

BANGLADESH OPERATIONAL PLAN

ANNEX: GENDER

CONTEXT

Despite considerable improvements in recent decades in girls' education, economic opportunities for women and women's political participation, Bangladesh continues to score poorly against UN gender indices.

Maternal deaths remain stubbornly high, at 320 per 100,000 live births. 53% Bangladeshi women are still illiterate, and 30% under-nourished and 58% start child bearing before the age of 19. Women constitute only 6% of the directly elected members of Bangladesh's parliament.

Despite the millions of jobs created by the burgeoning garments industry, women's formal employment is among the lowest in the world - only 4% of Bangladeshi women work for a cash wage. High levels of violence against women and girls critically constrains their mobility and quality of life and contributes to 14% of maternal deaths. Poor women in Bangladesh are among the most vulnerable to climate change.

APPROACH

Recognising that empowering girls and women (in particular adolescent girls) is key to reducing poverty and driving sustainable economic growth in Bangladesh, we will strengthen links between health, education, governance, wealth creation and empowerment and embed tackling inequality and promoting empowerment across all our programmes. The evidence base for this, in Bangladesh and globally, is strong. The better educated a girl is, the greater her employment opportunities. And with a paid job comes greater empowerment and choice – particularly over when to marry and have children.

Our programmes work with all key stakeholders – poor women themselves, government, civil society and the private sector, to strengthen the delivery of services. Combined with an improved enabling environment which makes girls and women feel secure at home or at work, this will allow them to reach their full potential, resulting in job creation and higher income for women, as well as improved access to more efficiently produced goods and services. We will work with other parts of HMG and our donor partners to press for improved implementation of policies and legislation that protect and promote the status of women and girls.

We will continue to strengthen our own skills and capacity to engage effectively and deliver improved results for women and girls in Bangladesh. We will work with other bilateral and multilateral donors to minimise financial risk and maximise the benefits of scaling up to deliver real transformative change. We will work with all of our partners to improve the collection of sex disaggregated data so that progress can be tracked effectively. DFID Bangladesh has developed and is piloting a framework to measure “empowerment” which we will use to measure the change in women's and girls' ability to make life choices.

HOW DFID BANGLADESH WILL DELIVER CHANGE FOR WOMEN & GIRLS

Our current and future programmes will pursue a wide range of activities in support of equality and empowerment of adolescent girls and women, to advance progress in the four pillars of the Gender Vision House.

Girls' education: support for formal and non-formal education and improved learning outcomes; stipends for girls' education; better water and sanitation facilities in schools; supporting community engagement for better, more accountable education; technical education for poor boys and girls; improving English language teaching and skills, for improved employment opportunities.

Reproductive health and choice: support for adolescent girls' life skills development; services for reproductive health and vouchers to enable poor pregnant women to access health care; initiatives to help train poor women as nurses and midwives, and gain employment; facilitate participation and raising of voice by women in citizens' fora mandated to oversee quality of care of the health centres.

Women's Economic Empowerment: more and better jobs for women; licensing over 400 microfinance institutions to ensure safety of deposits made by poor women; better skills for women to allow them to get higher paid jobs in Bangladesh and abroad; providing extremely poor women with assets and cash transfers.

Reducing Violence Against Women: challenging discriminatory laws, norms and practices; helping women form social groups to increase their voice in the community; supporting community legal services for women to access justice; supporting citizens' engagement to demand greater political participation of women at all levels.