been active in promoting women development and women empowerment through interventions related to women education, women rights, VAW, dowry, safe motherhood, medical advice, AIDS etc. Various activities include slogans, songs, group presentation, spots, jingles, folklore, interviews, drama, documentary, talk shows, day observance, films, features, training etc. The Ministry is also implementing projects such as Advocacy on Reproductive Health and Gender Issues through the Department of Mass Communication and Advocacy and Communication for Children and Women.

221. Since 2007, SME Foundation under the Ministry of Industries has organized training for office executives and executive members of women trade bodies/associations on business communication strategy, office management, leadership development and computer application. In addition, 2,015 women entrepreneurs have received training on different issues. Ten women entrepreneurs were supported to participate in SMIDEC fair in Malaysia and sharing meeting on gender activities was organized with a delegation of women entrepreneurs from Pakistan. Two national SME women entrepreneurs conferences were organized and inaugurated by the head of state. A divisional conference was held in Chittagong in 2008. National SME women expo was organized in 2008 including a roundtable discussion on ‘Export dynamism in SMEs: Challenges and Opportunities’ in

collaboration with Export Promotion Bureau (EPB). Women entrepreneurs' contribution to economic development was recognized through naming eight outstanding women entrepreneurs in different categories such as best women entrepreneur, best innovative entrepreneur, best enterprise etc.

222. SME Foundation has conducted a study on the major challenges and opportunities for women entrepreneurs in Bangladesh. The Foundation has successfully advocated with Bangladesh Bank and commercial banks to set up a special booth for women entrepreneurs. A workshop was conducted on strengthening attitude and behaviour of banking institutions towards access to credit, inclination of borrowing and compliance of credit and finance for women SMEs. A pilot credit-wholesaling program is underway for women entrepreneurs' access to credit at 9 percent rate of interest. SME National Women Entrepreneurs Forum will be launched soon. Four ICT based helpline centres have been established at different women trade bodies viz., WEAB, CWCCI, BWCCI, and NASCIB to provide access to information.

223. Several NGOs are active in undertaking interventions to reduce discrimination against women through various measures. For example, Women for Women has conducted research on 13 topics, published 18 documents, organized 15 consultative meetings, open discussions, seminars, workshops etc. It has also organized 7 specific activities related to CEDAW such as training programs and seminars.

224. Another NGO, Yukta has organized a gender fair in Dhaka to raise awareness on women's rights with support from The British Council. This fair was replicated in six other cities and towns. Other activities have included workshops, publications etc.

225. Society for Environment and Human Development has organized investigative reporting, seminars and discussion meetings, capacity building and training courses for NGO staff, sex workers and indigenous people.

226. **Article 5:** Measures **to Address Sex Roles and Stereotyping Towards Eliminating Prejudices and Biases**

227. The Ministry of Finance through MTBF process has been addressing this issue. All 32 Ministries have been preparing their project documents using the format provided by the Ministry of Finance where the issues of gender equality, poverty reduction, empowerment of women and access to resources and control over resources have been outlined/reflected. This is a major shift for the Government to work from WID to GAD approach by introducing some standard forms and guidelines. However, more needs to be done for better conceptual clarity is not clear to the all implementers at different levels. This is a formal institutional arrangement to address the stereotyping of women in the name of sex roles. For long, it was the general assumption that most women would be recruited in the professions of teaching and nursing. But now in Bangladesh, the opportunity for women to join any type of profession is being encouraged. There has been increased participation of women in non-traditional professions – civil service, barristers advocates, airline pilots, vehicle drivers, doctors, engineers, police officials, and continuous social education programs run by several NGOs. This represents a significant measure from GoB in the area of addressing sex roles and stereotyping.

228. Budget Management Act, 2009 has been promulgated to ensure financial management for economic sustainability through gender equality in fund allocation and transparency.

229. The Ministry of Local Government, Rural Development and Cooperatives has been supporting Khulna City Corporation in implementing projects for empowering women through their membership in implementation committees responsible for safe drinking water facilities and micro credit activities. A total of 133 community development committees led by women are functional. As many as 616 deep tube wells and 5,406 sanitary latrines have been installed under the leadership of these committees. This is a unique example of Government initiative to involve the women folk in non-traditional activities.

230. In Bangladesh, women were generally not allowed to work outside beyond their own household chores. But things have been changing as per demand of human livelihood necessity. Now a days, women are even going abroad to get employment in the foreign job markets.

231. The Ministry of Expatriates' Welfare and Overseas Employment (MoEWOE) has introduced the National Overseas Employment Policy in August 2006. This Policy has kept provision to facilitate safe women labour migration. More than 3 memorandums of understandings (MoUs) have been signed between the labour sending country (Bangladesh) and labour destination countries (Malaysia, Korea and Saudi Arabia). From 1991-2007, about 74,074 women migrants have been given clearance for overseas employment. This is 6 percent of total international migration in 2006 and 4 percent in 2007. As per record, up to now more than 17 countries

received Bangladeshi women as migrant workers. A circular was sent by the Ministry to different recruiting agents to follow some rules and regulations for the promotion and protection of women workers sent abroad as domestic helper or for household workers.

232. The Ministry of Primary and Mass Education carried out following activities as measures to address sex roles and stereotyping towards eliminating prejudices and biases:

233. Provision for registration of both mother's and father's names during enrolment in primary schools,

234. For the payment of stipend money for primary education, the bank account has to be opened in mother's name.

235. Electronic and print media are challenging sex stereotyping and publishing articles, arranging talk shows on day celebration, organizing *achar* (pickle) competition and giving commercial value to traditional food products made by women.

236. **Article 6:** Suppression **of All Forms of Exploitation Against Women**

MoHA has taken several deterrent measures that include:

- Cell at Police Headquarters
- Screening of persons at airports and land ports
- Rescue and recovery of survivors of trafficking and apprehension of traffickers by border security force, police and Rapid Action Battalion (RAB)
- Rehabilitation of survivors

- Regular flow of timely and accurate reports from the districts to MoHA and Monitoring Cell at the Police Headquarters based on specifically designed formats
- Training of officials including public prosecutors, immigration officials, border security officials, and law enforcing agencies
- Designated prosecution officials at the national and district levels
- Prosecution of officials accused of complicity in trafficking women and children.

237. DSS has been operating six centres for socially disadvantaged women and providing them with vocational training, counselling, moral education, medicare, and psychosocial treatment to change their attitude regarding immoral activities, and rehabilitate them in the family and society. 483 women have benefited from this program. A project supported by UNDP has benefited 3,500 commercial sex workers through counselling, education, awareness, vocational training, resettlement investment, and legal support for their rehabilitation in the society. These women could understand to exercise their rights and choose alternative profession to become respectable citizens. Several NGOs are operating programs benefiting socially disadvantaged women and combating human trafficking.

B. Part II

238. **Article 7:** Elimination **of Discrimination Against Women in Political and Public Life**

239. GoB is headed by a woman Prime Minister and 5 important Ministries are headed by women and reserved seats in Parliament increased from 30 to 45. A recent example is the direct election of 475 women upazila Vice Chairman (for reserved seats).

240. Other achievements include New Labour Policy, separate bus service for women, separate seats in public bus for women, increased recruitment in GOs and NGOs, Bangladesh Bank policy, new Industrial Policy, reserved seats for women in UPs and Upazila Parishads.

241. DSS under MoSW implements Rural Social Services Program that includes formation of a women's group in each village, and these group leaders are members of village committees. A total of 27,518 such women groups have been formed and these group leaders are participating with men in identifying local problems, needs, resources, and plan for improvement of their socio-economic condition.

242. **Article 8: Equal Opportunity for International Representation and Participation**

243. From MoWCA, Adviser, Secretary and Joint Secretary participated in 4 to 5 international events during the reporting period.

244. From MoHFW, Joint Chief, Planning Wing, participated in 2 to 3 international forums on health and gender issues.

245. MoWCA provided inputs to the following country papers presented by several dignitaries:

1) Economic and Social Survey of Asia and Pacific 2007 on theme: Poverty Reduction in Asia and Pacific: Issues, Modalities and Strategies.
2) Good Governance and Women Empowerment, September 12-14, 2007, Seoul, Republic of Korea.
3) "Profile of Women in Bangladesh".
4) AID Effectiveness and Gender.

5) Presentation paper for the 52nd Session of Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) presented in New York.
6) Country paper presented by the Joint Secretary (Hospital and Gender) of MoHFW on Gender and Health Sector, Sri Lanka.
7) Presentation on CRC Optional Protocol in December 2007 was made by Secretary, MOWCA.
8) CRC Periodic Report presentation in Geneva in June 2009 was made by Secretary, MoWCA.
9) WTO Cell in MoC includes women representatives.

246. From MoPME, during 2008, 15 women officials have participated in international seminars and conferences.

247. From MoI, increasing numbers of women (10-15 percent) are participating in different international events such as country delegations, international conferences, meetings, workshops, training, study missions etc. In case of domestic events, the ratio of women participation is higher and the instruction from the Ministry is to ensure at least 25 percent women participation. Women development issues are included in the training curricula. Out of 45 officials, ten are women.

248. **Article 9:** Equal **Rights to Acquire, Change or Retain Nationality**

249. Citizenship (Amendment) Act, 2009 has been enacted by the Parliament amending section 5 of the Citizenship Law of 1951 to give a Bangladeshi woman the right to transmit her citizenship to her children.

C. Part III

250. Article **10: Equal Rights in the Field of Education**

251. Education is one of the rights of every woman and man of Bangladesh. It is also the principal instrument in eliminating discrimination against women. With a view to supporting girl's education up to higher secondary level, the Government of Bangladesh launched female secondary and higher secondary programs in 1993 and 2002 respectively. Criteria for female education stipend include attainments of 75 percent attendance, 45 percent marks and remain unmarried (to prevent child marriage). The female stipend programs have been proved effective in raising enrolment of female students at secondary and higher secondary levels and preventing dropouts as well as early marriage. Tuition fees of girl students up to class XII have been exempted for enhancing socio-economic status and empowerment of women through massive expansion of female education. Moreover, they are provided additional financial assistance for purchasing books as well as payment of examination fees. From 2000 to 2008, about 26.3 million girl students at secondary level have received Tk. 17,367.1 million as stipend. Curriculum and teacher training modules have been designed to ensure a girl-friendly school environment. As a result more than 50 percent of the students studying in secondary level are girls; and their enrolment in higher secondary level has also increased significantly.

252. Government is committed to employ 30 percent women teachers in the secondary level. With this view, a development project to promote employment, training and accommodation of the women teachers in rural non-Government secondary schools has been implemented.

253. Women participation is relatively low in technical and vocational education. With a view to increasing women participation, three women polytechnic institutes at three

divisional headquarters have been established. Measures have been taken to increase female participation in tertiary and higher education. An international university with foreign assistance, named Asian University for Women, has been established in Chittagong to offer opportunity to those women who are not able to attend co-educational institutions. In Dhaka, Central Women's University exclusively for women has been in operation even earlier.

254. Initiatives have been taken to promote sports activities among young women and to provide computer training. Steps will also be taken to introduce stipend program for women's education at the higher secondary and university levels in science, and technical and vocational education. An awareness-raising program will also be introduced in the education system to improve the appreciation and understanding of women's rights and men's family responsibilities. All these will definitely enhance the status of women in education sector in Bangladesh.

255. The Ministry of Primary and Mass Education has undertaken massive social mobilization programs to encourage guardians to send their girl child to the schools. These steps have contributed to the increase of girl enrolment bringing gender parity. Presently, the boy to girl ratio is 50:50. Separate toilets for girls are also being constructed in the primary schools to create a positive environment.

Basic education with skill training is being provided to 0.2 million children and adolescents in six divisional cities under the Basic Education for Hard to Reach Urban Working Children project. Of these, 60 percent are girls.

256. Skill training with income generating activities have been provided to 0.97 million neo-literates out of the targeted 2.9 million, 50 percent of whom are women under the Post Literacy and Continuing Education project.

257. Both for formal as well as non-formal education; there has been increased coverage through NGO operated schools.

258. Article **11: Equal Employment and Training Opportunities**

259. Women's participation in the labour force has increased significantly from 9.4 percent in 1985-86 to 24.4 percent in 2005-2006. However, women's role and contribution to the national economy through the informal sector is not accounted for.

260. The Ministry of Primary and Mass Education has carried out following activities in the area of Employment and Training:

- 60 percent posts of primary school teachers have been reserved for women candidates. The current percentage of women teachers in primary schools has already reached 49.76 percent.
- To encourage more women to join primary schools as teachers, steps have been taken to raise the residential capacity of women's hostels at the Primary Training Institutes (PTIs).
- During 2008, 14 women officials have participated in international training and study tours.

261. The policy to increase the number of women officials at various levels of the management of primary education is being pursued.

262. Under capacity building efforts for LGIs, six elected women representatives participated in international training courses during the reporting period.

263. 40 women officials of Ministry of Industries have participated in international training programs. This included two women officials of SERWTCI Trust who participated in foreign training and international seminars, one woman engineer of Bangladesh Industrial Technical Assistance Centre (BITAC[10]) who participated in technical training abroad, and one woman officer of Bangladesh Chemical Industries Corporation (BCIC) who participated in foreign training.

264. 7 women officers of General Economics Division under the Planning Commission had participated in foreign training, international seminar, international workshops and study missions abroad.

265. 133 women officials of Bangladesh Atomic Energy Commission under the Ministry of Science and ICT had participated in foreign training. Bangladesh Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (BCSIR), an agency under the same Ministry, has sent 11 women officials to participate in foreign training, conferences, meetings and study missions. In case of Bangladesh Computer Council (BCC), 6 women officials had participated in foreign training and conferences. 8 women officials of Bangladesh National Scientific Documentation Centre (BANSDOC) had participated in foreign training during the reporting period.

266. 29 women officials of Ministry of Foreign Affairs had participated in foreign training.

[10] BITAC has submitted a proposal for technical training of 5,000 women in five years so that they are employed in technical sectors across the country.

267. 164 women nurses of Directorate of Nursing Services under MoHFW had participated in various training courses during the reporting period

268. 27 DSS officials under MoSW participated in training courses abroad and of these 9 were women.

269. Other notable developments are the National Overseas Employment Policy 2006; Labour Code 2006; 60% positions of teachers for primary schools and 30% for secondary schools reserved for women; and increased number of women received training abroad and locally.

270. **Article 12: Equality in Access to Health Care and Family Planning**

271. Under the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, the Directorate of Health Services has been implementing following activities for the management of violence against women:

272. One Stop Crisis Centres (OCCs) have been operating at six medical college hospitals in six divisions with an aim to provide the services for the women victims of violence. The services provided through these OCCs include proper reception of the victim, medical treatment, psychological support, medico-legal support and rehabilitation support. Besides these activities, DGHS also developed training manual for Management of VAW for nurses in Bangla and for doctors in English. A total of 190 nurses and 192 doctors have received training for six days from different District Hospitals and Upazila Health Complexes.

273. DGHS has been piloting (in four District Hospitals and three Upazila Health Complexes) the ‘Women Friendly Hospital Initiative’ by giving special emphasis on quality of care, mother and baby package (which includes basic and comprehensive

emergency obstetric care, also neonatal care), support to victims of VAW, and ensuring gender equity in service provision and management of hospitals. Two doctors and six nurses from each of these seven hospitals were given six days training. Separate room with maintenance of privacy and other necessary equipment has been up in these seven facilities for the examination of victims.

274. A Government order was issued in September 2002 for prompt issuance of Medical Certificate to women victims (of rape, acid burn, and violence) after medical check up and copy to be forwarded to district commissioner (DC) and nearest police station. The order is being executed and monitoring is done by Civil Surgeon.

275. A network of health services for mothers and children through the Rural Services Delivery Program and Urban Family Health Program have been established and a special nutrition program has been undertaken.

276. From July 2003 to June 2008, NIPORT has trained the following women health service providers: 4,809 family welfare visitors (FWVs) on midwifery, IUD insertion, infection and counselling; 1,200 new recruits of family welfare assistants (FWAs); refresher training to 5,000 FWVs, 22,000 FWAs and 6,000 health assistants.

277. National Nutrition Program has appointed 23,246 women community nutrition providers and 2,243 women community nutrition organizers; as well as trained almost 250,000 hard-core poor women on nutritious food preparation that affects their income earning, empowerment and poverty reduction. The Program coverage includes 109 upazilas, 1,188,793 children under 2 years of age, 300,196 pregnant

women, 223,405 lactating mothers, 1,420,374 adolescent girls, and 159,200 newly married women.

278. IEM Unit under Directorate of Family Planning of MoHFW employs 31,182 women (64 percent) out of a total of 49,112 employees including officers, staff and field workers. The positions reserved for women include family welfare assistant, family welfare visitor, woman medical attendant, nurse, midwife, *aya*, sister tutor, field trainer, medical officer, assistant nursing attendant, assistant family welfare officer, and house keeper.

279. Other achievements include reduced gaps in the nutrition status of girl child and boy child; Gender Equity & Voice Task Group in HNPSP is in place; and reduced gap between life expectancy of women and men.

280. **Article** 13**: Equal Rights to Economic and Social Benefits**

281. Women now have increased access to bank loans and support from SME Foundation.

282. Notable achievements include the National Overseas Employment Policy 2006 and Labour Act, 2006 under which GoB formed 15 monitoring teams on the issues of equal pay for equal work, increased maternity benefits, number of crèches, and implementation of the labour law in both public and private sectors.

283. Article **14: Elimination of Discrimination against Women in Rural Areas**

284. The Ministry of Primary and Mass Education has carried out massive recruitment of teachers in the primary schools throughout the country, especially in the rural areas and this created a positive impact on the employment of rural women.

285. Several bi-lateral, multi-lateral and own funded projects support women development through rural cooperative building, capacity building, education; working for women health, rights to health, water and sanitation.

D. Part IV

286. **Article 15:** Equality **before the Law and Civil Matters**

287. It has become mandatory to specify mother's name along with the fathers' in all official documents and in voter registration forms. Government is finalising draft of The Domestic Violence (Prevention and Protection) Law, 2009.

288. **Article 16: Equality in Marriage and Family Law**

289. Enactment of the Child Marriage Restraint Act is under consideration of the Government. Withdrawal of Article 16 (1) (c) is also under consideration of the Government.

3. Remaining and Emerging Obstacles and Measures Envisaged

290. Bangladesh has made significant progress in achieving women's empowerment in number of areas including education, health and nutrition, participation in labour force, public services and political process. However, in achieving the desired goal of gender equality and gender mainstreaming, some challenges remain.

291. Effective implementation of appropriate intervention strategies to bring about desired change in female faces of poverty is essential. This requires increasing women's economic participation and reducing the gap between male and female in labour force participation. Facilitating equal opportunity for women in employment would necessitate access to ownership of land and control over resource, productive asset and means of production. Decrease in maternal mortality rate is a positive

achievement but health services need to be further improved to ensure the right to reproductive health care. There is scope to improve access to proper sanitation facilities, sufficient water supply and safe drinking water. While girls enrolment in primary and secondary education is encouraging with decrease in drop out rates, it is important to promote higher education for girl students with particular emphasis on vocational and higher technical education. It is imperative to reflect women's rights in formulation and implementation of economic policy, trade policy, monetary policy, tax policy etc.

292. In ensuring political empowerment of women, increased participation of women in decision making process in all spheres and increased representation of woman within political parties are significantly important.

293. Gender responsive budgeting on the basis of disaggregated data and effective resource allocation is extremely crucial in achieving holistic empowerment of women. Concerted actions are required in strengthening the capacity of the national system and the Ministries in generating and reporting sex disaggregated data. Governance needs to be made gender sensitive through reforms of institutional mechanism and extensive training. Social protection policies may be further extended to diminish women's exposure to risks and vulnerabilities and enhancing their capacity to protect themselves against hazards, loss of income etc.

294. In preventing violence against women law enforcement and proper implementation of law through a gender sensitive system/mechanism is necessary. Delivering proper legal remedies to the victims of violence and facilitating access to justice is essential.

Emerging Challenges:

295. An emerging and critically important challenge is the adverse affect of global climate change. Recent cyclones Sidr and Ayla caused massive disruption of life and livelihood of large number of people including women and children in costal areas of Bangladesh. It is anticipated that such natural disasters will increase in terms of both frequency and severity and result in environmental refugees where in women will be sufferers. In general, global as well as country experience confirms that women are more vulnerable to such disasters than men. Women are the primary caregivers to children, the elderly and the disabled. Women are affected by loss of home, shelter and income. Therefore, rehabilitation becomes a major issue.

296. "Vision 2021" has been declared by the Government placing elimination of poverty and inequity at the forefront. Government is strongly committed to the cause of achieving women empowerment and gender equality and has formulated policies and undertaken various programs/projects to reduce gap between men and women. These policy, program and project implementation will be done in a coordinated manner by all relevant stakeholders. The Women Development Implementation and Evaluation Committee headed by the Minster of MoWCA and the National Council for Women and Child Development (NCWCD) headed by the Honourable Prime Minister, as the highest authority will regularly monitor and provide guidelines for making the system and mechanism more effective.

297. As part of the Digital Bangladesh initiative by the Government, ICT has been integrated with women's advancement. In this regard, Ministry of Women and Children Affairs already has a web site providing access of citizen to information

such as vision, mission, allocation of business, laws, policies strategies, plan, budget etc. In addition relevant forms can be downloaded. On way to digitalization automation system has already been introduced at the library of the Begum Rokeya Documentation Centre. Online communication through internet with the District and Upazila based women affairs officials is underway. All officers have been provides with computer training. The two agencies - Department of Women and Jatia Mohila Shangstha – will be having their own web sites in the near future. System for online payment of fees will be introduced soon. E-commerce facility will be established to support women entrepreneurs.

298. The ongoing planning efforts during preparation of the Sixth Five Year Plan (2011~2015) will be directed towards reduction of economic deprivation in terms of inadequate opportunities and capability; vulnerability, risks and insecurity; inadequate participation and empowerment of women. The Government will focus on creating more jobs through actions to improve employment opportunities for women and wages outside their households. More vocational skill training facilities for women particularly in high-tech industries will be established. Enabling environment at the work place will be created through establishment of day care centres and secure and decent working condition, both in the formal and informal sectors.

299. The Government will continue to impart training to new women entrepreneurs for business development. The preferential treatment in terms of collateral requirements and interest rate on bank loans will continue. Information collection and dissemination units will be established through out the country to provide women

entrepreneurs with information on markets, procedures of formation of companies, getting bank credit, sources of availability of equipment and technological support. Initiatives are underway to promote the products produced or made by women in remote villages at the grass root level through projection on the Internet facilitating web-based marketing opportunities for women.

300. Social protection measures have an important role to play in reducing the vulnerability and risk of women for promotion of economic growth and poverty reduction. Women will be protected against all vulnerability and social risks.

301. The National Council for Women and Child Development (NCWCD) chaired by the Honourable Prime Minister will oversee the women advancement related activities in the Sixth Five Year Plan more effectively through providing guidance and policy support. The WID Focal Point mechanism will be further strengthened to take effective role in leading the coordination and monitoring of implementation of gender equality policies, programs, projects and issues under the guidance of NCWCD.

302. Gender issues will be integrated in the data collected by national statistical system and generated through the Ministries' administrative system. These data will be reported in sex disaggregated manner for improving analysis of policy, designing programs and projects, and monitoring of impact.

4. Impact of measures taken

303. This sub section addresses the impact of measures taken and analyses trend and the progress over time in eliminating discrimination against women and ensuring women's full enjoyment of their human rights. The broad impact of sustained efforts

by the Government is reflected in the NSAPR II that has been prepared addressing GE/GM concerns. In addition, the national planning process has been made gender sensitive through gender responsive planning and gender responsive budgeting.

Social Empowerment

- Continuing gender parity in primary and secondary school education; widened student stipend program; increased coverage through NGO operated schools
- Improved maternal and infant mortality ratios; reduced gaps in nutrition status of girl and boy child; increased number of women friendly hospitals; increased expectancy for women; successful immunisation programs for children and pregnant women
- Widened social safety net programs to cover widowed and pregnant women, and to support ultra poor women in extreme poverty
- Increased number of women in non-traditional professions as civil servants, judges, airline pilots, engineers, police, armed services etc.

Economic Empowerment

- Labour Act, 2006 ensuring equal pay for equal work, increased maternity benefits, increased number of creches for working mothers in public and private sectors, redress against harassment at the workplace
- Significant increase in women's economic participation in formal labour market
- increased employment opportunities as primary school teachers
- Overseas Employment Policy 2006 provides increased opportunities for safe migration of women workers

- SME Policy, Industrial Policy and separate window at banks for access to finance in support of women entrepreneurship
- Disaggregated and Gender Responsive Budget

Legal Empowerment

- Citizenship Law 2009 enacted by the Parliament to give a Bangladeshi woman the right to transmit her citizenship to her children
- National Human Rights Commission Act, 2009 enacted and Human Right Commission established having at least one woman as a Member
- Right to Information Act, 2009 enacted and Information Commission established having one woman as Commissioner
- Representation of People's Ordinance, 2008 enacted and requires political parties to reserve at least 33 percent of all committee positions for women
- Registration of both mother's and father's name during enrolment in primary schools, national ID card, certificates, passport etc;
- WID Coordination Committees at district and upazila levels

Political Empowerment

- Government is headed by woman Prime Minister and 6 important Ministries are headed by women
- Women in Parliament serve as Leader of the Opposition, Deputy Leader of the House, Whip, Chairman and members of Standing Committees
- 475 women elected as Vice Chairman of Upazila Parishads

- Representation of People's Ordinance, 2008 requires political parties to reserve at least 33 percent of all committee positions for women
- One third of Councillors positions in City Corporations and municipalities are reserved for women
- 3 (three) reserved seats for women in Union Pairshod who are directly elected
- Number of reserved seats for women in Parliament increased from 30 to 45

VAW

- Draft of The Domestic Violence (Prevention and Protection) Law, 2009 at the finalization stage and to be enacted as law.
- Inter-Ministerial Coordination Committee to Prevent VAW; Central Cell for prevention of VAW and Children at MoWCA; VAW Committees at districts headed Deputy Commission, upazila headed by Upazila Nirbahi Officer and union levels

5. Different Groups of Women

304. This sub section addresses the implementation of the Convention with respect to different groups of women, in particular those subject to multiple forms of discrimination.

305. The different groups of women include those from the *adivasi* (indigenous) community, religious minorities, other socially disadvantaged groups and people with disability. All forms of discrimination against the socially excluded groups will be eliminated. The Government is committed to fully implement the 1997 Chittagong Hill Tracts Peace Accord and will put more efforts towards the development of the underdeveloped *adivasi* areas. The activities of the Land Commission will be made effective for settling land disputes. Efforts will be taken

for peaceful coexistence of hill *adivasis* and the settlers through preserving and protecting the rights of the *adivasis*. Ways and means will devised to protect the land rights of the plain land *adivasis*. The *adivasis* will be constitutionally recognized and their cultural heritage will be preserved and protected.

306. The Government is committed to ensure the entitlement of all the marginalized and ethnic groups to equal opportunity in all spheres of state and social life with special measures as per constitutional provisions. Special programs will be designed for education, marketable skill training and credit with stipend (for education) and quota system (for employment). Measures will be taken for creating enabling environment for diversification of the occupations of these down trodden groups for betterment of their earning opportunities.

307. Ministry of Social Welfare and its agencies has various development initiatives supporting such disabilities girls and women.

308. Civil society and NGOs will be encouraged to launch a cultural movement for integrating the excluded groups into the mainstream of the society and against oppression of the minorities.

309. Rules and regulations will be framed for implementing the Bangladesh Disability Welfare Act, 2000.

310. NSAPR II mentioned that disability and gender issues will be addressed both as a humanitarian and also as a development issue. Measures will be taken for ensuring proper housing and accessibility to all physical facilities for disabled persons. Shelter homes will be provided for women with severe disabilities. They will also be given preference under safety net measures.

6. Fundamental Changes in Political and Legal Approach

311. The women can directly participate in all elections at the national level and local level Government. As equity measure, the Constitution of Bangladesh contains provision for quota of women in the national and local Government representations. The reserved seats for women in the Parliament were increased from 30 to 45 in 2006 and they are elected by the Parliament Members of the general seats. In 1997, one-third of the local Government seats of members/councillors were reserved for women who would be elected by the direct vote of the people. This has become a milestone for women's participation in the political empowerment process.

312. At the second tier of local elected bodies, Upazila Parishads, one of the two elected vice chairmen has to be a woman. Accordingly, 475 women have been elected as vice chairmen out of 1,936 women who contested during elections held in January 2009.

313. The newly elected Government in January 2009 led by a woman Prime Minister has appointed five women to the cabinet (three as full ministers and two as state ministers) responsible for key portfolios such as agriculture, home affairs, foreign affairs, women and children affairs, and labour and employment. The Leader of the Opposition in the Parliament is also a woman (former Prime Minister). For the first time, a woman has been appointed as the Deputy Leader of the House in Parliament and a woman MP has been appointed as the Chairperson of the Parliamentary Standing Committee on MoWCA.

314. An increasing number of women voters have participated in successive elections with 50.87 percent in 2008 as compared to 48.2 percent in 2001.

315. As per Local Government (City Corporation) Ordinance 2008, under section 5, sub-section (2), in each City Corporation, one third of the total number of Councillor posts is reserved for women.

316. As per Local Government (*Pourashava*/district head quarters) Ordinance 2008, under section 7, sub-section (1), in each *Pourashava*, one third of the total number of Councillor posts are reserved for women.

317. Among the new laws introduced during the reporting period is the Citizenship (Amendment) Act, 2009 that has amended Section 5 of the Citizenship Law of 1951 to give a Bangladeshi woman the right to transmit her citizenship to her children.

318. The revised Bangladesh Labour Act, 2006 provides for equal pay for equal work, work friendly environment, maternity leave, redress against harassment at the workplace etc.

319. Draft of a new law on Domestic Violence in near completion.

7. Optional Protocol

320. The withdrawal of the declaration is under active consideration of the Government.

8. Outcomes of UN Conferences, Summits and Reviews

321. The State Minister of MoWCA represented Bangladesh in the Asia Pacific Regional High level Inter-Governmental Meeting organized by UN ESCAP in Bangkok, Thailand from 16-18 November 2009 on Beijing PFA+15 Years review.

322. The Government is reviewing the concept note on the draft general recommendation on older women and protection of their human rights as discussed

at the 44th session of CEDAW Committee held in August 2009. MoFA has already written to MoWCA in this regard.

A. Beijing Platform for Action

323. This sub section deals with the measures taken to implement the Beijing Platform for Action (PFA) including further actions and initiatives during the period of the Beijing + 15 on the twelve critical areas of concerns as elaborated in **Annex-A.**.

B. MDGs

324. With regard to the implementation of the gender elements of the MDGs, Bangladesh has already achieved gender parity in primary education and women are becoming increasingly visible in economic spheres. Increasing women's involvement in non-farm activities has provided them with increased opportunities for wage work and certain economic independence.

325. The following table provides information with regard to the progress towards achievement of the indicators for MDG 3 - Promote Gender Equality and Empower Women and MDG 5 – Improve Maternal Health.

Table 1: Progress Towards MDGs

Goal	**Target**	**Indicators**	**Base Year 1990-95**	**2005**	**Target 2015**	**Status of Progress**
Goal 3: Promote	Target 4: Eliminate	Ratio of girls to boys in primary education	45:55	53:47	50:50	Achieved

Goal	Target	Indicators	Base Year 1990-95	2005	Target 2015	Status of Progress
Gender Equality	gender disparity in primary and secondary education preferably by 2005 and to all levels of education no later than 2015	Ratio of girls to boys in secondary education	34:66	50:50	%0:50	Achieved
		Ratio of women to men in tertiary education	25:75	36:64	50:50	Needs Attention
		Ratio of literate females to males of 15-24 year olds	42:65	46:65 (2002)	100:100	Needs Attention
		Ratio of women in wage employment in the non-agricultural sector	19.10	20.00	50%	Needs Attention
		Proportion of seats held by women in national parliament	12.73	19.00 (2009)	33%	Needs Attention
Goal 4: Improve		Maternal mortality ratio	457	290 (2006)	143	Needs Attention

Goal	Target	Indicators	Base Year 1990-95	2005	Target 2015	Status of Progress
Maternal Health		Proportion of births attended by skilled health personnel	5	20 (2006)	50	Needs Attention

326. As may be seen above, some indicators of MDG related to gender disparity are on track, some are not on track and some have structural and socio-cultural barriers to be in track in 2015. In case of MDG related to maternal health, Bangladesh is lagging behind and much more needs to be done. Several challenges need to be addressed including strengthening opportunities through increased awareness to effectively sustain post-primary education for girls, the weak transition of girls to tertiary level education and the workplace, high levels of female youth unemployment and underemployment, involving more women in productive income generating activities, providing women with child care, low levels of women participation in political and high public office, reduction of violence and mainstreaming of gender.

C. Others

327. The Government is reviewing the concept note on the draft general recommendation on older women and protection of their human rights as discussed at the 44th session of CEDAW Committee held in August 2009. MoFA has already written to MoWCA in this regard.

Annex-A

Beijing Platform for Action

1. Women and Poverty

Poverty is usually defined as a situation in which a household or a person is unable to achieve a certain minimum level of welfare based on a priori yardstick. It is measured in Bangladesh as a minimum level of expenditure, which can meet a person's basic needs, comprising food and non-food items. However, it is recognized that poverty has multi-dimensional characteristics and the poverty reduction strategy needs to consider the non-income aspects of poverty as well. Further, the incidence of poverty is marked by variation across groups and regions.

There are three aspects of women poverty, which make it important as a separate issue, namely, women have a higher incidence of poverty than men; their poverty is more severe than that of men, and there is trend towards greater poverty among women, particularly associated with rising rate of Female Headed Households (FHHs). According to NSAPR II, the pro-poor women policies, strategies and measures undertaken in the past have positively influenced women's poverty. About 35.4 percent of female-headed households were living in poverty compared to 34.2 percent of male-headed households in 2000. Female-headed households living in poverty have declined to 21.9 percent in 2005. Women participation in the labour forced increased to 29.2 percent in 2005-06, from 26.1 percent in 2002-03,

and 23.9 percent in 1999-2000. However, a majority of them work as unpaid family workers; about 60 percent of women workers are unpaid women workers compared to about 10 percent of male workers. About 68 percent of the women are employed in agriculture without being paid. Women's labour in agriculture has increased from 25 percent in 2002-03 to 34 percent in 2005-06.

Progress in poverty reduction

Table 2 focuses on poverty incidence by selected household characteristics including the gender of the head of household and marital status. The Head Count Ratio (HCR) of poverty was found significantly less for the female-headed households than that of male-headed households. Using the upper poverty line, in 2005, the HCR of incidence of poverty based on sex of head of household was 29.5 percent for women; on the other hand, it was 40.8 percent for the male-headed households. In the rural area, HCR was 31.0 percent for the female head and 44.9 percent for the male head. In the urban area, the HCR was 24.4 percent for the female head and 28.7 percent for male-headed households. There was 17.5 percent point decrease for the female head and 8.2 percent point decrease for the male head during 2000 to 2005. In 2005, the HCR of incidence of poverty using the lower poverty line was estimated at 21.9 percent for the female-headed households where as it was 25.4 percent for the male-headed households.

Poverty incidence of the household by marital status indicates a lower percentage of households living in poverty among unmarried persons and

higher rates for single headed households (widowed, divorced or separated persons). This could be explained by the lower dependency rate amongst unmarried people and the absence of stipends and other complementary sources of income for single headed households.

Table 2: Incidence of Poverty (CBN) by Selected Characteristics of Household Head

Indicators/Years	**2005**			**2000**		
	B'desh	Rural	Urban	B'desh	Rural	Urban
Using lower poverty line						
in percentage						
National poverty level	**25.1**	**28.6**	**14.6**	**34.3**	**37.9**	**20.0**
a. Household head						
Male	25.4	29.0	14.5	34.2	37.7	19.9
Female	21.9	23.6	16.2	35.4	39.8	22.0
b. Marital Status						
Married	25.0	28.5	14.4	34.5	38.0	20.1
Unmarried	17.2	19.7	11.1	19.7	22.6	8.1
Widowed/ Divorced	29.6	32.3	20.0	37.0	41.6	22.1
c. Religion						
Muslim	24.9	28.3	15.0	35.0	38.6	20.8
Non Muslim	26.6	30.3	10.4	27.0	30.7	10.9
Using Upper poverty line						

in percentage						
National poverty level	**40.0**	**43.8**	**28.4**	**48.9**	**52.3**	**35.2**
a. Household head						
Male	40.8	44.9	28.7	49.0	52.5	35.1
Female	29.5	31.0	24.4	47.2	50.6	37.1
b. Marital Status						
Married	40.3	44.1	28.4	49.2	52.6	35.3
Unmarried	29.9	32.7	22.8	30.6	32.8	21.2
Widowed/ Divorces	39.2	42.0	28.9	50.9	54.7	38.5
c. Religion						
Muslim	39.2	42.9	28.7	49.6	53.0	36.0
Non Muslim	45.7	50.4	25.0	42.5	45.8	26.2

Source: BBS,May 2007, Report of Household Income and Expenditure Survey 2005.

So (Ref: Economic and Social Survey Asia Pacific 2007)

There is a clear recognition by the Government of the need for gender resource budgeting (GRB) as part of broader changes in the planning and budgeting process taking place in Bangladesh. The Ministry of Finance (MoF) in consideration of this need has introduced changes to the Budget Circular-1 (BC-1). Part A, Section-3 that includes a specific section on Poverty and Gender Impact. The section includes a set of guidelines to be followed by the Ministries that are using the Medium Term Budget

Framework (MTBF). The other GRB-related aspect of the BC-1 is Part-B, Form-4, entitled Department/Agency Preliminary Expenditure Estimation and Projection. In this section, MTBF line Ministries rate the impact of different expenditures on women's advancement. In FY 2007, GoB successfully integrated poverty and gender concerns relevant to the NSAPR, into the strategic phase of the budget cycle through Budget Circular-1 (BC-1).

The approach taken in the Budget Circular demonstrated three important developments:

- Poverty and gender concerns are now a regular feature of budget planning. Each year, Ministries will be required to consider the poverty and gender-related impacts of all their strategic objectives and associated projects and programs, in their budget proposals.
- MTBF Ministries now have a framework that can be used to evaluate poverty and gender-related impacts of Government strategies and associated Ministry-specific expenditures.
- A link between the NSAPR and the Ministry budget is being established.

The Government of Bangladesh is among a few that has successfully institutionalised the coordination of NSAPR and the MTBF to this extent. To support this process, MoWCA has provided technical assistance to WID Focal Points and associate WID Focal Points for enhancing reporting capacity on GE/GM issues outlined in the NSAPR. Some supporting materials were also distributed among the WID Focal Points. MoWCA also

organized round table discussions on next periodical CEDAW reporting where Government officials, NGOs and civil society actively participated.

A series of awareness raising materials were produced and distributed to build a common understanding on the gender mainstreaming and gender equality issues.

328. MoWCA has produced knowledge building materials namely Gender Glossary, Gender Equality in the NSAPR, Gender Responsive Budgeting etc. A series of meetings and workshops on gender issues were carried out under the supervision of MoWCA.

During 2007-2008, Finance Division has implemented an extensive program of capacity building for poverty and gender-responsive budgeting, involving all MTBF line Ministries and Finance Division officers. MoWCA and the Ministry of Finance have jointly organized 7 workshops for the members of the Budget Working Group (BWG) and Budget Management Committee of MoWCA and the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare (MoHFW). The Budget Desk Officers of Finance Division received training on how to supervise the line Ministries under Medium Term Budget Framework (MTBF). MoF has formed a working group to work and coordinate the budget planning and monitoring issues.

In addition, the Comptroller and Auditor General (C&AG) Audit teams, comprising both men and women, completed two Social Performance Audits; one of Government-run orphanages (*Shishu Sadan/Paribar*) under the Ministry of Social Welfare, the other one of MoWCA's Vulnerable

Group Development (VGD) Program. These focus on the Government's financial performance and also investigate the extent to which Ministries are fulfilling their social objectives and incorporate the views of beneficiaries in the audit reports.

Social Performance Audits together with the poverty and gender-related information provided by the line Ministries are two concrete examples of the Government's efforts to improve the effectiveness and transparency of public expenditure decisions. The Government's progress to date sets the foundation for a process, which will continue to strengthen Government's accountability to the poor and to women, and support the ongoing implementation of the NSAPR.

2. Women and Decision-Making

The newly elected Government in January 2009 led by a woman Prime Minister has appointed five women to the cabinet (three as full ministers and two as state ministers) responsible for key portfolios such as agriculture, home affairs, foreign affairs, women and children affairs, and labour and employment. The Leader of the Opposition in the Parliament is also a woman (former Prime Minister). For the first time, a woman has been appointed as the Deputy Leader of the House in Parliament and a woman MP has been appointed as the Chairperson of the Parliamentary Standing Committee on MoWCA.

There are three seats reserved for women Union Parishad who are directly elected and one of the two elected Vice-Chairman in Upazila Parishad has to be a woman. One third of the Councillor post in Municipalities and City Corporation is reserved for woman.

In case of MoE, the percentage of women in administration at the secretariat level has varied between 12.4 to 16.1 over the period 2006-2009. The corresponding figures including its several agencies has varied between 23.9 to 28.8. Currently, the percentage of women employees in Government secondary schools is 30.58 and in non-Government educational institutes is 29.78.

In case of MoHFW, the percentage of women in administration at the secretariat level has varied between 11.18 to 17.74 over the period 2006-2009. The corresponding figures including its several service agencies has varied between 37.13 and 39.53. Currently, the percentage of women employees in Upazila Population Centres is 73.58, in District Hospitals is 46.4, and in Nursing Colleges is 43.94.

In case of MoSW, the percentage of women in administration at the secretariat level has varied between 16.28 and 19.72 over the period 2006-2009. The corresponding figures for autonomous bodies and other organizations have remained steady at 23.08. In case of several social service agencies, the figures have varied between 4.7 and 36.84. Currently, the percentage of women employees in District Offices is 31.67 and in Upazila Offices are 40.76.

In case of MoFDM, the percentage of women in administration at the secretariat level has varied between 14.93 and 15.79 over the period 2006-2009. The corresponding figures including its several agencies has varied between 4.12 and 4.55. Currently, the percentage of women employees in Directorate of Food is 8.06 and in Directorate of Relief and Rehabilitation is 6.82.

3. Education and Training of Women

Education is one of the rights of every woman and man of Bangladesh. It is also the principal element of eliminating discrimination against women. Therefore, it is of immense importance to raise the women's status in the society. With a view to supporting girl's education up to higher secondary level, the Government of Bangladesh launched female secondary and higher secondary programs in 1993 and 2002 respectively. Attainment of 45 percent marks, attendance of 75 percent classes and remain unmarried (to prevent child marriage) are the criteria for receiving female education stipend. The female stipend programs have proved effective in raising enrolment of female students at secondary and higher secondary levels and preventing dropouts as well as early marriage. Tuition fees of girl students up to class XII have been exempted for enhancing socio-economic status and empowerment of women through massive expansion of female education. Moreover, they are provided additional financial assistance for purchasing books as well as payment of examination fees. Curriculum and teacher training modules have been designed to ensure a girl-friendly school

environment. As a result more than 50 percent of the students studying, in secondary levels are girls; girls' enrolments in higher secondary levels have also increased significantly.

Government is committed to employ 30 percent women teachers at the secondary level. With this view, a development project to promote employment, training and accommodation of the women teachers in rural non-Government secondary schools has been implemented.

Women participation is relatively low in technical and vocational education and with a view to increasing their participation, three women polytechnic institutes at three divisional headquarters have been established. Measures have been taken to increase female participation in tertiary and higher education. An international university with foreign assistance, named Asian University for Women, has been established in Chittagong to offer opportunity to those women who are not allowed to attend coeducation educational institutions. All these will definitely enhance the status of women in education sector in Bangladesh.

Massive social mobilization programs have been undertaken by Ministry of Primary and Mass Education to encourage guardians to send their girl child to the schools. These steps have contributed to the increase of girl enrolment bringing gender parity. Present boys to girls ratio is 50:50. **S**eparate toilets are also being constructed in the primary schools for girls to create a positive environment for them.

The National Plan of Action (2003–2015) for Education For All (EFA) targeted that the Gross and Net Enrolment Rates would be 110 and 95 respectively for both boys and girls. The dropout rate would be reduced to 5 percent, primary completion rate would be 95 percent and adult literacy program would cover 95 percent of the population (aged 25 to 45 years) as summarized below:

Table 3: Summary of Targets of EFA NPA II, 2003-2015 (*In percent)*

Indicators	**Benchmark 2000**	**Target for the Selected Years**		
		2005	**2010**	**2015**
ECCE (both formal and non-formal)				
Formal ECCE (Primary School Attached)	22	(# 1.0 m)	(# 1.0 m)	(# 1.0 m)
Non-Formal ECCE (Family and Community-based)	-	15	20	15
Primary Education				
Gross Enrolment Rate (Total)	96.5	103	108	110
Gross Enrolment Rate (Boys)	96.0	102	107	110
Gross Enrolment Rate (Girls)	97.0	104	107	110
Net Enrolment Rate (Total)	80	83	92	95
Net Enrolment Rate (Boys)	82	87	91	95
Net Enrolment Rate (Girls)	85	89	93	95

Indicators	Benchmark 2000	Target for the Selected Years		
		2005	2010	2015
Dropout Rate	33	25	14	05
Completion Rate	67	75	86	95
Quality Achievement in Primary Education	05	30	65	90
Non-Formal Education				
NFBE-Access/Coverage	11	19	48	33
Adult Literacy Rate (15-24 Age Group)	66	73	82	95
Adult Literacy Rate (25-45 Age Group)	56	70	78	90

Source: EFA NPA II

The Government undertook various measures to improve education for girls/women. The female student's stipend programs at primary, secondary and higher secondary levels have increased participation of girls. Gender parity in enrolment in primary and secondary education has been recorded. Passing rates in various public examinations show that there is no significant different between girl and boy students. Three women's polytechnic institutes were set up for attracting girls in technical education. The establishment of an international university for women has been facilitating higher education foe women. Initiatives were taken to promote sports activities among young women and provide computer-training programs for women.

The Ministry of Primary and Mass Education carried out the following activities

- Basic Education with skill training is being provided to 0.2 million children and adolescents in 6 divisional cities under Basic Education for Hard Reach Urban Working Children Project, 60 percent of whom are girls.
- Skill training linked with income generating activities have been provided to 0.97 million neo-literates out of the targeted 2.9 million under 30 post Literacy and Continuing Education Project, 50 percent of whom are women.
- 60 percent posts of primary school teachers have been reserved for women candidates. The current percentage of women teachers in primary schools has already reached 49.76 percent.
- To encourage more women to join primary schools as teachers, steps have been taken to raise the residential capacity of women's hostels at the Primary Training Institutes (PTIs).
- The policy to increase the number of women officials at various levels of the management of primary education is being pursued.

Other measures taken by the Government include the following:

- Ensure equality and equity in education at the primary level: Gender and Development Cell has been established in the National Curriculum and Textbook Board.
- Increase access to secondary education: Female participation in secondary schools has been given a boost by various stipend projects. PROMOTE project is aimed at raising the ratio of women teachers in secondary schools up to 30 percent. This

project encourages women teachers to receive B.Ed. training and facilitates construction of resource centres for teachers and hostels for women teachers in upazila towns. Nationwide female stipend program for both secondary and higher secondary levels have been introduced.

- Ensure a gender balanced approach in the formulation of the curriculum: Activities have been carried out to introduce gender balanced curriculum and through some projects, curriculum was reviewed, and incorporation from gender perspective is underway. Higher secondary level girls are being provided stipend in all over the country.
- Introduce and expand Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) for adolescents and adult male and female, and make provision for TVET after class VII and equivalent grades: Bangladesh Industrial and Technical Assistance Centre (BITAC) provides skill training on 26 trades and about 10 percent participants are women. BSCIC, through its Design Centre and SCITI, has been offering regular skill training on different trades to develop entrepreneurship and self-employment. Skill training is also being conducted at district level by undertaking new projects by BITAC. Already 66,920 persons received vocational training.
- Increase female participation in vocational, technical, higher & professional education: BSCIC and BITAC have been providing vocational skill training up to now 26,472 women have been trained.

Formal Education

The Ministry of Education (MoE) manages the post-primary education that includes secondary,11 higher/tertiary, professional, technical-vocational and religious streams of education, including primary school level stand-alone *ebtedyee madrasah* and those attached to high *madrasahs* (secondary and higher secondary).

The University Grants Commission operates as an autonomous organization and serves as intermediary between MoE and the 24 public universities in respect of financial allocations and disbursements. It also approves and monitors academic programs of all 78 universities, including the 54 private ones.

The National Academy for Primary Education (NAPE) and 54 Primary Teacher Training Institutes (PTIs) are administered by MoPME. The National Academy for Educational Management (NAEM) and the National Curriculum and Textbook Board (NCTB) including a unit for curriculum and materials development for primary education is under the administrative jurisdiction of MoE.

Both Ministries have their management structures at Divisional (regional), district and sub-district levels, operating independently in their own respective spheres. MoE deals with gender equity and equality (EFA Goal 5) separately for the post-primary levels, basically at secondary level.

[11] Unlike many other countries, in Bangladesh, secondary education covers three levels: lower secondary (grades VI - VIII)/(in some country it goes by the name of upper primary), secondary (grades IX - X) and higher secondary (grades XI -XII).

There are 80,397 primary level schools with 344,789 teachers of which 124,990 (36.25 percent) are women. There are about 16,225,658 (girls 8,134,437 = 50.13 percent) enrolled in these schools. At the secondary level, there are 18,500 schools with 232,929 teachers of which 46,983 (20.17 percent) are women. There are about 7,398,552 (girls 3,868,014=52.28 percent) students enrolled in theses schools (BANBEIS, 2006).

Non-formal Education

Non-Formal Education in Bangladesh is being provided largely by the NGOs. Even the programs of the Bureau of Non-Formal Education (BNFE) are being implemented by the NGOs selected through a pre-set selection criteria and public notification. However, there are a number of Government bodies and international organizations that implement NFE Programs either directly or through partner organizations.

The mapping of NFE activities carried out by BNFE covers primary information from 739 organizations to assess coverage of various programs. In ECCD, only 46 organizations have parenting programs, 52 organizations have ECD programs, meaning 94 percent organizations do not implement such programs. In pre-primary program, the situation looks a little better. 206 organizations have pre-school programs, covering around 28 percent of the total number. In NFBE, 529 organizations (71 percent) implement NFPE program, whereas only 129 and 127 organizations (27 percent) implement

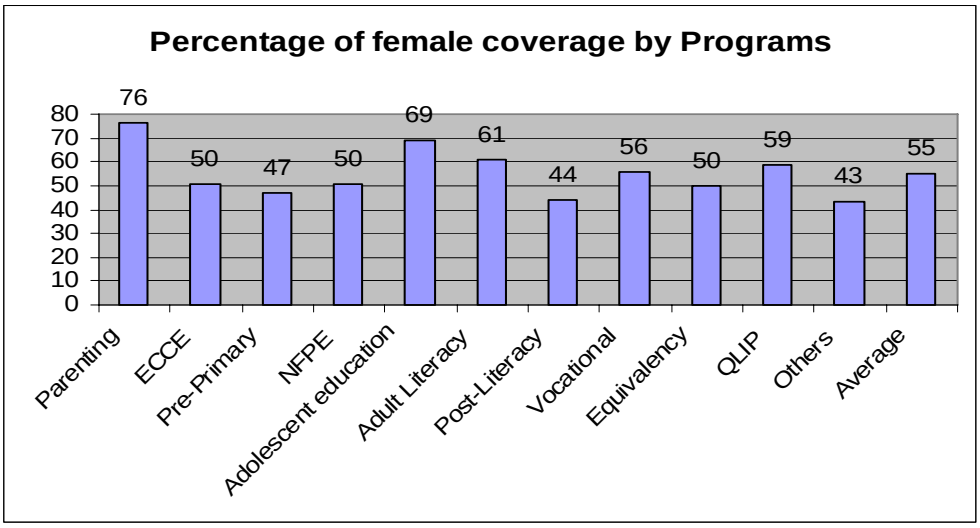
programs for adults or adolescents respectively, which means about 83 percent organizations do not have any basic literacy program for adults and adolescents. Coverage of post-literacy program is found to be relatively better – 243 organizations (33 percent) implement post-literacy program. Less than 10 percent organizations implement some forms of continuing education programs.

The types of target groups in terms of age, socio-economic status, level of education and other factors show that largely the NFE learners are from poor households, some of them (though very few) are in the category of hard core poor. A good number of NFE children are involved in economic activities as child labourers and some of those are engaged in hazardous work. In general, occupations of the parents or household heads include day labourer, rickshaw puller, marginal farmer, van driver, small trade, fisherman etc.

The report shows that the families of the NFE learners are in most cases socially neglected and economically excluded. Very few of them have any role in social relationship and leadership. A majority of the family members are illiterate. Though the rates of literacy vary in different locations, between 30-50 percent of the household members of the NFE learners are illiterate.

On an average, 55 percent learners in NFE programs are female. Highest percentage of female coverage is found in parenting program (76 percent) and adolescent education and adult literacy programs, whereas

proportionately less participation of female is found in pre-primary, post-literacy and other programs.



Major initiatives of Government and Civil Society

Current Government projects are targeted to promote the education of children in Bangladesh that include compulsory primary education for all, free education for girls up to grade 12, stipends for female students, a nationwide integrated education system and a food-for-education program etc. A large portion of the national budget is allocated to support these programs into action and to promote education and make it more accessible. Equality of opportunity along with free and compulsory education is the state obligation. Articles 17 and 19 (as shown below) provided assurance of such education and equal opportunity to all citizens as a fundamental principle of the state. Consequently, several gender friendly steps have been taken by the Government that includes ratifying different treaties,

Article 17: Free and compulsory education

The State shall adopt effective measures for the purpose of -

a. *establishing a uniform, mass-oriented and universal system of education and extending free and compulsory education to all children to such stage as may be determined by law ;*
b. *relating education to the needs of society and producing properly trained and motivated citizens to serve those needs; and*
c. *removing illiteracy within such time as may be determined by law.*

Article 19: Equality of opportunity

1) *The State shall endeavour to ensure equality of opportunity to all citizens*
2) *The State shall adopt effective measures to remove social and economic inequality between man and woman and to ensure the equitable distribution of wealth among citizens, of and throughout the Republic.*
3) *opportunities in order to attain a uniform level of economic development*

ulation and implementation of different laws, policies and procedures etc. towards human capital development.

2004: Launching of PEDP II and Out of School Children Project - Two large programs namely, Second Primary Education Development Program (PEDP II) and Reaching Out of School Children (ROSC) were launched. The first one targeted to formal schooling while the second one focused on the drop outs and missed outs.

2005: NSAPR Approved - The Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper was approved by the Government and all development programs/projects were focused on this document.

2006: Non-formal Education Policy Framework Approved - The Government established the Bureau of Non-formal Education and also approved the NFE policy framework.

2006: TQI Launched - The Teacher's Quality Improvement (TQI) program launched by the Government to improve the quality of education at the secondary level.

2007: Withdrawal of ban on adult literacy program by non-state providers - A 1997 ban imposed on the adult literacy program by non-state providers, in particular NGOs, was withdrawn as the Government was not implementing such programs.

2008: Flexible School Calendar - All the primary level institutions had been advised to implement flexible school calendar that would facilitate access to education of marginalized girl children of the disadvantaged areas.

2008: Asian University for Women - Established in Chittagong and operational.

The Government is committed to allocate 6 percent of GDP towards education and budget allocations during last few years were as follows:

4. Women and Health

The one most important aspect of human development is good health. Deprivation of this is a form of poverty - the 'health poverty'. This is also one of the most effective tools for overcoming income poverty. The Government is cognizant of human development as a long-run sustainable development strategy for Bangladesh and has been maintaining an emphasis on it over the last three decades.

Good health is a resource for everyday life. It becomes more critical when it includes women's health needs. Women health is often inter linked with family health as well as child health. In Bangladesh, women are generally considered as an inferior sex and in the most of rural families, women health needs get second priority. Therefore, it requires both investment and actions on the social, economic and environment determinants of health. Such investment and actions need to be fair so that individuals and families have equal opportunity to develop and maintain their health. Nutrition is another dimension of development. Bangladesh has made substantial gains in the area of primary health care and has been successful in raising the average longevity of the population. Gender gaps have narrowed down in the area of life expectancy and attained success in family planning area.

The Government undertook several initiatives both at institutional and program levels to address the health needs of women and to minimize the discrimination towards women in the health sector. A comprehensive revised health policy is under process where gender issue is one of the priority areas.

Besides these activities, DGHS also carried out some activities such as developed training manual for Management of Violence against Women for nurses in Bangla and for doctors in English; total number of 192 doctors were given 6 days training according to the manual from different District Hospital and Upazila Health Complexes. Until now, 190 nurses have also received training for 6 days on management of violence against women.

DGHS has been piloting the 'Women Friendly Hospital Initiative' in four District Hospitals and three Upazila Health Complexes thereby giving special emphasis on quality of care, mother and baby package, which includes basic and comprehensive emergency obstetric care, neonatal care, support to victims of Violence against Women and ensuring gender equity in service provision and management of hospitals. Two doctors and six nurses from each of these 7 hospitals were given 6 days training according to the manual. Separate room with maintenance of privacy and other necessary equipment has been set up in these seven facilities for the examination of victims.

A health related MDG is the reduction of maternal mortality and under 5 mortality rates. The objective of HNPSP are to achieve these goals through meaningful policy planning programming interventions during the NSAPR-II period, The performance of the health, nutrition and population sector during 2000–2007 is shown in the following table:

Table 4: Performance of Health, Nutrition and Population Sector

Indicators	**2004**	**2007**
Crude Birth Rate (CBR)/ 1000 population	25.3	24.2
Crude Death Rate (CDR) 1000 Population	8.6	8.0
Rate of Population Growth (%)	1.7	1.61
Total Fertility Growth (TFR)	3.0	2.7
Adolescent Fertility Rate per 1000 Adolescent (11-19 yrs)	0.135	0.127

Indicators	**2004**	**2007**
Maternal Mortality Ratio (MMR) per 1000 LB	3.65	3.2
Infant Mortality Rate (IMR) per 1000 LB	65	52
Neonatal Mortality Rate (NMR) per 1000 LB	41	37
Contraceptive Prevalence Rate (%)	58.1	55.8
Immunization Coverage: % of children aged 12- 23 Months who receive vaccines	73.1	81.9
Under Five Mortality Rate/1000 LB	88	65
% of Children exclusive Breast Feeding	63.0	63.0
% of Children 9-59 months who receive Vitamin "A"	81.8	88.3
% of children under 5 years: Classified as malnourished : Height for Age-Severe Weight for Height – Severe Under Weight for Age- Severe	 16.9 1.3 12.8	 12.2 1.2 10.9
Heard About AIDS (%) Male Female	 82.0 60.0	 85.0 67.0

Apart from maternal health and reproductive health problems, women also suffer from general health problems emanating from male nutrition, exposure to domestic environmental population, violence and mental torture. Traditionally, access to modern health care services outside the home is often not easy. In order to overcome this situation, an enabling environment has been created through HNPSP. This sector-wide program is

being implemented through 38 Operational Plans to improve the over all improvement of people's health including women's health. Through these interventions, regular household visits, counselling and massive awareness creation, and social support, women are being encouraged to avail health facilities.

Gonoshasthaya Kendra (GK), an NGO, has supported the Government through an integrated primary health care approach by linking traditional birth attendants (TBAs) with its village based trained health workers (paramedics), and institutionalising a system of accountability by which TBAs and paramedics are made directly accountable to the community they serve through village health committees, headed by women Union Parishad members as Chair. These health committees also monitor the quality of antenatal and postnatal care including deliveries at home. In GK program areas, covering 592 villages with about a million population in 11 districts, over 80 percent births are being delivered safely at home at a low cost.

5. Violence Against Women

Throughout the world, violence against women is one of the most systemic and prevalent forms of human rights abuses. While violence against women is widespread, in Bangladesh data is scant and it goes for the most part unreported, ignored, and socially tolerated in silence. Although violence against women is regarded as "private issue" or "cultural matter", in Bangladesh, there have been efforts during the last decades to bring the issue to light. The women's movement, human rights organisations, and

Government and NGOs have increasingly recognized this as a human rights violation and unacceptable. Violence against women is a multifaceted problem. Manifestations and causes are varied and accordingly strategies to address these have been varied. However, the ultimate goal has been the elimination of violence against women and establishment of equality between men and women.

The Government has made provision for stern measures to combat the heinous crime of violence against women.

The Ministry of Women and Children Affairs has been implementing a project entitled " Safe Custody Home for Women" with a view to protect women (who are not convicted but somehow taken into custody for some suspected criminal behaviour or otherwise) from sexual abuse or harassment. The same kind of six safe custody homes for women have been operated by the Ministry of Social Welfare in six divisions of the country.

Accurate data about violence against women is a must to guide legislation and policy, design and implement effective interventions and to monitor trends, impact of interventions taken by different agencies and to hold the State accountable for its actions to prevent the violence against women. Obtaining accurate data is challenging as violence against women is often seen as a "private issue" and remains under reported. Official data sources are also not accurate and figures vary between NGO sources, press reporting of cases and records by the police, hospitals and courts. Some work is being done through surveys to assess the prevalence rates of varies types of

violence. Findings differ which is a reflection of the difficulties of getting such data and the sensitivity of the questions used, the approach by researchers and the research design.

Since 1995, police headquarters in Bangladesh has been collecting data on VAW from its upazila and district offices. Such data, even if incomplete, is available nationally and is a result of interactions with women's organisations such as Bangladesh National Women Lawyers Association (BNWLA), Naripokkho and Bangladesh Mahila Parishad (BMP) for the follow-up and monitoring of cases. Data from police headquarters on the prevalence of VAW all over Bangladesh is shown below.

Table 5: Number of cases of violence by category and year

Year	Type of Violence									Total
	Violence for dowry	Acid throwing	Abduction	Rape	Murder after rape	Trafficking	Murder	Injured	Other violence	
2004	3081	198	1594	3097	17	68	62	134	4564	12815
2005	3130	177	2069	2796	22	138	97	49	2949	11427
2006	3417	135	2087	2566	14	107	109	75	2558	11068
2007	4146	137	2736	3495	33	113	142	74	3374	14250
2008	4487	120	2874	3387	65	49	131	87	3025	14274

Source: Police Headquarters, GoB

The reporting covered various types of violence like dowry, acid violence, abduction, murder, rape, torture, and other forms. However, no cases were

reported under domestic violence, as there is no separate provision to seek justice for domestic violence. In fact most cases of dowry related violence represent domestic violence. It has been observed that an increasing number of cases per year might be an increase in reporting, and not necessarily an increase in the number of incidences. On the other hand, there has been a decreasing trend in acid violence.

The Bangladesh Demographic and Health Survey conducted by NIPORT asked currently married men for information on violence against their wives. They were asked if they thought it was justified for a husband to beat his wife in the following four situations: if she goes out without telling him, if she neglects the children, if she argues with him and if she fails to provide food on time. Overall more than half (55 percent) of the men agreed that at least one of these factors is sufficient justification for wife beating. The most widely accepted reason for wife beating is a wife going out without informing her husband.

The World Bank Survey on Gender Norms published in the 2008 report "Whispers to Voices" states that 24 percent women in the 45-60 age group and 30 percent of women in 15-25 age group reported ever experiencing violence by the husband. In contrast, over 43 percent of male heads of households reported ever having been violent to their wives. The study found that "men do not regard actual harassment or spousal violence to be as high as women do. One–third of women believe that it is usual in their communities for a woman to be beaten if she neglects the home and family.

It is on suspicion of having an extramarital affair that a woman in the community is most likely to be beaten and here men and women have almost identical response, indicating that this is the “norm”. Most focus group discussions also felt that violence against women as a “last resort’ was quite common.

The same study found that when women accept violence and report more conservative views on other gender norms, they are less likely to experience it, but when men believe it is acceptable to be violent they seem to practice it as well. It was also found that women whose families have paid dowry are more likely to experience violence, which is contradictory to the general perception that paying will prevent violence and in keeping with the women’s movement and NGO perception that paying dowry will only lead to more demands and greater violence.

Seventy-four percent men (Bangladesh Demographic and Health Survey 2004) reported that they have ever been violent to their wives against 43 percent men in the World Bank Gender Norms Study of 2008.

With regard to acid violence there is an interesting trend that it has changed from being exclusively targeted towards women and girls in response to romantic proposals being turned down to being used against both women and men, and increasingly in land disputes and family disputes. ASF Statistical Presentation 2007 shows that in 2007, 187 persons were attacked with acid in 154 incidents. The downward trend started since 2003 with number decreased yearly by 16.12 percent, 20.92 percent in 2004, 16.31

percent in 2005, 18.75 percent in 2006 and 15.38 percent in 2007. In terms of gender, 67.87 percent women and girls were attacked in 2006, while men were 32.13 percent; in 2007 the percentage increased for women and girls to 69.52 and attack for men decreased slightly to 30.48 percent.

Table 6: Number of cases of acid violence and number of survivors by year

Period	Number of incidents	Number of survivors
2004	266	325
2005	217	272
2006	180	221
2007	156	193
Total:	2062	2633

Source: Acid Survivors Foundation

Policy Measures to Address VAW

National Policy for Women's Advancement 1997

In the post Beijing follow-up period, the Government formulated a policy in 1997 through a wide consultative process with stakeholders, women rights groups, human rights activist, and in the light CEDAW Convention and Constitution of Bangladesh.

National Strategy for the Acceleration of Poverty Reduction (NSAPR-II)

NSAPR has identified Violence Against Women and Exploitation one of several Challenges on the path towards achieving the desired goals of

Gender Equality and Gender Mainstreaming, The Major targets for the elimination of VAW are:

- ensure reporting of all VAW incidence
- reducing reported VAW by at least by half;
- consolidate the One Stop Crisis Centres
- sensitise Police, Administration and Judiciary to apply CEDAW which provision in cases of VAW and women rights

National Overseas Employment Policy (Migration Policy)

After withdrawing the ban on women migration in 2003 in Bangladesh, the number of women migrant labour to different countries, including to the Middle East, has increased dramatically. Considering this situation, the Bangladesh Government developed a specific policy in addition to the "Overseas Employment Policy 2006" to promote and address women migrant issues. In that policy, women workers are only considered as domestic workers. In 2007, the policy was revised again with emphasis on greater regulation of recruiting agencies, clear information to migrants and employees, involvement of embassies at receiving end, specific contract between recruiting agency at both ends, training and orientation of migrant workers etc.

In addition there is a SAARC agreement about Trafficking and a draft Child Labour Elimination policy 2008.

Legislation

The Government has various criminal law provisions to prosecute violence as a criminal offence. The recognition of VAW has evolved and society as a whole is more sensitive to forms of abuse that were not previously recognized as violence. The Government at various times has enacted new legislation as mentioned in the earlier report.

The recent World Bank Gender Norms Study of 2008 has found that the incidence of dowry has increased. It found that 7.7 percent of the cohort of older women (and the majority were Hindu) compared to 46 percent of younger women had to pay dowry at their weddings. Therefore, it would seem that the law has not had any disincentive effect on the payment of dowry.

Labour Code

The new Labour Code approved in 2006 recognizes the problem of sexual harassment in the work place under clause 332, which is on behaviour toward women. This clause states that no one can behave with any woman employee, in any position, and in any institution, in such a way that is insulting or unacceptable.

Preventive and Protective Measures Adopted by the Government

The following section has discussed the recent initiatives taken by Government to address VAW.

Shelters

The Government has had Vagrant Homes for women and children but these were not treated as shelter homes and the numbers and facilities were, and still are inadequate. Recently there have been attempts to improve the situation with regard to shelter. There are six divisional safe homes run by the Department of Social Service (DSS) for adolescent girls, women victims and witnesses. Each has a capacity to accommodate 50 persons. Based on the felt needs, the Government has taken the initiative to create Safe Homes to protect the interests of victims and residents. They are provided with food, accommodation, health and legal aid support with limited resources. MoWCA runs one shelter home as well. DSS also has six training and rehabilitation centres for sex workers.

Recently an MoU has been signed between Department of Social Services (DSS) and Manusher Jonno Foundation (a donor assisted Trust) for 'Ensuring effective, quality and sustainable services of existing Safe Homes' to overcome those shortcomings.

Public Awareness Raising Campaigns By MoWCA

MSP-VAW had a 3 years campaign to "Create awareness of the issues of crimes and violence against women through public education campaigns". The campaign included regular awareness training for the media, Imams, GOs and NGOs, developing materials and a media campaign.

Police Reform Project

The Police Reform Project, which began in late 2005 has been extended for another five years up to 2014, and has been undertaken with an aim to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of Bangladesh Police. One of the most important objectives of this program is for the police service to become more responsive and sensitive to the poor and women survivors of violence. Some of main activities are to enhance the capacity of the police force to be responsive to women, young people and vulnerable people, develop their conceptual clarity on gender issue, HIV/AIDS, and human rights to address the case of VAW effectively. It is very positive to see that through Police Reform Program, the law enforcing agencies acknowledge that women sensitive police services is a must to ensure justice for women. The Program has taken the initiative to establish a Victim Support Centre at Tejgaon *thana* of Dhaka city to provide professional support to survivors.

The Police Reform Project has done its strategic plan for next 3 years. It has 5 key strategic areas. Among 5 areas, one key area is to increase women police and gender sensitisation. “Women Police and gender policy have been identified as an important strategic direction to move the police into a modern policing service”. Under this plan an action plan will be developed to mainstream women police officers and 3,000 women police will be recruited at Sub-inspector and Constable positions throughout Bangladesh.

Gender Responsive Community Policing

Another initiative undertaken by MoWCA with assistance from GTZ is the program on Gender Responsive Community Policing to ensure security for

women and girls as they are subject to gender-specific insecurities, such as domestic violence and human trafficking. The objective of the project is to "Contribute to poor people's, particularly women's and girls', access to justice in urban and rural Bangladesh". Gender-responsive community-based policing is a strategy to increase security and to strengthen human rights protection, especially for women and girls. The activities are being monitored and evaluated in order to generate good practices. In community policing, the police works with community people in maintaining law and order and preventing crimes. Community Policing Committees arrange courtyard meetings in their respective areas to make people aware of the Committee's roles and activities and solve cases of gender violence. This approach is being piloted in some regions by Police, NGOs and community-based organizations (CBOs). Its focus is to bring the community and the police together in resolving problems and establishing security at the local level.

Women Friendly Hospitals

In 1997-98, Ministry of Health and Family Welfare (MoHFW) and UNICEF had taken steps to upgrade hospitals so that women could better access their services. The main objectives were to decrease maternal mortality rate and to provide support to women survivors of violence. The need to provide better access to women and survivors of violence was a long-standing demand of women' rights and health rights activists and organisations, to which the health sector sought to respond. At that time the main activities

were to provide sensitivity training to doctors and nurses about dealing with patients especially women patients and holding duty doctors responsible for dealing adequately with the patients. Based on the lessons from the previous project, UNICEF later extended the program further. Now DGHS is working with UNICEF to upgrade district hospitals and upazila health complexes, where necessary. The goal of this project is that women will get treatment with respect, dignity and equity, and they will receive adequate and appropriate care that is timely and affordable. To achieve these goals, one of the important issues of women friendly hospital is management of cases of violence against women. Only a limited number of hospitals have been able to achieve the standards required to be qualified as women friendly hospital. Some NGOs are working with seven hospitals of which one hospital has already been declared as a model hospital.

Naripokkho, an NGO, has been involved in the monitoring of state interventions to combat VAW through its work with 22 police stations and 2 medical college hospitals, and 2 special courts/tribunals (dealing with violence against women and children, and acid violence) within metropolitan Dhaka city. The NGO staff are placed within these public institutions to observe how the violence-affected victims are handled by the on duty Government staff. The positive outcome has been that both the institutions have requested and received training support for creating an enabling environment for women’s access to justice and prevention of violence.

A recent study report (May 2009) titled 'Legal Framework to address VAW' on existing laws on gender-based violence has proposed for legislative reform through a draft Domestic Violence Bill and Guidelines for Sexual Harassment. This study was supported by the Netherlands Embassy and has incorporated comments received from practitioners, diplomats, representatives of NGOs and others.

In terms of victim support centres, MoWCA has six one stop crisis centres (OCCs), six VAW Cells at divisional levels under DWA, and one VAW Cell at JMS.

The Police Reform Project has one centre at Dhaka and 21 at district levels. UNFPA has one centre at Cox's Bazar. In addition, there are six NGO centres operated by different organizations at various locations.

6. Women and Disaster

Women are affected directly and adversely by man made as well as natural calamities such as political conflict, social discrimination, arsenic contaminated water, salinity, drying of wetlands, deforestation, use of agro chemicals, industrial waste, inappropriate land use, building of dams and embankments; and floods, cyclone, and droughts. It is important to note that as a result of climate change, cyclones such as Sidr and Ayla have been occurring with greater intensity and more frequently. In spite of great difficulties and resource constraints, the Government has tackled the situation effectively.

7. Women and Economy

Women have limited access to natural and financial resources. For the most part, women's access to agricultural land and the use of natural resources such as water or trees is dependent on the rights of husbands or male kin. Inheritance laws continue to be religious based. Muslim women are entitled to inherit from their father, half the share of their brothers but many women leave their portion of the land with their brothers as a form of insurance against marital breakdown and to ensure visits to the parental home. Hindu women's formal entitlements are negligible; they inherit 1/8 of their husband's land if there are no living sons or grandsons.

Women's access to financial resources is also extremely restricted, as most of the financial institutions require collateral such as property ownership before giving credit. And finally, the lower literacy rate of women makes the formal banking sector less accessible to them. These factors seriously cripple women's capacity to set up small businesses or purchase land. To address these difficulties GoB has take some important steps/measures both at policy and implementation levels.

Major economic policies and projects in Bangladesh have included gender analysis as per National Action Plan (NAP) and National Policy for Women's Advancement (NPWA). Gender equality issue has been emphasized in expenditure tracking and the benefits from budget allocations towards women. IMED monitors the progress of women specific programs and projects through some established mechanisms. Several initiatives have

been carried out by the Ministry of Women and Children Affairs, Finance Division, Planning Commission, National Board of Revenue and IMED for awareness raising on the issue of participation of women in development. As per NSAPR directives, relevant Ministries have been doing social auditing through their projects and programs. The Ministry of Industries through Small and Medium Enterprise Sector Development Program (SMESDP) has organized various skill development training and established an institution named SME Foundation. Special section has been created for addressing women issues and to develop necessary policy guidelines for improving women efficiency.

SME Policy 2005 includes special preference for women entrepreneurs and mentions that efforts to accelerate the retention and promotion of women entrepreneurs should be strengthened.

An objective of Industrial Policy 2009 is to mainstream women in the industrialization process. The Policy document also includes a strategy to undertake special measures to develop women entrepreneurship ensuring access to land and finance for business support services. Participation and development of women entrepreneurs has been given emphasis through various incentives and support mechanisms. Bangladesh Small and Cottage Industries Corporation (BSCIC) through its special project “Women Entrepreneurship Development Project (WEDP)” is extending awareness program on reproductive roles of women. The family members of the

participants are receiving education for improvement of living standards, nutritional balance, personal hygiene and family planning.

To assess women's economic position in a country, it is also essential to see the women's employment situation in that particular context. Gender disparity continues to exist between women and men's economic status. Employment opportunities for women have increased in the last decade, especially in industries such as the readymade garment sector, construction, ceramics, and the informal sector. However, women are more likely to be found in casual daily works in the informal sector and the forms of work they are engaged in tend to be more insecure. There remains a significant wage differential between women and men with women's wages at only 58.2 percent those of men. While the wage differential can be attributed to some extent to monopolistic elements in the labour market, it is largely determined by social attitudes to women as well as the education and skill differentials.

Several important steps were taken by the GoB to promote women's economic equality. For example, a ban had been placed on women's overseas employment due to incidents of harassment of the women migrant workers (especially those involved in domestic work). However, the ban led to an increase in irregular women migration, which made the women migrants more vulnerable and susceptible to violence and exploitation. For this reason, the Government withdrew the ban and built the capacity of the Ministry of Expatriates' Welfare and Overseas Employment. Other

measures taken to promote women's economic equality include the introduction of a 60 percent quota for women in the recruitment of primary school teachers. This measure will support the Government in achieving parity in the ratio of male and women primary teachers, making for a more conducive environment for the girl-child.

The Government and parastatals are still the highest employers in the country. The Government has committed to ensure equal opportunity in recruitment of women and men in all cadres of the civil service, including the police. Women are now being recruited for active service in the armed forces. The Government has set a recruitment quota of 10 percent of women amongst first class gazetted officers' rank and 15 percent in other classes within Government and parastatals. Though the quota set by the Government has not yet been attained, progress towards that goal is encouraging.

In public sector employment, men and women enjoy same benefits and amenities in all respects including pay, allowances, pensions and other financial benefits. To respond to women's housing needs, the Ministry of Women and Children Affairs (MoWCA) has implemented projects for the construction of hostels for women in urban centres. The Ministry of Health and Family Welfare (MoHFW), which is the biggest employer of the women, is also implementing a program to improve the working conditions of women. In addition, the Government has recently increased paid maternal leave from three to four months. Simultaneously, day care facilities have

been created in the office premises of the Bangladesh Secretariat and organizational head offices. MoWCA has also prepared policy guidelines with a view to deliver standardized day care services.

Table 7: Employed Persons (15 years and older) by Status of Employment, Sex and Location (in percentage)

	Bangladesh			**Urban**			**Rural**		
Status in Employment	**Both Sexes**	**Male**	**Female**	**Both Sexes**	**Male**	**Female**	**Both Sexes**	**Male**	**Female**
Employees	13.87	14.55	11.69	31.2	30.54	33.34	8.48	9.57	5.01
Employers	0.27	0.32	0.11	0.28	0.33	0.11	0.27	0.32	0.11
Self employed	41.9	50.04	15.86	41.63	45.28	29.86	41.99	51.53	11.55
Day labourer (Agri.)	10.71	13.29	2.47	2.21	2.69	0.68	13.35	16.59	3.02
Unpaid Family worker	21.68	9.67	60.12	9.52	5.55	22.31	25.46	10.05	71.77
Domestic	0.7	0.19	2.34	0.93	0.11	3.58	0.63	0.21	1.96

	Bangladesh			Urban			Rural		
Status in Employment	**Both Sexes**	**Male**	**Female**	**Both Sexes**	**Male**	**Female**	**Both Sexes**	**Male**	**Female**
workers									
Apprentice	0.51	0.57	0.3	0.69	0.82	0.28	0.45	0.5	0.31
Others	0.88	0.64	1.66	1134	0.74	2.4	0.8	0.6	1.43

Source: Labour Force Survey, 2002-03, Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics

The above table provides an overview of the overall employment situation for women and men in rural and urban areas of Bangladesh. The table clearly brings out that the sexual division of labour continues to exist with women being significantly more predominant in areas such as unpaid family labourers and domestic workers. These differentials are more significant in urban areas. Men, on the other hand, are significantly more predominant in all other areas of work – employees (only in urban areas), employers, self-employed, day labourers, and agriculture (only in rural areas). At the rural, urban and national levels, women's employment status continues to lag behind that of their male counterparts.

Table presents the employed persons by sex and by weekly hours worked. The table reveals that the working hours for women on average in both rural

and urban areas are quite less than that of their male counterparts. This is due to the lack of recognition of women's unpaid labour.

Table 8: Employed persons aged 15 years and over by weekly hours worked by Sex and Location (in thousand)

Weekly hours worked	Bangladesh			Urban			Rural		
	Both sexes	Male	Female	Both sexes	Male	Female	Both Sexes	Male	Female
Total	47357	36080	11277	11224	8569	2656	36132	27511	8621
<15 hr	4879	477	4401	507	52	455	4372	426	609
15-19	1024	357	666	90	33	58	933	325	609
20-29	3621	1537	2084	536	196	339	3086	1341	1744
30-39	3715	2639	1076	845	438	407	2870	2201	669
40-49	12193	10690	1503	3120	2482	638	9073	8207	865
50-59	9930	9157	773	2149	1812	337	7781	7345	436
60+	11995	11222	773	3977	3556	421	8018	7666	352

Source: Labour Force Survey, 2002-03, Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics Ref: Economic and Social Survey)

Employment in Public Service: In 2006, about 15 percent officers in the Bangladesh Civil Service Administration Cadre were women but only about

2 percent were at the secretary and about 7 percent at the joint secretary kevels. The participation of women in public service is about 15 percent and that at class I level is about 11 percent**.**

Foreign Employment: The Ministry of Expatriates' Welfare and Overseas Employment has formulated some strategies to ensure foreign employment opportunities for women. Women below certain age seeking for foreign employment as housemaids have to take approval of the Ministry through a recruiting agency to ensure her protection. The Ministry has taken steps to bring housemaids under the definition of labourer for foreign employment.

Recently, the central bank (Bangladesh Bank) has instructed commercial banks to allocate 15 percent of its loan portfolio to SMEs, and 40 percent of SME loans for micro businesses. Most of these commercial banks have already opened a 'dedicated desk' for women entrepreneurs. These banks are also able to utilize refinancing mechanism from the central bank for collateral free loans up to Tk. 1.5 million against personal guarantee.

8. Institutional Mechanisms for the Advancement of Women

Government has put into operation a comprehensive national machinery to promote advancement of women. At the highest level; the National Council for Women's Development has been set up with the Prime Minister as its chairperson. Parliamentary Standing Committee, Women in Development (WID) Focal Points, Women's Development Implementation and Evaluation Committee represented by focal points from all line Ministries, District and Upazila level Coordination Committees etc. form a country-

wide network for implementation and monitoring of WID activities. Ministry of Women and Children Affairs has been designated as the nodal Ministry entrusted with the responsibility of coordinating gender equality concerns across the Government. MoWCA has been coordinating regular quarterly WID Focal Point/Associate WID Focal Points meeting on specific issues cantered around mainstreaming gender. The major areas of focus are on monitoring the implementation status of PFA, NAP, NSAPR and CEDAW in the field of women's advancement. There are about 96 WID Focal Points/Associate WID Focal Points and Sub-WID Focal Points that are now functional.

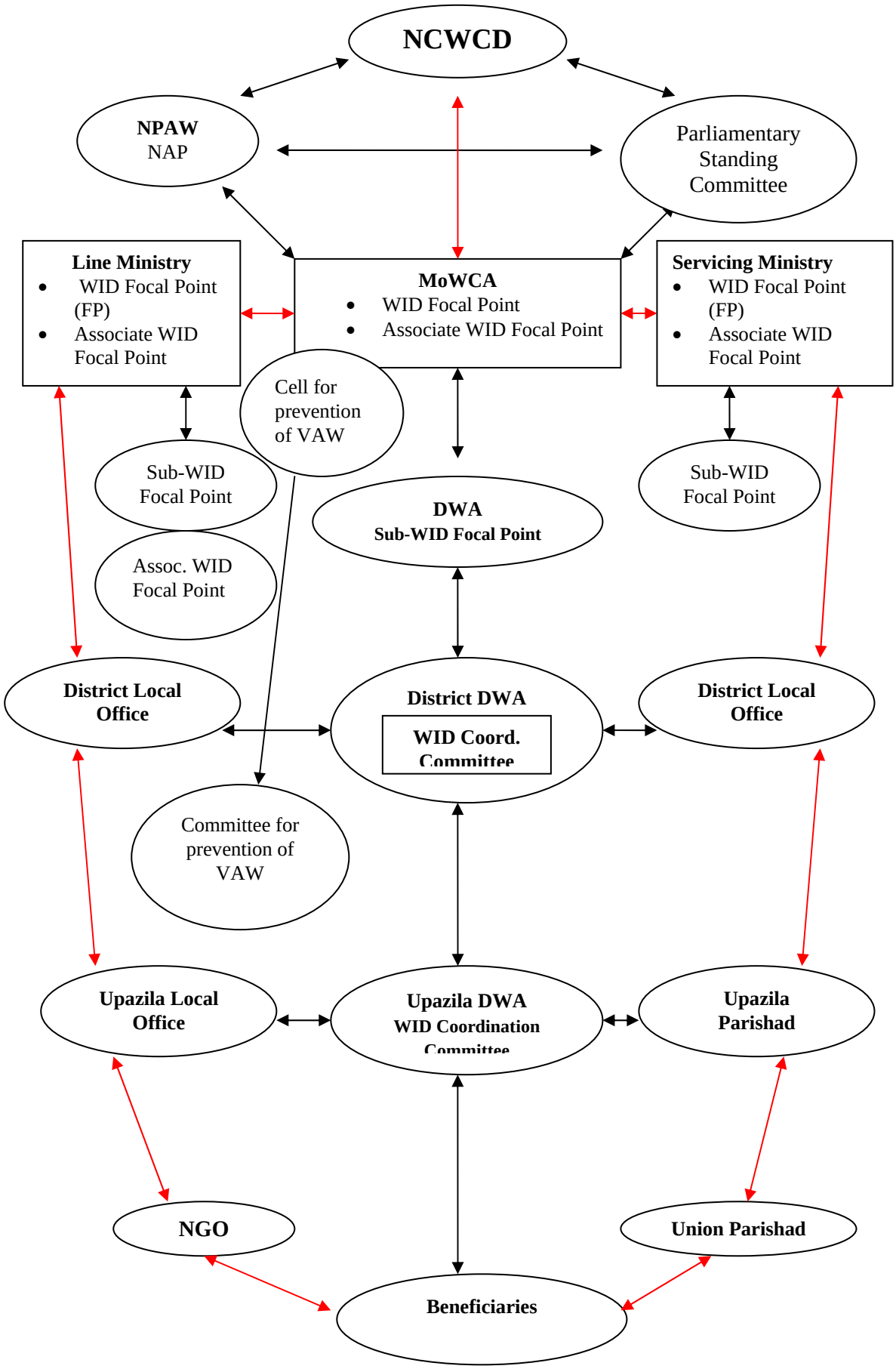
MoWCA is acting as the focal point and catalyst for action regarding women's issues and responding to the needs and priorities of women in activities of all Government agencies. MoWCA and its implementing agencies have been undertaking different projects and programs for women's advancement. The Allocation of Business of MoWCA has incorporated coordinating and monitoring of women in development activities of different Ministries through designated WID Focal Points/Associate and Sub WID Focal Points. The National Council for Women Development (NCWD) was established in 1995 with the Prime Minister as the chair. The Government has adopted a National Policy for the Women's Advancement (NPWA). As a follow up on the Beijing Platform for Action, the Government prepared a National Action Plan. To fulfil the commitments of NAP, the Parliamentary standing committee for MoWCA

has been established. Consultation and active collaboration between the Government and non-Government organizations on women issues is now more visible.

Besides these, Government has formed various committees to ensure women's participation in the mainstream economic activities, ensuring the receiving of small and medium entrepreneurship support loans, and getting legal and medical support in case of oppression or violence against women.

There is an inter-ministerial coordination committee to prevent VAW and children through a central cell that is supported by (i) VAW committees at district, upazila and union levels, (ii) VAW cells at DWA and JMS, (iii) MSP-VAW PIU and OCCS, and (iv) VAW unit at police HQ.

The institutional set up for advancement of women is schematically depicted on the following page


NCWCD
NPAW
NAP
Parliamentary Standing Committee
Line Ministry
WID Focal Point (FP)
Associate WID Focal Point
MoWCA
WID Focal Point
Associate WID Focal Point
Servicing Ministry
WID Focal Point (FP)
Associate WID Focal Point
Cell for prevention of VAW
Sub-WID Focal Point
Assoc. WID Focal Point
DWA
Sub-WID Focal Point
Sub-WID Focal Point
District Local Office
District DWA
WID Coord. Committee
District Local Office
Committee for prevention of VAW
Upazila Local Office
Upazila DWA
WID Coordination Committee
Upazila Parishad
NGO
Union Parishad
Beneficiaries

MoHFW has set up a Gender, NGO and Stakeholder Participation (GNSP) Unit that has undertaken activities such as training on gender and health, gender mainstreaming in health sector, and gender issue in health sector) as well as research (on analysis of hospital MIS data: measuring performance from gender perspective and baseline survey on perception and knowledge of community regarding women-friendly health services) for mid-level and desk level officers. A total of 97 participants were trained and resources were provided by GOs and NGOs.

9. Human Rights of Women

Women can now compete for 300 general seats in the Parliament in addition to the 45 reserved seats for women. There is also provision for one-third reserved seats in all locally elected bodies including Union Parishads, Upazila Parishads, Municipalities and City Corporations.

Human Rights Commission Act, 2009 authorizes the setting up of a Human Rights Commission, constituted by seven members, of whom at least one will be a woman and one will be from a minority community. The Commission is mandated to investigate violations of human rights and can make recommendations to the Government for submission of reports on human rights violations.

Women’s participation in the formal labour market continues to increase as a result of changes in economic expansion, rural livelihood patterns and rural-to-urban migration.

Inclusion of mother's name alongside with that of father is mandatory for primary school applications, documents, certificates, passports etc.

Recent High Court verdict that allows a mother to be recognized as the guardian of her child. Subsequently, the Ministry of Education has allowed the use of only mother's name for the purposes of registering a student for public exams such as SSC and HSC.

10. Women and the Media

Ministry of Information (MoI) is promoting women's participation in the media through its agencies such as Press Institute of Bangladesh (PIB), Press Information Department (PID) and Department of Films and Publications (DFP). All training for journalists that are conducted by PIB include a session on gender and it also conducts a four-day long training course on Gender and Media for journalists at national and sub national levels. National University has a course on Gender and Media at the master's level. PID has conducted training on gender for all Public Relations Officers assigned to each Ministry and also a one-day batch wise training on Gender Capacity Building for all feature writers. DFP has three regular publications that have a separate page on women development covering news locally as well as regionally. It also produces motivational films that are screened by the Department of Mass Communication (DMC), also an agency under MoI. National Institute of Mass Communication (NIMCO) is responsible for training of journalists of electronic media and has conducted ToT through adapting the manual on Gender and Media (July

2009) developed by PIB through support from MoWCA. MoI has also formed a GO-NGO committee to exchange views on women development issues.

Bangladesh Women Journalists Centre has also compiled a training module on Gender Sensitive News Editing (July 2009) intended to train women working and aspiring journalists. NGOs have also formed the Gender and Media Forum.

11. Women and the Environment

Women are affected directly and adversely by man made as well as natural calamities such as political conflict, social discrimination, arsenic contaminated water, salinity, drying of wetlands, deforestation, use of agro chemicals, industrial waste, inappropriate land use, building of dams and embankments; and floods, cyclone, and droughts. It is important to note that as a result of climate change, cyclones such as Sidr and Ayla have been occurring with greater intensity and more frequently. In spite of great difficulties and resource constraints, the Government has tackled the situation effectively.

12. The Girl Child

The Government is committed to the overall development and welfare of children and has is currently implementing its Third National Plan of Action for Children (2004-2009) with focus on the following five areas – food and nutrition, health, education and empowerment of the girl child, protection from abuse, exploitation and violence and physical environment. In

addition, other policies have been formulated such as education policy, health policy etc. to improve the quality of life of the children with special focus on girls.

List of Tables

1. Progress towards MDGs
2. Incidence of Poverty (CBN) by Selected Household Characteristics
3. Summary of Targets of EFA NPA II, 2003-2015 (In percent*)*
4. Performance of Health, Nutrition and Population Sector
5. Number of cases of violence by category and year
6. Number of cases of acid violence and number of survivors by year
7. Employed Persons (15 years and older) by Status of Employment, Sex and Location (in percentage)
8. Employed persons aged 15 years and over by weekly hours worked, sex and residence (in thousands)

Reference Documents

1. National Plan of Action II (2003-2015) for Education for All
2. Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, January 2003, Fifth periodic report of State parties: Bangladesh
3. Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, July 2004, Concluding comments: Bangladesh
4. May 2004, Constitution of the People’s Republic of Bangladesh

5. Introduction authored by Dr. Shirin Sharmin Chaudhury, MP, Honourable State Minister, Ministry of Women and Children Affairs, Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh.

6. ESCAP, Economic and Social Survey of Asia and Pacific 2004

7. MoWCA 2004, Country Framework on Trafficking of Women and Children

8. MoWCA, January 2005, Forty-Ninth Session of the Commission on the Status of Women: Bangladesh Country Paper

9. World Bank 2005, Attaining the Millennium Development Goals in Bangladesh

10. Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS), June 2006, Agriculture Sample Survey of Bangladesh 2005

11. General Economics Division (GED), Planning Commission, October 2005, National Strategy for Accelerated Poverty Reduction (NSAPR)

12. Ministry of Industries, December 2005, SME Policy 2005

13. NIPORT, Bangladesh Demographic and Health Survey 2005

14. Overseas Employment Policy 2006, Ministry of Expatriates' Welfare and Overseas Employment

15. Gender Equity Strategy and Gender Action Plan from 2006-2011, Ministry of Water Resources

16. BBS, December 2006, Report on Sample Vital Registration System 2004

17. BBS, May 2007, Household Income & Expenditure Survey 2005

18. DWA and UNFPA, September 2007, Policy Dialogue on Implementation of CEDAW in Bangladesh: Keynote Presentation by Ferdous Ara Begum, Member, UN CEDAW Committee

19. BBS, April 2008, Labour Force Survey 2005-06

20. World Bank, 2008, Whispers to Voices

21. Dhaka Business & Professional Women's Club, May 2008, Implementation Status of CEDAW in Bangladesh: Keynote Presentation by Ferdous Ara Begum, Member, UN CEDAW Committee

22. UN, May 2008, International Human Rights Instruments: Compilation of Guidelines on the form and content of reports to be submitted by State parties to the International Human Rights Treaties, HRI/GEN/2/Rev.5

23. UN, July 2008, CEDAW: Convention-specific reporting guidelines of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women. CEDAW/SP/2008/INF/1

24. BBS, November 2008, Report on Sample Vital Registration System 2007

25. World Bank, Gender Norms Study 2008

26. Ministry of Industries, September 2008, Industrial Policy 2009

27. GED, Planning Commission, August 2009, Steps towards Change: NSAPR II

28. BBS, May 2009, Gender Statistics of Bangladesh 2008

29. Bangladesh Gazette, July 2009, Public Funds and Budget Management Act, 2009

30. GED, Planning Commission, July 2009, Millennium Development Goals Needs Assessment and Costing (2009-15) Bangladesh

31. Citizen's Initiatives on CEDAW-Bangladesh, November 2009, Alternative Report (draft) to the CEDAW Committee