

Women Empowerment in Bangladesh: An Analysis of Present Perspectives

Tania Rahman¹
Taiyeba Tabassum²

Abstract : *Women empowerment has been a crucial policy of the government for long since they constitute half of the total population and has boundless potentiality to contribute to the development of the nation. Bangladesh is the champion of women empowerment in south-Asia. The country has made momentous progress since the last few years particularly in the area of women development. However, the concept of empowerment requires clarification since it is sometimes misunderstood. Proper socio-economic development is urgently needed to empower women. And this study also attempts to explore the present perspective of women empowerment programs are taken and run by government and various agencies for women development of Bangladesh and challenges of empowerment and later suggests few recommendations for that. After collecting data, it is found that it needs to take more effective measures for all women; especially for the mainstream women to accelerate national development.*

Key words: *women, women empowerment, challenges, initiatives, national development*

1.0 Introduction

Women Empowerment is the crying need throughout the world. Bangladesh is not out of this in this regard. In today's world, Bangladesh has already passed almost fifty years after getting independence through the great Liberation War of Bangladesh. Women empowerment is such indicating issue by which a country must be able to uplift its overall development process through encompassing opportunities in education, skill development, employments generation and make sure participation in productive activities. Over a few decades, women development in terms of economic, political and social empowerment has rapidly increased;

¹ Tania Rahman, PhD, Professor, Institute of social Welfare and Research, University of Dhaka, E-mail: taniarahman39@gmail.com &

² Taiyeba Tabassum, Lecturer, Bangamata Shekh Fazilatunnesa Mujib Science and Technology University, Jamalpur, E-mail: taiyebataba94@gmail.com

particularly young girls are taking higher education and getting involved in various Government and Non-government organizational activities. Now, they are much more cognizant about their life, social position, dignity and participation in decision-making process of their families and communities as well as nation. The women in Bangladesh is very much active in planning their role regarding women rights and enjoyment of social equity and privileges without the discrimination based on or gender identity. The world is now passing a pandemic situation. UN Commissions declare International women's day 2021 theme- "Women in Leadership: Achieving an equal future in a COVID-19 world". This year's International Women's Day is like neither. Though countries and communities are trying to recover from a deteriorating pandemic, this would also be a chance to end the exclusion and marginalization of women and girls. We need immediate and proper action. We must stop wage deprivation, decrease poverty rate for women, eradicate inequalities, increase decision making capabilities, make certainty in proper distribution of resources and power, develop new policy and so on.

1.1 Objectives of the study:

The main objective of this article is to find out the present situation of women development initiatives and how to impact on increasing women empowerment. In this connection, we have tried to identify the challenges/barriers of women empowerment and suggested some recommendations for mitigating these barriers.

1.2 Operational Terms:

Concept of Empowerment

Concept of 'Empowerment' has been popular throughout the women conference of UN at Nairobi in Kenya in 1975. Paulo Freire, a Brazilian educationist firstly used the issue of establishing equal rights of women. Empowerment is that process in which a person can achieve controlling capability of self-life. So, he or she can authorize decision making power with related issues. Empowerment means the transformation of structures of subordination, through radical changes

in law, property rights, control over women's labor and bodies, the institutions that coerce and eternalize male domination.

Caroline Moser described it as "redistribution of power" while Rawland's viewed it as from multiple aspects as listed below:

- a) Power over- it indicates the controlling power.
- b) Power to- power that creates potentialities without resistance.
- c) Power from within-the unique power of all human beings namely spiritual strength.

Satidhel, a famous researcher uttered four entities of empowerment in 1990.

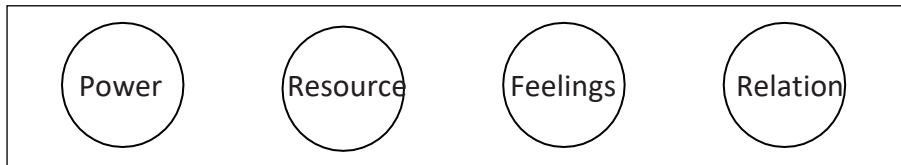


Figure One: Four entities of empowerment

Empowerment indicates power is in regards to the ability to practise of a great number of grounds in their lives many be very possibility encompasses participation in decision-making. It is the process of capturing oneself as capable and authority over making decision. Both men and women have particular responsibility in society that help them perceived as indiscriminately able person as their male counterparts. Kabeer N. (2005)

Mahtab Nazmunnessa (2012) pointed out empowerment that concerns people- both for women and men, who will control over their lives, fixing their own agendas; attaining skills and having their own skills and knowledge recognized increasing self-confidence.

Friedman (2015) marked three types of power that intervene one another which are social power, political power, psychological power, and empowerment means to gain these powers. Kate young indicated it as having control over their own life and determining their own agenda. Empowerment means organizations of women to

help each other and raise their voice towards the state to make the expected change in the society. More recently, the word has reached the vocabulary of development agencies, including international organizations and the United Nations’.

Empowerment is a thorough transformation of the processes and structures responsible for women’s deteriorating status in the society. It is based on a ‘transformational potential’ related to the ‘need to transform women’s position in such a way that the betterment will be sustained. Dandikar (1986:26) has brought out the term “empowerment” from four different issues. These are following:

- Monetary ownership of women;
- Access to political participation by women in a given society;
- The nature or framework of a family and how it inspires or discourage women; and
- Probably most important, the subjective perception of women in their respective, which literally determines women’s perception about themselves and the available choice that she can tak into account for herself.

Batliwala S. (1993) narrated empowerment is a procedure that includes a reordination of power, particularly within the household. As regards empowerment, Hashemi (1993) have explained it in a study ‘Targeted Credit Programs and the Empowerment of Women in Rural Bangladesh’ and strengthen on women rule over on her lives. They have ascertained six general domains in which, traditionally subordination of women is effeted and in which empowerment of women is believed to be happening. The six domains are: (1) Having sense of self and ambition for future; (2) Freedom of dynamism and presence in the public arena; (3) Having the ability to earn living by themselves; (4) Power of making decision within family; (5) Meaningful interaction in the public functioning; (6) Participating in groups outside the family.

So the concept of empowerment is a process for decision-making and control over resources and achieving benefits through agencies. It is both individual and collective level.

In this article, I have tried to find out the different empowerments related to the women in Bangladesh like economic, social, political, psychological, Physiological and so on. The main objective of this article is to examine the present women development initiatives and how it is possible to be empowered in the different sectors. In this connection, I have tried to identify the challenges/barriers of women empowerment in this article.

1.3 Women:

A woman is an adult female human. The term woman may also conclude to a girl or lady. The word “Women” is referred as female humans without any judgment of age, color, religion, caste, place of birth etc. A woman believes in feminism, equality, proper allocation of resources, opportunities and power.

Concept of Women Empowerment

Empowerment of women is now a world phenomenon. It means a process to establish control over resources and also defines to acquire capability and convenience to win obstructions and to participate in decision-making process and its implementation. Although this term is generally used for promoting women’s condition, in exact sense it may be applied to any disadvantaged group of society for bringing them to the same level of advanced section.

Women empowerment is that approach where the women are able to regulate themselves to enhance their self-dependence, to express their independence right, to make choice and to gain control over resource that will help them to challenge their subjugation. (Keller and Mbwewe 1991). It is mainly neighboring with these four terms, options, choices, control and power. Ability to fix up, make choices, having control and gaining power connotes women empowerment.

But Kabeer N. (2001) has extended this definition further explaining as-The expansion in people’s ability to make artistic life choices in a context where this ability was previously denied to them. However, Batliwala (1993) explained it from a larger context. He told, it is about demanding patriarchal belief, to renovate the persisting structure and institution that maintain difference between men and women and

social inequality. It also indicates enabling disadvantaged women to gain access to, control over both material and immaterial resource. Our view as to women empowerment, it is a process having multiple dimensions like economic, socio-cultural and political also. All arenas are interrelated and inter-dependents. Empowerment of women will be confirmed when the women feel themselves that they can do any kind of work in the society like men. So the women empowerment is very much related to gender equality. In this paper, it is described the inter-related factors regarding women empowerment in Bangladesh like utilization of women's resources, enhancing their capacity and achieving their life goals.

1.4 Dimensions of Women Empowerment

The term "Empowerment" has been explained from multiple dimensions. However, this term can be classified into five different categories:

1.4.1 Social Empowerment

Bangladesh is achieving noticeable progress in last decades promoting the life of girls and women affairs where it is flourishing women entrepreneurship, ensuring women participation in productive activities; not constrained only in reproductive activities, engaging women leadership, entitling women against gender based violence. Social empowerment is generally concerned with strengths and capabilities that enable women's position in a related society and assert the present structure. It refers eradication of social discrimination and making room a favorable placement towards women. Social empowerment is a process where women gain more control over their own lives that give her more freedom to make choice. However, patriarchal attitude limits women from all the social activities and obstructs them to participate in any decision-making and sharing arena in Bangladesh, Marilee stated the issue. Especially the social situation of rural women is more on risk. Prejudice, socio-political ignorance, illiteracy, poverty, etc. play an influential role in lifting women from the mainstream of society (Chowdhury et al, 1980). Globally, 20 to 50% women face domestic violence in their life.

In Bangladesh, UNICEF (2010) report discloses that, more than 70% girls from the age group 13-18, including young housewives, faced physical abuse at home that led to death (unicef.org/Bangladesh). Building awareness, raising voice, organizing women, and access to information are crucial for ensuring women's social empowerment.

1.4.2 Educational Empowerment

The aim of educational empowerment is to develop skills, provide self-reliance mechanism, pleasures women for transforming their position. It helps women to learn about mental strength, motivation, confidence, patience, potentiality etc. The rate of primary and secondary level of education has been promoted in Bangladesh by recognizable percentage though the enrollment rate is praiseworthy. It has been recognized that an individual personal development relies on root level of education. (Hossain and Yusuf, 2001). Among the total 876 million adult women, two-thirds of them are unable to read and write. Likewise, two-thirds of the children among the total 150 million are not participating in primary schools (Mahtab, 2015, Ahmed, 2001). A study conducted on rural women showed that, 32% women had only the ability to sign their name and 9% were illiterate. Though 52% rural women had the educational quality up to secondary, only 7% women could receive the education above secondary level (Akter et al, 2018).

Table One: Overall Literacy Rate (%)

Literacy rate (7 Year +), (%), 2017	74.4%
Men	76.5%
Women	72.3%

Source: Bangladesh Economic review, Ministry of Finance, 2020

Table Two: Women participation in Education:

Rate of girl child admission in primary school	99.40%	Female students receiving scholarship in Secondary and Higher Secondary level	27,00,000 students
Female students in primary school	51%	Female student in Secondary level	53%

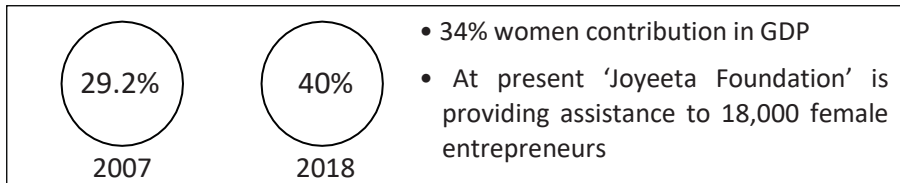
Source: mowca.gov.bd

The data shows that the female literacy rate is increasing consistently. There has positive impact on them they are conscious about their health care, food habits, childcare and overall it brings a positive change of their daily lives. In this connection, there has been referred as Education accelerates livelihood that women will care for their own wellbeing along with that of their life. Educated women also seem less possibly to suffer from domestic violence. (Kabeer N. 2005).

1.3.3 Economic empowerment

Economic empowerment is pivotal to women’s capability to exceed poverty and to flourish their well-being and also it immensely determines women’s status in society. If women can earn money in exchange of their labor (paid worker) and they contribute in the family and become a decision maker of their family affairs. Then they can significantly play role in the familial or societal matters. Women’s unpaid work and community work is 35% of GDP around the world, which is very alarming for the advancement of women in economic sectors. In Bangladesh, 20% agricultural workers are female who contribute to produce food for us, nevertheless, their earnings are 30% less than the male counterpart’s wages. In addition to agricultural sector, income of women in other sectors is also less than half of male wages (Mahtab, 2015, Mahmud and Bidisha, 2018). Women can also take care of their families and communities through their economic contribution.

Figure Two: Women participation in labor market



Source: Cri.org.bd

In Bangladesh, micro-credit programs and garments work fields, a huge number of women have been involved presently. They are contributing in the daily expenses of their family. It gets an obvious change in their own perceptions, and their role in house hold decision-making (Kabeer N. 2005). Micro-credit helps to reduce poverty so that women may access to make credits.

Table Three: Survey report on labor force

Labor force survey	2016-17
Total labor force (15+ years), Crore	6.35
Men	4.35
Women	2.00

Source: Bangladesh Economic Review 2020

The above mentioned data (Table Three) reveals that, women are more aware of being self-reliant. They are conscious about participating in various income generating activities. Moreover, micro-credit as well as entrepreneurship and employment generation women in industrial and informal sector would bring women into the mainstream of society.

Table Four: Women’s Educational status and in Labor market:

Primary el=50.75%	lev-	Higher Secondary Level= 47.00%	Professional Education=38.00%
Secondary el=54.00%	lev-	University Level=36.00%	Labor Market= 37%

Source: Cri.org

Noble Laureate Economist Amarta Sen wrote in his book “India: Development and Deprivation”, The advancement of Bangladeshi women is much more than Indian’s.”

1.3.4 Political Empowerment

Participation of women in political platform is a significant step towards empowerment of women in national level. When women can have their voice in parliament, they get the opportunity to formulate the laws for gender equality and women’s empowerment at national, as well as, grass root levels. So, embodying women to collectively efforts in bringing change can be achieved through political empowerment (Sarkar and Islam, 2017). However, global situation of women’s political empowerment is not up to the mark. In world’s parliament, women hold only 10.5% of the seats. Bangladeshi parliament is not that much different from the global scenario. Although 9th national parliament has increased the number of reserved seat from 30 to 45 and more or less 25% women members in local government are elected, the overall situation of women has not changed in society because of the patriarchal outlook (Mahtab, 2015).

Table five: Women’s participation in parliament

Year	Parliament			Cabinet		
	Male	Female	% of fe- male	Male	Female	% of female
1996	292	8	2.73	22	4	9.09
2001	293	7	2.38	25	1	4
2008	279	21	7.52	22	4	18.18
2014	277	23	8.30	24	2	8.33
2018	278	22	7.91	24	2	8.33

Source: Women’s status in parliament and cabinet (1996-2018)



Source: Ministry of Public Administration (2019)

The overall findings of political empowerment reveal that the female are far lag behind than male in parliament, local government, public administration and Ministry level. So, we seem that it is necessary to develop consciousness level for the female and try to take necessary strategic steps to the upliftment of the female. Fifty seats for reservation of women, it wouldn't emphasis a proper worthy for them. Actually, they are like sleeping partner, couldn't show their power actually. Despite women, achieved the right of voting, they still suffer to get the full opportunity to participate in national politics. The two main political parties in Bangladesh Awami League and Bangladesh Nationalist Party-BNP are leaded by two women but due to patriarchal political value, muscle power and influence of black money, low political knowledge, lack of political socialization, corruption, political instability, gender insensitive politics etc. women feel insecure to participate actively in politics (Mahtab, N. 2015).

Table Six: Categories of the Women's Leadership

Category	Number
Leader/Head of the Political Party	02
Elected National Member	22
Minister	05
Speaker of Parliament	01

Source: Ministry of Public Administration (2019)

Table Seven: Male-Female ratio working in MoPA, Dhaka

Rank	Male (2014)	Male (2018)	Female (2014)	Female (2018)	Vacant (2018)	Vacant Posts
Secretary	1	1	0	0	1	0
Additional Secretary	3	9	2	5	5	0
Joint secretary	17	22	4	3	21	1
Deputy Secretary and equivalent officers	13	43	10	20	23	2
Senior Assistant secretary and equivalent officers	21	9	16	6	37	5
Assistant programmers and equivalent to AS	18	12	7	3	25	6
Grand total	74	96	38	37	112	14

Source: Public Administration Computer Centre, MoPA 2014 and 2018

But, the public administration in Bangladesh has 10 female secretaries at present, are providing their services in major policy making sectors including the Finance and Economic Relations Division. In spite of Bangladesh having a patriarchal society, monetary affairs, trade and tariff, planning, economic relations departments are regulated by skillful women Bureaucrats. (Dhaka Tribune, June 2022)

1.3.5 Psychological and Physiological Empowerment

Psychological and physiological strength are inter-related. Favorable atmosphere and mental satisfaction stimulate a person to get a sound mental health. On the contrary, ensuring women's sound health and appropriate health access is beneficial to building a healthy nation. Unfortunately, the health status of women is very poor in Bangladesh. Proper and nutritious food intake can make psychological and physiological betterment. We know that there have six fundamental rights; food is one of them. It can make women more energetic and also more confident.

According to National Institute of Population Research and Training (NIPORT), 11000 women pass away during giving birth every day, which is the largest in South-Asia. Furthermore, globally more than 80 million women are subject to genital surgery. In addition, women consume less nutrition than their male counterparts (Mahtab, N. 2015).The average calorie intake has declined as non-food items take precedence in expenditure amid the rising household income, according to data of Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (2019).

Income and expenditure per household increased 39 percent and 40 percent respectively between 2010 and 2016, but calorie intake has gone down 4.65 percent during the period, according to the Household Income and Expenditure Survey (HIES) 2016 released yesterday.”The health status of women and the disparities in health between the sexes are often critical indications of equality in society. (WHO, 1986).

Table Eight: Comparison of Taking Nutrition between Men and Women

Subject	Male	Female
Daily Calorie Intake (2020)	2,500	2,000

Source: US standard 2020

The table no. eight shows that the female are behind of male due the low categories intake of food. Because, the mental and physical strength depend on physical fitness and it is possible to involvement of income generating activities.

Getting proper treatment is also one of the fundamental rights of human being. Every person in society irrespective of gender, color, race, religion has the right to get appropriate treatment for betterment of health. However, above tables show that the women are not getting proper nutrition than their male counterparts. As a result, they face various types of health hazards in their lifetime especially due to enough nutritious and dietary food they fail to produce a healthy child.

As a consequence of it, the mortality of women and child is high. Death rate of under one month mortality rate (alive birth per 1000) is 15; About 28 children (alive birth per 1000) are died who are under

Five Years; maternal mortality rate (alive birth per 1000) is 1.65- has been stated in Economic Review 2020.

It is very satisfactory that today's women are being able to take their own decision in their reproductive health. When a country can limit the rate of population growth rate, it will help a nation gradually be developed. In 1976, increasing rate of population growth rate has been defined as No. 1 problem of Bangladesh; regarded as 'population Explosion'. The rate of using birth control contraceptives is 63.4%. The total reproductive health (15-49 years) is 2.04. There is a gap in treatment expenditure between men and women (Mannan and Mary, 2006).

2.0 Initiatives for Women Empowerment in Bangladesh

Human beings are the constitution of both men and women. But, the unfortunate matter is that women are being frequently neglected and exploited from the very beginning of society. Women in many ways are inferior to and dependent on men from their childhood.

The present Government of Bangladesh has taken various programs to ascertain women development in Bangladesh. The world community has been considered as one of the leading issue to accelerate women development.

2.1 Gender responsive budgeting

Bangladesh has been adopted gender responsive budgeting since 2009 when Sheikh Hasina Government was democratically elected for the 2nd time. Every Ministry carries gender responsive budget and distributes this budget for economic and social empowerment of women. Present Government is promised to accomplishing the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) of gender equality and women empowerment and implementing the Convention on Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and The Beijing Platform for Action. Bangladesh has already achieved MDG3 as it has achieved gender parity. Bangladesh has been working in a relentless manner to assure women's entire development by confirming their equal and active participation in the mainstream socio-economic

activities and exterminating several obstacles to their empowerment.

Table Nine: Allocation of Funds for the Women Development in fiscal budget of 2009 an 2018

Year	Budget Allocation for women development (Tk in Crore)
2009	27,248
2018	1,73,782

Source: Budget Speech (2019): Finance Minister of Bangladesh.

2.2 Women Development Board of Bangladesh:

For expediting rehabilitation of women who suffered during the War of Liberation, a program was undertaken and the uprooted 1st 5-year plan (1973-78). It emphasis on education, health and family planning and attaining economic self-reliance of various nature aimed at ultimate social welfare for the first time. Bangladesh Women Rehabilitation Board was established by the government of Bangladesh in 1972. It (a) conducts survey to collect correct information about the women and children abused and to organize for their rehabilitation; and, (b) arranges various vocational training of these victimized women. In addition marriage was arranged for such 10 women Biranganas under personal initiative of Begum Fazilatunnessa and rehabilitation of majority of such of them on family and social levels. As the scope and responsibility of Women Development Board expanded steadily, this board was reorganized in 1974 into Women Rehabilitation and Welfare Foundation. This foundation had myriad programs including (1) build up physical infrastructure targeted at development of women in all the districts and sub-divisions of the country; (2) impart vocational training for broad based employment of women; (3) establish showroom and sales Centers for productive employment of women; (4) extend day care facilities for those women engaged in productive and training activities; (5) render treatment facilities to war affected women; and (6) introduce scholarships and stipends for education of the children of women affected by the War of Liberation which function is currently conducted under the name and style of "Vulnerable Women and Children Welfare Fund.

2.3 United Nations (UN) initiatives for empowering and developing women in Bangladesh

UN has incorporated few steps for the development and empowerment of women. And as upcoming developing countries, Bangladesh follows- (1) Elimination of salary discrimination-1951; (2) Female Education Rights-1962; (3) Declaration of Women Decade-1975; (4) 8th March-Recognition of International Women Day; (5) Sign in CEDAW certificate-1979 and (6) Declaration of 'Women Oppression Prohibition Day'-17th November, 1999.

In the CEDAW Perspective

Bangladesh did signature in 1984 4 articles- Initialed in the agreement of 'International Bill of Rights' with some reservations for women: 1. 2, 2. 13 (a), 3. 16 (a), 4. 16 (e). In 1996: (1) 13 (a), (2) Withdrawal from reservations 16 (e), (3) Submit report consequently 4 years to UN

The Government of Bangladesh and various voluntary organizations are implementing the UN Programs for the development of women in Bangladesh. The women and overall people of Bangladesh are trying to realize the necessity of gender quality by the assistance of international community.

2.4 Steps for protecting 'Violence against Women' in national and international arenas:

The Government of Bangladesh has undertaken effective programs for strengthening legal structure and principles of our country so that we can be able to protect from violence against women and to ensure women rights. Violence can be physical, sexual, burn, psychological, economic, acid violence, human trafficking, polygamy, child marriages etc.

International arena:

- "Universal Declaration of Human Rights 1948"
- Declaration on the Protection of Women and Children in emergency and armed conflict 1974.
- "Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women" (CRDAW) 1979

- Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women 1993
- The Beijing Declaration and The Platform for Action 1995
- Optional protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of All Discrimination against Women 1999
- Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and Optional Protocol 2006
- Commission on the Status of Women: Resolution of 57th Session 2013

Government initiatives for protecting women from violence; Multi-dimensional program by the Ministry of Child and Women Affairs:

- One stop crisis centre (OCC), has been established in Dhaka and providing medical facilities and services in all divisions of our country.
- Has different laboratories, national Trauma Counseling centre, Violence Against Women (VAW) database, One stop Crisis Cell, National Helpline Centre for Violence Against Women and Children (Established in 2012 and helpline number is 10921).
- Women friendly hospital initiatives by Ministry of Women and Child Affairs,
- Bangladesh Police has established 'Victim Support Centre' in 2009
- In 2009-2010 fiscal years, Bangladesh firstly adopted gender responsive budget. From 2011-12 fiscal years, 43 Ministries are formulating and implementing budget.
- This Government has remarked "Domestic Violence" as a crime for the first time through "Domestic Violence (Prevention and Protection) Act 2010.
- "Child Marriage Prevention Act 2017" has recently been accepted in cabinet after correcting "Child Marriage Control Act 2013". Here, marriage has been prohibited before 18 for the female child and will be punished if someone breaks the rule.
- 'One Stop Crisis Centre' in 8 medical college for ensuring treatment for victim girl

2.5 Developed Health Services

Bangladesh has tremendously progress in health services from last decade. The Government has formed required infrastructure and public resource to ensure developed health services for women especially for grassroots. In last two decades, both infant mortality and newborn child mortality rate has been decreased. Because, maternal and pregnancy care are being gradually developed. Present Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has been carrying out maternal health voucher scheme during her first term. A voucher scheme is provided through this scheme. This scheme includes- health check-up for three times during pregnancy period, safe child birth in the presence of skilled midwifery, one time check-up after giving birth of a child, transportation costs. About 1,00,000 women are getting assistance from this scheme. Women are being provided Primary Health Care in 16,438 community clinics. It is very delighting that 1 crore people are receiving health care services from community hospitals. Among them, 80% are women and children. Community clinic has been developed in 1998.

2.6 Economic Steps

The present Government is providing importance on women participation in economic activities. The Government seems that this participation is very much crucial for fetching out a control on the achievement of women rights and dignity. Women are being inspired to take part in labor market. In this connection, the women have been involved as key source of economic power. According to a report of 'Prothom Alo', it is noticed that poverty has been declined 70% within 50 years. Poverty has been lessened from 48.9% to 20.5% in 2000 to 2019.

The women in development approach (WID) urged for the "integration of women into development programs and planning (Mahtab N. 2015). Extensive programs have been undertaken to simplify economic empowerment of women. These programs are Such-management of professional training, making availability of work, ascertainment of women participation in labor market, financial and related other assistances. Government has incorporated an Income Generating

Activity (IGA) in Upazila level. Its objective is to be self-dependent of rural women. Four months duration program is being operated through sewing, tourism, handicrafts, mushroom cultivations, carpet making, urging shops, mobile phone repairing, computer repairing. It is being implemented in 426 Upazillas.

2.7 Women participation in sports

Bangladesh Government is giving importance on sports. Sports deliver women not only physical stamina but also mental strengths, along with confidence, but also it offers a way to become self-dependent. Through breaking the social stigma, women are taking part in different challenging workplace. So, women are passing a better and healthy life and also achieving glory for our country. Jessy recently become the first female commentator from Bangladesh to commemorate in International matches on star sports during the World Cup 2019. While Ashreen became the first Bangladeshi basketball player to join the Global Sports Mentoring Program, funded by ESPN and the United States, Last year. Female players are participating in different sports like athletics, swimming, cricket, football etc. and gaining success.

2.8 Administrative Empowerment of Women

Government has undertaken various inclusive programs from the beginning period of Bangladesh for the administrative empowerment of women so that they can be able to make decisions of their own.

Table Ten:

1972	Reservation of 10% quota for women in Workplace
1973	Inclusion of two women in cabinet
1974	Appointment of an women in the post of Director-General of Bangla Academy
1997	Number of Three reserved seat for the local elective body of Union Parishad
Female quota in Government jobs	

Gazetted-10%,	Non-gazetted-15%
Appointment of Primary teacher-60%	

So, the women are being gradually involved in administrative arena and they become the part of power.

2.9 Achievement of Gender Parity

Bangladesh has been ranked the top country among its South Asian neighbors by performing the best in bringing down gender gap, World Economic Forum said in its latest report. Bangladesh has ranked 65th out of 165 countries in the latest Global Gender Gap Index 2021. It closed 72.6% of its overall gender gap and obtained 50th position out of 153 countries globally, where India is 122nd and Pakistan is 151st position out of 153 countries, the WEF said in its report titled 'Global Gender Gap Report 2020'. Bangladesh was in the 91st position in WEF's 2006 report. WEF prepared this report measuring education, economic participation, health and political empowerment to measure gender equality of any country. Bangladesh has successfully achieved MDG 8 goals; including gender parity. Although there are no countries thoroughly eliminated gender discrimination, Bangladesh has achieved unbelievable success to lessen discriminations. Our Honorable Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina achieved "Planet 50-50 Champion" awards. Before that Bangladesh fruitfully achieved MDG target for achieving gender parity. And it is expected that Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 4 will possibly be achieved with the consequence of achieving the target of MDGs within 2030.

2.10 Bangladesh and National and International NGOs attachment

Bangladesh has made remarkable progress in the last 20 years in improving the lives of women and girls. Maternal and child mortality rates are declining, fertility rate is decreasing, and there is greater gender parity in school enrolment. Besides, eighty two percent married women suffer gender-based violence and widespread sexual violence which prevents women from achieving their complete feasibility.

In spite of the government and non-government organizational attempts reducing the rate of child marriage in Bangladesh, it remains the highest in South Asia at 59 percent of girls getting married before the age of 18.

Women's participation in the workforce remains limited, little-wages sectors. Three million Bangladeshi women are employed in the profitable ready-made garment (RMG) sector, which is Bangladesh's largest export industry. Increasing numbers of women are involved in small and medium enterprises, but there sustain immense economy gaps that women face despite few government initiatives. USAID is committed to addressing many of the challenges facing women in Bangladesh across its programs.

Bangladesh is one of the most vulnerable countries to malnutrition. For example, 36 percent children who are under the age of five are somewhat stunted and 33 percent are underweight. In addition, 31 percent of women and girls aged 15 to19 are undernourished. USAID is helping women to fulfill participation in the private sector and increasing their access to market scheme. Focusing on women, USAID's Bangladesh has led to a significant impact on malnutrition in Bangladesh, reducing stunting by over 20 percent in project areas. USAID has also developed a mobile application that promotes social behavior change for nutritional messaging and zinc-fortified rice promotion, particularly among women. USAID's Agricultural Value Chain activity, enhancing access to economy, circumstantial consent, nutrition, and gender equity, shared with local organizations of empowered women entrepreneurs and business owners to help break down barriers and biases for women.

USAID and other National NGOs are working for women. Grameen Bank is that non-government NGO which aim is to empower women. It provides loan only for women. Not only Grameen Bank but also BRAC, Asha, Proshika and so on. deliver their special attention in grassroots level women. In 2015, USAID programs in Bangladesh.

- Has trained more than 500,000 female farmers in adopting developed agriculture technologies like deep placement of

fertilizers and more productive load tolerant varieties of seeds, as well as aquaculture practices to make larger catches of fish and shrimp.

- Has helped nearly 150,000 primary school-aged girls improving their reading skills.

3.0 Challenges of Women Empowerment

According to a report, women can earn twenty percent more if they are provided with extra education. This large efficacy remains untouched in many countries due to many challenges they face in empowering women. For example, Organization of Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) countries could accelerate their Gross Domestic Product (GDP) by almost six trillion if rate of female employment is increased. Some of the challenges in women empowerment in Bangladesh perspective are mentioned below:

Patriarchal dominance

Patriarchy has been a base of our social, cultural, political and economic life for a long period of time. This sustainability is established in our social and religious values that are still seems hard to challenge. Production, distribution and consumption are uniquely influenced mostly by men in our society. The disparity in wages, share of benefit have lagged women behind in achieving economic freedom. This sense of patriarchal dominance is also extensive in the area of sexuality, cultural life and state administration.

Violence against women

Multiple form of violence against women is unlikely to decline in Bangladesh. Domestic violence against women in Bangladesh was very high, with 47% of adult women reporting physical assault by a male partner (UNFPA (1994), Program of Action Adopted at the ICPD, Cairo. It is impossible to pass a day without any reported violence against women particularly rape, sexual harassment, eve teasing,

physical torturing at household, trafficking, dowry related violence etc. women literally feel unsafe at home, public place, workplace, transport and almost everywhere. This leaves them with little choice and freedom to flourish according to their dream and ambition. Thus, many potential entrepreneur, leader, politician and change maker become unable to blossom in life.

Discrimination in workplace

Although government and NGO's provide incentives to women entrepreneurs, this concept is not widely regarded among the mass people of Bangladesh. Women leading in business and ventures are often facing multiple obstacles comparing to their male counterpart.

Harassment

Women are highly vulnerable when it comes to working in night shift. They are highly likely to be victimized at workplace for long time. Sexual harassment is common among many forms of harassment. Economic empowerment is the precondition to ensure women have voice in all decision making and planning. If they face barriers in acquiring this power, it would be impossible for them to rise above the status at all.

Lack of Recognition of Informal Work

Woman has to accomplish loads of work and daily chores that mostly goes unrecognized in Bangladesh. The Government barely observes and considers them as economic contribution. Besides these, they are mistreated and tortured sometimes by their husband. This climate of un-recognition must be changed if we seek to treat them fairly.

Social stigma

The myth about women's capacity, intelligence and social superstition is common barriers women faces in continuing education. Therefore, insecurity on the way to school, transport is another concern for women. People in rural area used to marry off their daughter at early

age due to poverty, safety and other social problems. Even though most girls aspire to pursue their education, there in laws become major hindrances to achieve this goal. Women are supposed to stay inside house, perform daily chores and taking care of children. This attitude towards exist everywhere due to prejudice among common people.

Inadequate and Low-quality Reproductive Health Services

Despite magnificent progress in providing reproductive health service across the country since last decade, three women die every hour due to reproductive health related complexity. Besides these, a large number of adolescent girls are being deprived of reproductive health service that is increasing their vulnerability. Bangladesh has large number of population of which half of them are women. The country has to struggle to disburse necessary material assistance and quality service to its huge amounts of women.

Feminization of Poverty

Poverty is the worst enemy behind women empowerment. Not only Bangladesh but also all South Asian countries are facing the unfavorable influence of poverty. Women's has limited control over resources. Due to their lack in ownership and access to resource, they remain poor in economic sense. Poverty and women used often interchangeable in our society. Feminization refers to a trend of increasing inequality in living standards between men and women due to the increasing gap in poverty between women and men as noticed toward the end of the twentieth century. It can be defined in varied ways targeting on income, assets, time, health deprivations, and social and cultural exclusions.

There have even many more families who constrain themselves in the concept of feminization of poverty. This is very unfortunate in the 21st Centuries. In 2013, more than one woman in seven has to live under poverty line. This cycle sustained for long time. Since women have less access to opportunity, limited control over resources, less freedom

in mobilization, obstacles in acquiring education and unsafe work environment they end up becoming poor and this cycle continues.

Political unrest

Women have to face multiple complexities while contesting in election. Most important factor is that the political culture of present time in which parties regulate and to some extent which is very necessary to make favorable environment to the promotion of women's involvement in politics. They are neglected and threatened by their male counterpart in every steps of political participation. Political socialization is not gender sensitive in our country to create a level playing field. Hence, women have to fight socially, economically and politically to gain public support while maintaining their family. They often become victim of verbal abuse and scandals are spread against them to downgrade their position.

Early Marriage

Early marriage is that stigma in our society by which majority women loss their opportunity to take proper education. They become deprived from their basic necessities, do not make control over their resources, do not play their role in various developmental aspects, passing marginalized life, lagging behind from their life. This is really a very measureable issue.

4.0 Recommendations and Conclusion

The constitution of Bangladesh has provision particularly in article 27, 28 and 29 to provide necessary measure for the sake of uplifting women's condition and not to discriminate based on gender. National initiatives have taken especially for women's development and their participation in all spheres of life. Different national policy and incorporation of women's agenda in different national plan is indicator of tremendous opportunity ahead for empowerment of women. Multiple legislations have been formed to ensure safety of women and to prioritize their importance in every walks of life. Institutional

measure to undertake various programs aiming to empowering women is underway in everywhere:-

Educating women regarding inherent right and dignity of their individuality; suggest special provision for women, personal strength and weakness and available service for them to increase their mental strength and enthusiasm for empowerment.

Eradicating social all prejudices, myths and practices that can return women advanced in all areas of life; Introducing collective effort against those social menaces responsible for backwardness of women.

Emergency to eliminate all forms of violence and discrimination against women so that they can allow them flourish equitable with men.

Introducing rigorous punishment and declaring zero tolerance to any violence and discrimination against women.

Need to provide a safeguard for women in entrepreneurship; corporate leadership and business to thrive them in all sectors. Special privileges and incentives are required to achieve this goal. A safe working environment free from all worries is must be very emergence for women to compete and thrive with their male counterpart. Many incidents of such abuse go unreported that require meticulous attention from concerned authority.

Recognizing informal work done by women at home will give them privileges to claim more rights and opportunity for their development.

Access to justice should be ensured to the extent that can establish a favorable environment for women to benefit from all services and resources.

Financial constraint should be removed through ensuring property rights and income generating activities for women. A strong coordination among all Government Organizations (GO) and Non-government Organizations (NGO) body working towards women empowerment should be introduced for a greater outcome.

No compromise should be made that is sensitive to women empowerment and a zero tolerance policy should be introduced regarding crime against women.

Early marriage must be avoided so that women can physically and mentally be strong. As a result, women would be capable to take part in varied challenging tasks. Women should be more conscious as well as society should develop themselves in a hurry.

In this present paper, we have tried my level best to highlight the issues of women empowerment especially in the dimensions of economic, political, social, legal and cultural empowerment. If the barriers of women development needs to handle with the implementation of female rights enforcement of equal justice and reduce the discrimination among the males and females. In addition, traditional social values and practice should be modernized within the context of global multicultural values and religious liberalism.

References

- Akter, Ayesha, Ahmed, Nobaya, Jafar (2018), *Empowerment of Women through Entrepreneurial Activities of Self-help Groups in Bangladesh*, Journal of International Business and Management, 1(1): 1-15.
- Akter, Zobida (2001), *Women and Equality: The Context of Bangladesh*, a Ph.D. Thesis (Unpublished), Department of Philosophy, Dhaka University.
- Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS) (2019), Planning Division, Ministry of Planning, Government of Bangladesh.
- Bangladesh Economic Review (2020), Ministry of Finance, Government of Bangladesh.
- Bathiwala, S. (1994), *Empowerment of Women* in Gita Sen etal (edited), India.
- Batliwala, S. (1993): *Empowerment of women in south Asia: Concepts and Practices*: New Delhi: FAO – FFNC/AD.
- Centre for Research and Information (Cri).org. bd
- Dhaka Tribune report on Women Empowerment: Bangladesh sets example for the world.
- Hashemi, S. M. & Schuler, S. R. (1996), *Sustainable Banking with the Poor: A Case Study with Grameen Bank*, Dhaka, Grameen Bank.
- Hossain M, and Yusuf, A.F. (2001), *Future of Girls Education in Bangladesh*, Dhaka: Academy for Planning and Development Centre.

- Kabeer, N. (2001), Conflicts Over Credit: Re-evaluating the Empowerment Potential of Loans to Women in Rural Bangladesh, *World Development* 29(1).
- Kabeer, N. (2001): Reflections on the Measurement of women's empowerment: In N. Kabeer (edited): *Discussing women's empowerment: theory and practice*: Stockholm Sida: Pp 20- 27
- Kabeer, N. (2005), Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment: A Critical Analysis of the third Millennium Development Goal, *Gender and Development*, Vol-13, No.1.
- Mahtab N. (2015), *Women, Gender and Development Contemporary Issues*, A H Development Publishing House.
- Mahmud, Simeen, Shah Nirali M. , Becker Stan, Measurement of Women's Empowerment in Rural Bangladesh, *World Dev.* Author manuscript; Available in PMC 2013, April 29, PMID: PMC3639002.
- Mannan, Abdul, and Mary, Khanom, Samsun Naher (2016), *Nari O Rajniti*, Abosar Prokashoni Sangstha, 46/1, 46/2, Hemendra Das Road, Sutrapur, Dhaka-1100.
- Marliee, K. *Women and Empowerment* (1995), Participation and Decision-making, 2nd edition.
- Milton Friedman (2015), *The Power of Choice: The Life and Ideas of Milton*, University of Caliphonia, USA.
- Ministry Of Women and Child Affairs (MOWCA).gov. bd
- Sarkar, Md Masud, and Islam Md Shahidul (2017), Social Capital and Political Participation: A Case Study from Rural Bangladesh, *European Review of Applied Sociology*, Vol-10, No.15.
- UNFPA (1994), Program of Action Adopted at the ICPD, Cairo. UNICEF Report, 2010
- USAID report (March 2, 2021) on the Gender Equality and Women Empowerment. WHO (1986), report on Inter-personal Action for Health.