

## **Women and Sustainable Development: Bangladesh Perspective**

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**ABSTRACT:** Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) has become a major concern for the developing countries of the world. As Bangladesh has achieved much praises from the global development community for its excellent performance in attaining the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), including gender equality and women empowerment, the country is becoming an active participant in welcoming the sustainable development goals. Although SDG has 17 Global Goals and the 169 targets for Bangladesh, an attempt has been made in this article to focus on the goal number five of SDGs that is gender equality and women empowerment. Women constitute half of our total population. Without the development of women, it is not possible to ensure our holistic development. However, the objective of the study is to know the relationship between women and sustainable development in the context of Bangladesh society. The findings of the study highlighted that Bangladesh government has prioritized the women issue and taken many initiatives for their improvement since its independence from the state of otherness, second sex, timid, dependent to opposite ones. Significant progress including participation of women in the National Parliament, Girls' enrolment into schools, women participation in the labor force outside agriculture, elimination of all forms of discrimination, violence, and harmful practices against women and girls, ensuring universal access to sexual and reproductive health, affording women equal rights to economic resources such as land and property etc. have been achieved during the 2000-2015 and 2015-2020 periods. It may create a thirst to the academicians to conduct more empirical studies on women and sustainable development goals issue in the context of Bangladesh.

**KEY WORD:** development, SDG, gender equality, women empowerment, health, Bangladesh

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Date of Submission: 10-06-2020

Date of Acceptance: 28-06-2020

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### **I. INTRODUCTION**

Bangladesh is now experiencing far-reaching changes in demographic transition, rapid economic growth and social development as well. The country has achieved developing status very recent. Despite much improvement in economic position, women of the country are still facing much disadvantages, discrimination, frequent harassment inside and outside of workplaces, getting low wages in the labor market, undermining in the reform process of gender segregation and by persistent gender inequality and job mobility. They were always suppressed under religious bigotry, social stigma, narrow-mindedness and discriminated in a male dominated society and also the talent and labor spent by our women in their household chores were never properly evaluated (NWDP, 2011). But now a day the status of women has been changing and socio-economic conditions of women in Bangladesh have been improving significantly over the years. Progress is evident in education, gender quality, health and empowerment, which is an indication of women's increasing participation in the workforce. Readymade garment industries, micro credits, GO and NGO organization's entrepreneurship, different types of policies, programs, plans, mission and visions of the government playing a key role in economically and socially uplifting a large cohort of poor and vulnerable women in Bangladesh. Sustainable development won't be possible without the equitable distribution of opportunities, resources, recognizing their contribution and full participation in workforce. As a part of the rural transformation, an increasing proportion of women are getting into wage employment in the rural economy including in agriculture through the initiatives of the five year plan of the govt. of Bangladesh. The government is successful in eliminating the gender disparity in primary and secondary education, solid progress has been made in reducing the large gap between male and female students at the tertiary level. The most important step has been to ratify the National Women Development Policy (NWDP, 2011). Besides; SDGs provide us with a commonplace plan and schedule to address some of the urgent challenges going through our global and local affairs of women discrimination, gender inequality and sustainable development. Implementation of the 2030-time table of Sustainable

Development will be a possibility for Bangladesh to attention interest on many of these challenges and to solve it. A list of 20 goals was formulated in order to empower women in all aspect of life: socially, legally, economically and politically. Women have a strong role in education and socializing their children, including teaching they care and responsibility with regard to the use and protection of natural resources (Kumar, 2012). Women's empowerment is a key factor for achieving sustainable economic growth, social development and environmental sustainability. It is believed that science, culture, arts, technology and communication play in women's empowerment, and the need for a gender equality lens in all these areas. Digital revolution and participation of women in technology enhance women empowerment through reducing gender digital divides. Participatory decision making, awareness building, increase economic solvency and capacity building may be the possible solution to women empowerment and in order to build women as catalyst for sustainable development, their role in family, community and society at large has to free from socio-cultural and religious traditions that prevent women participation (Kumar, 2012). Bangladesh's economic transformation was driven in large part by social changes, starting with the empowerment of women. Bangladesh govt. has set vision 2021 and vision 2041 to achieve its goals through taking some crucial initiatives, strategies and strategic plans such as Five year plan and Perspective Plans to meet the requirements of sustainable development goals which associated with women empowerment and attaining gender equality as a developing nation like MGDs. The disparity towards women is eliminating, participation of women in income generating activities and involvement of women in decision making process are enhancing gradually through implementation of activities of Perspective Plan, Five Year Plan and SDGs undertaken to reach strategic objectives. Thus women participation in mainstream development activities and women empowerment are establishing Goal 5 emphasizes elimination of all forms of discrimination against women and girls, elimination of all forms of violence against all women and girls, and elimination of harmful practices affecting child and women. Ensuring universal access to sexual and reproductive health, and affording women equal rights to economic resources such as land and property are important for attaining the goal. Enhancing use of enabling technology especially ICT and adoption of sound policies and enforceable legislation are also vital for this goal. Above all, a legal framework to promote, enforce and monitor equality and non-discrimination needs to be in place.

## **II. MATERIAL AND METHODS**

The research has been prepared using secondary data. Data from books, Government reports, Journal articles, Newspapers articles, and Web based information on sustainable development goals issue have been given priority as the secondary data. The document study method has been used to conduct the research.

## **III. RESULT**

**Factors Influencing Women Backwardness in Bangladesh:** Factors behind disempowerment of women in Bangladesh can be divided in to three broad categories as economic, social and cultural and political (Newaz, 2000). Limited employment in labor force, patriarchal inheritance and ownership of land, low income are the roots causes of their backwardness. Both Muslim and Hindu personal laws of inheritance are patriarchal and there is discrimination in shares between men and women (Newaz, 2000). Women in Bangladesh are socially and culturally hindered to foster their activities and initiatives. Dependencies on men, illiteracy are remarkable. From childhood to older ages, women depend on men in various ways in Bangladesh (Goswami, 1998). Cultural apathy, marriage for women is low age, puberty, dowry; dowry (property or money brought by a bride to her husband's family) determines their marriage prospects. Dowry has proved to be detrimental to women's position (Mason: 1984, cited in Goswami: 1998) Purdah (veil) prevents women to participate in social, economic and political activities (Newaz, 2000).

**Scenario of Women in Bangladesh at Present:** Bangladesh is in transition at all aspects of indicators of development in recent times the government is successful in MGDs and other development agendas but the country still facing some problems and is gone to be removed at immediate concern. If the activities of women work are not considered included and recognized the whole system of development will be destroyed.

**Women Violence:** Women violence is a very common feature in both rural and urban Bangladesh. A survey conducted by shows that two thirds of women in Bangladesh, around 66% have been victims of domestic violence and 72.7% of them have never disclosed their experience to others. Women still suffer from chronic abuse, torture and violence in their homes. Despite this high rate of partner violence most women do not want to close their experience to others. Only 2.1 of women inform local leaders of their experience while 1.1% of women seek help from the police.

**Sexual Harassment in the Work Place:** World Health Organization on "Violence against Women" states that nearly one-third of the world's women are being subjected to sexual violence. 7 percent of women in the world have been a victim of rape, regardless of their age. Women aged from three to sixty years have been subjected to sexual harassment. Women lost their passion to work in office sometimes for subjected to harassment in the workplace. Research conducted by (Action Aid Bangladesh, 2019) found that 80% of garment

workers in Bangladesh have either seen or directly experienced sexual violence or harassment in the workplace. Their aggregate data showed that overall 80% of respondents reported experiencing or witnessing abuse at work. The data also shows that 12% of women said they had been sexually harassed molested or assaulted at work. A shocking 10% of women said they were currently being subjected to sexual harassment, molestation and assault at work. In reality, these figures are likely to be higher because survivors of abuse are sometimes reluctant to discuss this, whether because of anxiety, shame, or fear of reprisals. The vast majority (81.5%) of respondents said they were aware of abuse and harassment in and around work (Action Aid Bangladesh, 2019).

**Child Marriage Rate:** Bangladesh faces a great deal of child marriage in rural as well as urban slum areas because of lack of awareness, poor educational attainment and poverty of the citizen. Teenage girls are the main victims of child marriage. About 52 per cent of 20 to 24 year-old women in Bangladesh married before they were 18 and 18 per cent married before they were 15 shown by a study conducted by Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS) in 2015 with financial and technical assistance of UNICEF. After marriage, are frequent affected with fatal diseases and absorbed in hard-core poverty. Over the last decade, marriage rates for girls under 15 dropped by more than 35 percent, and Bangladesh plans to eradicate the practice entirely by 2021 (Wazed, 2017).

**Situation of Widowed, Divorced or Separated Women:** Women headed family are more sufferer in economic spheres of their life in Bangladesh. Providing women with the opportunity to learn skills and earn a living can be instrumental fostering economic growth and advancing gender equality and to make them solvent. Study findings that households headed by widowed, divorced or separated women are the poorest, 25% of them living in extreme poverty (UN, 2017).

**Gender Digital Divide:** The world is moving fast and the use of technology and internet are evident in development field. It will not be possible to foster sustainable development of women without empowering women or girls in ICT sectors. In Bangladesh only 16 percent of the women are engaged in ICT sector and a huge number 84 percent of male. There is large gender gap in the ICT sector of Bangladesh (The Daily Star, 2019). Presenting a study titled “Breaking barriers and empowering Girls in ICT,” keynote speaker and BIID CEO Shahid Uddin Akbar said about 42% of students who study in ICT based courses such as engineering or computer science do so out of personal interest, while 18% study with the aim of gaining better salaries and job opportunities, 7% for work flexibility, and just 5% after being influenced by their parents (Adib, 2019).

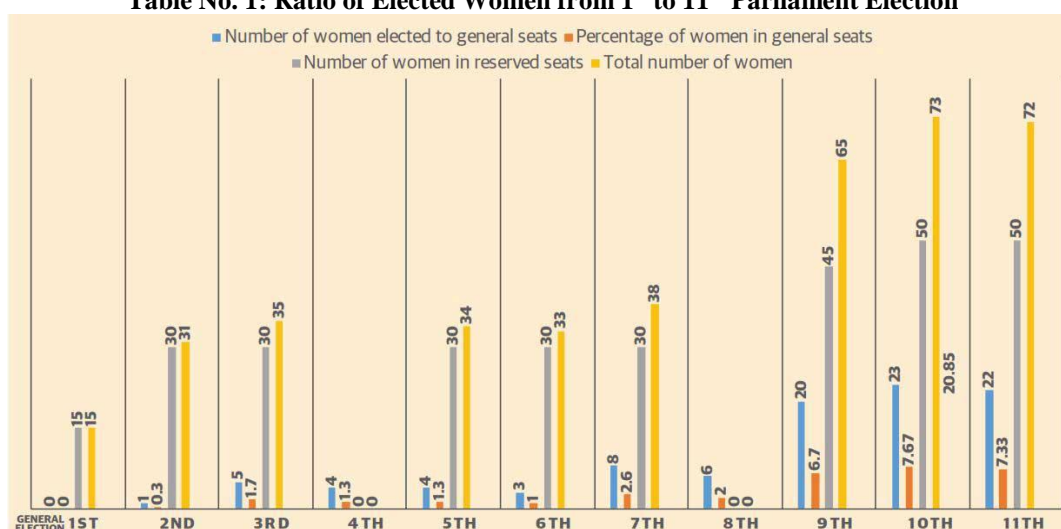
**Unpaid Domestic Work Situation:** In Bangladesh half of the population is women and the majorities are engaged in unpaid domestic and care work and participation is mostly limited to work of low pay. A joint study discovered that unpaid and in accounted domestic work comprises nearly 48 percent of the nation’s GDP (gross domestic product). As the study has found women’s contribution to the uncounted labor is more than 81 percent reports (Financial Express, 2019). Women need recognition for their unpaid work because its monetary value was almost 40 percent of Bangladesh’s GDP in fiscal 2016-17, (Sanem, reports The Daily Star, 2019). Sanem says the monetary value of unpaid domestic work is equivalent to 48.54 percent of fiscal 2016-17’s GDP and women account for 81.4 percent of the amount (The Daily Star, 2019).

**Bangladesh Progress towards Gender Equality, Women Empowerment and Sustainable Development-Political Empowerment and Parliament Member Ratio:** Though the political arena of Bangladesh is still dominated by men and very few women are succeed in rising up and taking the lead, the political empowerment of women in Bangladesh is remarkable. The policies of the government and political parties for inclusion of women in politics and national parliament helped tremendously to increase inclusion of women in politics. This is due to the initiatives of reservation of seats at National Parliament and local governments.

- Honorable Prime Minister, Speaker of the Parliament, Opposition leader of the parliament is women.
- 50 seats out of 300 are reserved for women
- One of two Vice-Chairman must be a women at Upazila level
- 1/3 of the seats of Union Parishad, Municipality and City Corporation are kept reserved for women.
- According to the Representation of the People Order (RPO) every political party must have women as 33% of its representatives as per law.
- Women Development Forum has been formed to enhance the capacity of elected women representatives at Upazila level.

The provision of reserved seats for women was introduced in the first parliament in 1973, with 15 seats (gray in color) reserved for women in addition to the 300 general seats in the parliament. But the number was later raised to 50 gradually with the 14th amendment of constitution, the number of reserved seats for women was raised from 30 to 45—prior to the ninth parliamentary election held in 2008—and then increased to 50 through the 15th amendment in 2011 and the tenure of the reserved seats for women was extended to 25 years amendment 17<sup>th</sup>. According to the recent “Global Gender Gap Report 2018” published by the World Economic Forum (WEF), Bangladesh has closed over 72% of its overall gender gap, retaining its topmost position among the South Asian countries in ensuring gender equality.

**Table No. 1: Ratio of Elected Women from 1<sup>st</sup> to 11<sup>th</sup> Parliament Election**



No seat reservation in parliament election 4<sup>th</sup> (1988) and 8<sup>th</sup> (2001).

**Women Participation in Administration:** Bangladesh, being a developing country, has been striving to achieve the elusive goal of ensuring gender equality. It is an unfortunate fact that women in Bangladesh are still considered as one of most vulnerable groups. Social and cultural values did not create a congenial atmosphere for most of the women to lead a dignified life. They are expected to play the traditional gender biased role of a cook, cleaner, house hold manager and baby care taker. Women get access in civil service in 1982 but still covering 14.48% of public administration (Khair et al. 2017). According to the Article 29 of the Constitution of the Bangladesh 10 per cent posts of civil service are preserved for women in order to secure women’s adequate representation in civil service.

- Human Rights Commission consists of a Chairman, a regular member and five women honorary members.
- 10% quota for Gazetted and 15% for non-gazetted post are reserved for women.
- 60% women quota is reserved for Primary School Teachers.
- Armed Police Battalion named APBN-11 formed consisting of 371 women personnel.
- Two Female Police Units (FPUs) are sent to the UN Peace Keeping Missions in Haiti and DR Congo.

**Gender Responsive Budget:** The government of Bangladesh emphasized on gender responsive budgeting since 2009-2010. At present all the ministries adopted gender responsive budgeting and are made accountable towards allocation for economic and social empowerment of women, poverty reduction and women advancement related spending. Prioritizing women’s development, Bangladesh has seen the highest allocation in history in the women development sector in the budget for women. Today’s women budget is more than total budget of 2009-10.

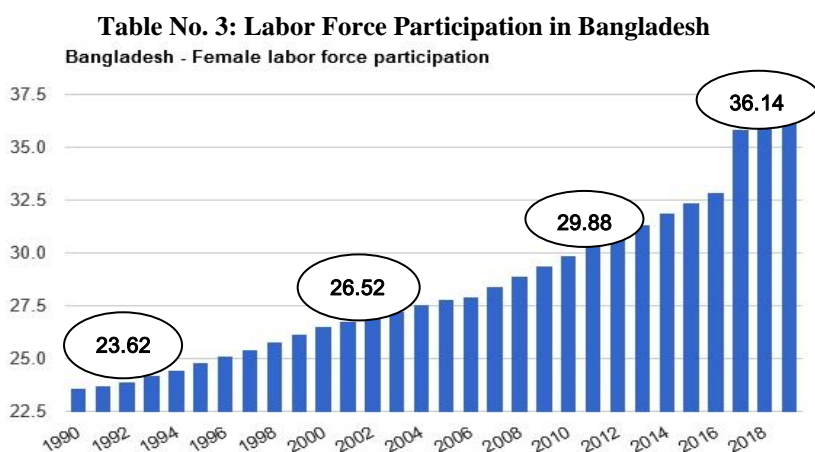
**Table No. 2: Gender Responsive Budget**

Fiscal Year	Total Budget (Core Taka)	Allocation for Women Development (core taka)	Allocation for Women Compared to total budget (%)	Allocation of Women compared to GDP (%)	Number of Ministries/ Division in Gender budget
2009-10	110523	27248	24.65	3.95	4
2010-11	130011	34221	26.32	4.36	10
2011-12	161213	42154	26.15	4.61	20
2012-13	189231	54302	28.64	5.23	25
2013-14	216222	59756	27.64	5.06	40
2014-15	239668	64087	26.74	4.23	40
2015-16	264565	71872	27.17	4.16	40
2016-17	340604	92765	27.25	4.73	40
2017-18	400266	112019	27.99	5.04	43
2018-19	464580	137742	29.65	5.43	43
2019-20	523190	161247	30.82	5.58	44

**Job Satisfaction of Working Women:** Success of an organization totally depends on human resources division. A country’s overall development depends on the equal contribution of male and female. Total population ratio of male and female are 100:103 (Population and Housing Census 2011). Women are about half of the direct and indirect labor forces and thus, half of the development of Bangladesh depends on them. About two-third (61.67%) of the respondents expressed very high appreciation with the pay and benefits which they are getting from their job, where only 13.33% respondents are not satisfied with their pay and benefits. In term of pay and promotions, 51.67% of the respondents were very much satisfied whereas 21.67% respondents have an opinion that they were not satisfied with the provision of their promotional opportunities (Zabir et. al, 2018).

**Female Labor Force Participation in Bangladesh:** In the economic sphere, as of 2018, 38% of adult women were part of the labor force (up from 34% in 2017), compared with 84% of men. 107<sup>th</sup> economic participation of women in the workforce since 1990 to 2019 in has tremendously increased in Bangladesh. In 1990 participation of women in the workforce was only 23.62 percent but now it has been increased to 36.14 percent reports World Bank, 2019. Three million Bangladeshi women are employed in the lucrative ready-made garment sector, Bangladesh’s largest export. Forty-three percent of rural women contribute to fisheries-related activities. And women now make up more than 60 percent of the fish farmers in Bangladesh.

**Peach Keeping Mission:** Bangladesh is the top contributor of female police officers to the United Nations Peacekeeping Operations as Formed Police Unit. key driving force to reduce gender-based violence providing sense of security especially for women and children Presently 157 female officers from Bangladesh working in different Peace keeping Mission helping United Nations towards its goal of having 20 percent of women employee in its recruitment system (Bangladesh police, 2020). Bangladesh now stands 5th among the Troop Contributing Countries or Police Contributing Countries in contributing female peacekeepers (Masud, 2019).



**The Global Gender Gap Index Reports and Scenario of Bangladesh:** Over the past 14 years the Global Gender Gap Index compasses to track progress on relative gaps between women and men on health, education, economy and politics in the world. The World Economic Forum, (2020) asserted that at the dawn of the 2020s, building fairer and more inclusive economies must be the goal of global, national and industry leaders. To get there, instilling gender parity across education, health, politics and across all forms of economic participation will be critical. Progress is evident for Bangladesh and it is in the top among the South Asian country.

**Table No. 4: Regional and Global Gender Gap Rank of Bangladesh**

Country	Rank		Score
	Regional	Global	
Bangladesh	1	50	0.726
Nepal	2	101	0.680
Sri Lanka	3	102	0.680
India	4	112	0.668
Maldives	5	123	0.646
Bhutan	6	131	0.635
Pakistan	7	151	0.564

Bangladesh has closed 72.6% of its overall gender gap and ranks 50<sup>th</sup> on the “Global Gender Gap Index 2020”. It improves its score marginally by 0.4 percentage points but loses two positions nonetheless at 48<sup>th</sup> rank (Global Gender Gap Index 2018) as other countries have improved even more. But Bangladesh is the best performer in South Asia, ahead of Nepal (101st) and Sri Lanka (102nd), and some 60 places ahead of India (112th). The country has slipped only two notches to the 50th position, but is still ahead of all other countries in South Asia, according to WEF’s The Global Gender Gap Report 2019

**Table No. 5: Position of Bangladesh from 2006 to 2020**

Year	Ranking	Score
2020	50	0.726
2015	64	0.704
2010	82	0.670
2006	91	0.627

Bangladesh has remarkably progressed in the world ranking with the improvement of the indicators of SDGs and The Global Economic Forum’s indicators that are considered in calculation of The Global Gender Gap Index. Bangladesh ranked 50<sup>th</sup> position at “Global Wage Gap Index 2020” from 91<sup>st</sup> of the first “Global Wage Gap Index 2006”. The key indicators and sub-indicators are GDP, Per capita, total population, population growth rate, population-sex ratio (female/male), human capital index and economic participation and opportunity, educational attainment, health and survival, and political empowerment.

**Table No. 6: Gender Gap Sub Index (2006-2020 Ranking of Bangladesh)**

Key Indicators	Ranking (2006)	Ranking (2010)	Ranking (2015)	Ranking (2020)
Economic Participation and Opportunity	107	117	130	141
Educational Attainment	95	108	109	120
Health and Survival	113	122	95	119
Political Empowerment	17	12	8	7

Bangladesh presence in the top 50 and regional leadership should not hide the fact that there is considerable room to bolster basic rights of women and improve their economic and political prospects. It is the only country in the world where women have had a longer tenure than men at the helm of the state over the past 50 years. This contributes to the strong performance on the Political Empowerment sub-index (score of 54.5%, 7th). But there are only 8% of women in the cabinet and only 20% in the parliament. In the economic sphere, as of 2018, 38% of adult 30 women were part of the labor force (up from 34% in 2017), compared with 84% of men. Only one in 10 leadership roles is occupied by a woman (139th), and the estimated average annual income of women is 40% that of the men.

**Global Gender Gap Sub Index and Progress of Bangladesh:** Since 2006, the Global Gender Gap Index has been measuring the extent of gender-based gaps among four key dimensions- Economic Participation and Opportunity, Educational Attainment, Health and Survival, and Political Empowerment and tracking progress towards closing these gaps over time.

**Economic Participation and Opportunity:** The ranking of Bangladesh in the Global Wage Gap Reports has been wavering since the first reports of the World Economic Forum but progress is evident in some indicators and in the world ranking and score that lead of women ahead of other countries and attainment sustainable development respectively. The present women labor force participation rate of Bangladesh is 38.1% compared with 83.9% of men according to the “Global Gender Gap Reports 2020” It was 34% in 2017 and 36.9% was in 2019 The World Bank Reports 2019. For sustainable development of a country it is very crucial to include women in labor force. In earlier (2015) labor force participation of women was 60% in Bangladesh but it has decreased to 38.1% but after the decrease it is increasing gradually with in balance. The situation of women in legislature, senior officials and managers raised from 5% (2015) to 11.4% at 2020 that proved that participation of women in leading is improving.

**Educational Attainment:** Bangladesh has shown its tremendous success in education sector with gender parity in primary as well as secondary education. The literacy rate of women has been improved remarkably at 71.2% in 2020 from 31 % at 2006 and 58% of 2015 “The Global Gender Gap Reports 2020”. Latest government data show female secondary students outnumber their male counterparts in 63 of the 64 districts and at his level the female-male ratio is 54:46. Net enrolment rate is 97.96%. Bangladesh is successful in enrolling students in primary and secondary education. Overall enrollment in primary school rose from 60.5 percent in 1990 to 98.7 percent in 2016. Girls receive stipends and scholarships for schooling until the 12th grade.

**Table No. 7: Economic Participation and Opportunity**

Key Indicators	Rank and Male-Female Percentage (2006)			Rank and Male-Female Percentage (2010)			Rank and Male-Female Percentage (2015)			Rank and Male-Female Percentage (2020)		
	Rank	F%	M%	Rank	F%	M%	Rank	F%	M%	Rank	F%	M%
Labor force participation rate	86	53	86	82	62	85	97	60	87	139	38.1	83.9
Wage equality for similar work	111	...	...	113	...	...	126	...	...	98	...	...
Estimated earned income (PPP) \$1000	54	124	228	91	830	163	108	214	410	131	2.3	5.6
Legislatures, Senior officials and managers	93	8	92	109	10	90	123	5	95	139	11.4	88.6
Professional and technical workers	88	25	75	108	22	78	118	24	76	134	29.7	70.4

**Table No. 8: Educational Attainment**

Key Indicators	Rank and Male-Female Percentage (2006)			Rank and Male-Female Percentage (2010)			Rank Male- Female Percentage (2015)			Ranking, Male-Female Percentage (2020)		
	Rank	F%	M%	Rank	F%	M%	Rank	F%	M%	Rank	F%	M%
Literacy Rate	107	31	50	109	50	60	109	58	65	105	71.2	76.7
Enrollment in Primary education	1	95	92	1	86	85	1	93	90	1	93.7	91.5
Enrollment in Secondary education	1	51	45	1	43	40	1	51	44	1	68.9	58.8
Enrollment in Tertiary Education	97	4	9	112	5	9	119	11	15	127	17.0	24.0

**Health and Survival:** Bangladesh is successful in improvement of life expectancy its population. The ratio of life expectancy of women is better than that of men with 64.1 years of women for 62.6 years of men Reports “Global Gender Gap Index” but according to Worldometer 2020 present life expectancy of Bangladeshi people 75.6 years of women for 71.8 years of men at births. This due to meeting of MGD Goals of reduced Child Mortality. Bangladesh is successful in reducing mother mortality rate.

**Table No. 9: Health and Survival Status**

Key Indicators	Rank and Male-Female Percentage (2006)			Rank and Male-Female Percentage (2010)			Rank Male- Female Percentage (2015)			Ranking, Male- Female Percentage (2020)		
	Rank	F%	M%	Rank	F%	M%	Rank	F%	M%	Rank	F%	M%
Sex ratio at birth	84	49	51	1	...	...	1	...	...	1	....	....
Healthy life expectancy	115	53.3	53.3	130	55	56	104	62	60	129	64.1	62.6

**Table No. 10: Political Empowerment**

Key Indicators	Rank and Male-Female Percentage (2006)			Rank and Male-Female Percentage (2010)			Rank and Male-Female Percentage (2015)			Rank and Male-Female Percentage (2020)		
	Rank	F%	M%	Rank	F%	M%	Rank	F%	M%	Rank	F%	M%
Women in parliament	56	15	85	63	19	81	76	20	80	86	20.6	79.4
Women in Ministerial Position	80	8	92	64	16	84	126	7	93	124	8.0	92.0
Years with female head of State (last 50)	4	15	35	5	17	33	1	22	28	1	25.6	24.4

**Political Empowerment:** Bangladesh is ranked at 7<sup>th</sup> position among 153 countries in political empowerment in Global Gender Gap Index 2020. Participation of women in the national parliament has increased through the augment of reserved seat of women in the amendments of the constitution respectively besides the participation of the women in the election is also increased. Bangladesh is the only country in the world where women have had a longer tenure than men at the helm of the state over the past 50 years.

**Initiatives taken by the government of Bangladesh, NGOs and INGOs to foster gender equality and sustainable development in Bangladesh:**

- Girl's empowerments are essential to accelerate economic growth and to promote social development. The government of Bangladesh is on right track. The process of uplifting women status and gender quality started by establishing equal rights of woman with man in all spheres of the state and of public life as constitutional obligation under Article-28.
- Establishment of the Ministry of Women and Children affairs after her independence in 1972.
- Development of National Women Development Policy 2011.
- Implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and the Beijing Platform for Action. Success shows in the attainment of the MGDs and reducing gender gap in primary and secondary education, reducing child and maternal mortality rates.
- Bangladesh government has taken various steps to ensure women development through its vision 2021 and 2041 and the 7th Five Year Plan (2016-2020).
- Seeking to lift women out of poverty, the Local Government Division in Bangladesh with technical support provided by the SDG Fund, through the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the International Labor Organization are providing 18 months of employment through the Strengthening Women's Ability for Productive New Opportunities (SWAPNO) project.
- Domestic Violence (Prevention and Protection) Act 2010.
- Article 28. Of the Constitution, guaranteeing special measures for the advancement of women and children.
- Formulated the Domestic Violence (Prevention and Protection) Rules 2013. Prevention and Restraint of Human Trafficking Act 2012 and the Pornography Control Act 2011.
- In addition to enactment of laws, One Stop Crisis Centers in 7 divisions are providing medical treatment, legal support, policy assistance and rehabilitation to the victims. DNA profiling lab and DNA screening for investigation of gender based offences such as rape. Continuing that total 80 One Stop Crisis Cells are established, among them 40 in district hospitals and 20 in Upazilla Health Complex.
- Establishment of victim support centers The MOWCA now maintains a helpline (10921) to provide legal, medical, rehabilitation and counseling help to victims of violence.
- The Ministry of Women and Children Affairs in Bangladesh with UNICEF and partners, has been implementing a multi-media campaign on ending child marriage across the country and National Action Plan to end child marriage and has been supporting 5,000 community-based adolescent clubs and operates two help lines (1098 and 109) to combat violence against women and children; it also provides outreach services to women and children to stop child marriage.
- Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina pledged to end child marriage below 15 years of age by 2021, and bring marriage between 15 to 18 years down by one third within 2021 and to end child marriage completely by 2041 and passed The Child Marriage Restraint Act 2017 bill.
- 'Digital Bangladesh' policy to foster participation in the ICT.
- Many ICT related Initiatives have been taken such as 'Girls in ICT' and 'Missing Daughters' projects of BDOSN (Bangladesh Open Source Network), 'Women in Power Sector' scheme by IEEE (Institute of Electrical and Electronic Engineers) Bangladesh Women in Engineering Affinity Group; 'Women's Innovation Camp' by A2I (Access to Information) of the Bangladesh government.
- Six months of paid maternity leave and allowances for divorced and destitute women as well as women with disabilities.
- Naripokkho Naripokkho's principal focus has been the assertion of women's citizenship and their claim to equal rights and equal treatment.
- Adhunika is dedicated to the promotion of technology usage for women in Bangladesh (<http://www.adhunika.org/bd/Index.html>).
- Ain o Salish Kendro (ASK). A human rights and legal resource centre. ASK provides free legal aid, mediation and counseling services, monitors, documents and campaigns on human rights and women's rights issues, and undertakes public interest litigation
- Proshika – <http://www.proshika.org/> and Nijera Kori – <http://www.nijerakori.org/>



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- United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees website, <http://www.unhcr.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/home/openssl.htm?tbl=RSDCOI&page=research&id=3ae6a81b0>
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- USAID promotes women's empowerment in agriculture, fertilizer deep placement method, culture fish and shrimp. To address gender-based violence, and help victims' access legal channels to settle domestic disputes and seek recourse. Trained more than 500,000 women farmers in adopting improved agriculture technologies such as fertilizer deep placement, and higher yielding stress tolerant varieties of seeds, as well as aquaculture practices to raise greater catches of fish and shrimp. Helped nearly 150,000 primary school-aged girls improve their reading skills.
- Grameen Bank and BRAC, along with more recent work by the government, Bangladesh has made significant strides toward educating girls and giving women a greater voice, both in the household and the public sphere. These efforts have translated into improvements in children's health and education, such that Bangladeshis' average life expectancy is now 72 years, compared to 68 years for Indians and 66 years for Pakistanis. (Wazed, 2017)
- Established in 1991, Nari Uddug Kendra (NUK) is a national non-government women's organization, mandated to promote gender equality, human rights and fostering personal and political empowerment of women and girls in Bangladesh

#### **IV. DISCUSSION**

Women in Bangladesh are mostly demotivated, apathy and inactive in income generation activities because of their religious views, patriarchy, insecurity and for social stigma in the society. Domestic violence, sexual harassment in the workplace, child marriage, and not enough ensured social safety net for widowed, divorced, or separated women, women digital divide, unpaid domestic works are the roots for women underdevelopment. In Bangladesh 66% are experienced of family violence, 80% percent are experienced opened or closed sexual harassment in the workplace, about 52% girls are married at under 18 years old, only 16% women has access in ICT sectors, about 48% of the GDP comes from women unpaid domestic work but remain uncounted. These things are pushed women back from the mainstreamed economic involvement. But Bangladesh has shown its tremendous success in eliminating all forms of discrimination against women through ensuring gender equality and women empowerment. Bangladesh is the first country in South Asia to achieve gender-parity in primary and secondary education, solid progress has been made in reducing the large gap between male and female students at the tertiary level. Compulsory primary education, free text books in primary and secondary education and stipends of girls up to class 12 resulted in gender parity and success in educational attainment. Literacy rate of women has also jumped from 58 to 71.2 of women from 2015 to 2020. Political empowerment and parliament ratio has been remarkably progressed. Prime Minister, opposition leader, speaker of the parliament all are women leading. Bangladesh has closed over 72% of its overall gender gap, retaining its topmost position among the South Asian countries in ensuring gender equality. Women are doing excellent in administrative sectors. Women now covering 14.48% of public administration posts associated with 10 per cent civil service posts preservation. The govt. of Bangladesh is also declaring women friendly budgets. Women job satisfaction level has been increased tremendously. About two-third (61.67%) of the respondents expressed very high appreciation with the pay and benefits which they are getting from their job, where only 13.33% respondents are not satisfied with their pay and benefits. Women are more participating in labor force. In Readymade garments the numbers of working women are remarkable. It has been seen that in 1990 participation of women in the workforce was only 23.62 percent but now it has been increased to 36.14 percent. Women of Bangladesh are showing their intelligence in UN peach keeping mission. Besides, Bangladesh shows its progress in Global Gender Gap Index presented by World Economic Forum. Bangladesh is the best performer in South Asia, ahead of Nepal (101st) and Sri Lanka (102nd), and some 60 places ahead of India (112th). The situation of women in legislature, senior officials and managers raised from 5% (2015) to 11.4% at 2020 that proved that participation of women in leading is improving. Bangladesh has shown its tremendous success in education sector with gender parity in primary as well as secondary education. The literacy rate of women has been improved remarkably at 71.2% in 2020 from 31 % at 2006 and 58% of 2015. Bangladesh is successful in improvement of life expectancy its population. The ratio of life expectancy of women is better than that of men with 64.1 years of women for 62.6 years of men. Bangladesh is ranked at 7<sup>th</sup> position among 153 countries in political empowerment in Global Gender Gap Index 2020. Participation of women in the national

parliament has increased through the augment of reserved seat of women the in the amendments of the constitution respectively. From the findings of this study it has been seen that Bangladesh is on the track of achieving sustainable development respectively meeting the challenges it faced in recent times.

## V. CONCLUSION

As a developing country Bangladesh is on the track of achieving sustainable development goals through eliminating gender inequality and empowerment of women. The country is improving in the area of women's empowerment but it is needed to ensure sustainability, priority should be given to skills-development, higher education and capacity-building. Without the equal inclusion of half of the world's talent, the country will not be able to deliver on the promise of the Fourth Industrial Revolution for all of society, grow our economies for greater shared prosperity or achieve the UN Sustainable Development Goals. Bangladesh has identified the critical importance of addressing both poverty and inequality and all other goals of sustainable development and putting gender equality and women's empowerment at the centre for development.

## VI. RECOMMENDATIONS

The policy of selecting MPs for the reserved seats should be changed or allocation, nomination and reserved seat numbers of women in the national parliament should be increased. Favourable environment for women in politics has to be create. Women's contribution to sustainable development must be recognized. More initiatives have to be taken to make aware of using natural resources such as food, fuel, water etc. among women through arranging training, seminar/symposium or campaigning through print and electronic media as they are involved in unpaid domestic and care work and depend on natural resources. Employment status should be increased, education and public speaking, business activities, capital earning, awareness building, Companies must treat people with dignity and respect and offer equal opportunities to all members of the society, leveraging gender diversity and investing in all of their talent through ongoing up skilling and reskilling. Governments must create policies that provide talent development, integration and deployment opportune-ties for all genders, diversify the leadership pool and provide support to families and caregivers, in both youthful and ageing societies alike. And business and government must work together on creating a new economic and social narrative for action and on coordinating and speeding up the process of change. Our Closing the Gender Gap Accelerators work with advanced and developing economies to create public-private collaborations for rapid acceleration to economic parity, focusing on increasing women's participation in the workforce, closing the pay gap between men and women, and helping more women advance into leadership roles and develop in-demand skills. Women's works are mostly reproductive and productive. We hardly recognize their productive works," she said, adding that these works should be formally recognized through calculating its monetary value and comparison with the GDP.

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Mst. Shamsun Naher, et. al "Women and Sustainable Development: Bangladesh Perspective." *IOSR Journal of Humanities and Social Science (IOSR-JHSS)*, 25(6), 2020, pp. 08-18.