

BUDGET FRAMEWORK ANALYSIS ON CHALLENGING FEAR OF VIOLENCE



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Survey Conducted by Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD)

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The 'Budget Framework Analysis on Challenging Fear of Violence 2022' aims to analyze the country context, policies, and budgets of the fiscal year against gender-based violence and the associated sense of fear. In addition, this report also aims to help policymakers set priorities, evaluate implemented services, and accelerate progress in ensuring the rights and well-being of women and girls at the country level. This report highlights existing gender norms and their manifestation while identifying current gaps and inequalities at the policy level and providing resources for the implementation of immediate and long-term interventions.

A recent report by Plan International Bangladesh titled "Policy Framework Analysis on Fear of Violence 2021" highlights the legal system's gaps, shortcomings, and practical limitations that deny access to justice and fail to build the confidence needed to empower women. The analysis found that the Government should increase its efforts to meet its obligations to girls under the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), and complementary legal and policy frameworks. This also means that the Government should consider all aspects of investment in the budget for the fiscal year.

The Government of Bangladesh introduced gender budgeting in FY 2009-10. As a tool, gender budgeting aims to ensure that gender mainstreaming is integrated into the budget system and process, and most importantly, that budget allocations at all levels are decided from a gender perspective. The MoWCA (Ministry of Women and Children Affairs) receives the highest allocations from the gender budget. Over the past five years, the average percentage of the gender budget in this ministry has been 72.3%. On the other hand, budget allocations to other sectors within MoWCA have increased over the last five years. Interestingly, the Ministry of Disaster Management and Relief (MoDMR) had the highest share of its total budget for women in development in FY 2021-22 (70.7%), followed by MoWCA. Of course, the Ministry of Primary and Mass Education allocated the highest amount for women in development. However, none of the ministries has allocated any budget that specifically addresses the fear of violence. In the existing gender budgets, violence against women and girls has been discussed prominently over the years, and several programs have been proposed and planned. In comparison, women's and girls' fear of violence is virtually absent from gender budgets.

This report indicates that some other factors of gender budgeting should be given more attention. At the national level, there are a number of projects to address gender-based violence, but they are not having a major impact, largely due to a lack of synchronization. Therefore, Plan International Bangladesh (PIB) will continue to advocate for increased resource allocation against gender-based violence, which requires special attention in planning and budgeting. In addition, a proper mechanism for monitoring and reporting on actual spending on GBV-related programs is needed. PIB believes that such analysis will be helpful for next year's planning and may increase or decrease the allocation of funds in specific areas.

In addition, funding for women working in the informal sector is not differentiated in the gender budget. According to BBS 2018, 91.8% of women work in the informal sector, while 85.1% of the employed population works in the informal sector. However, we did not see any specific allocation in the budget. PIB will prioritize working with government, civil society, private sector, law enforcement, legal and mental health support providers, young people, especially girls, and communities to address the root causes of fear of violence and resources to overcome the challenges.

Fear of violence has significant negative impacts on women and girls. It limits the movement and potential of women and girls, which directly impacts national growth. To eradicate GBV and achieve SDG goal 5, these invisible challenges should be recognized through the policy instruments and yearly budget allocation. The Ministry of Finance must address the constraints and take appropriate action. Otherwise, it is not possible to reduce the fear of violence along with violence against women and girls.

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ACRONYMS

BBS	Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics
DVPP	Domestic Violence Prevention and Protection
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
FY	Fiscal Year
GBS	Gender Budget Statement
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GGGI	Global Gender Gap Index
GoB	Government of Bangladesh
GRB	Gender Responsive Budgeting
IPPV	Intimate Partner Physical Violence
IPV	Intimate Partner Violence
MoSW	Ministry of Social Welfare (MoSW)
MoWCA	Ministry of Women and Children Affairs
MoF	Ministry of Finance
MTBF	Medium-Term Budgetary Framework
OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
RCGP	Recurrent, Capital, Gender and Poverty (Model)
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
VGD	Vulnerable Group Development





INTRODUCTION

Bangladesh has made significant progress on several Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). This progress is also evident in SDG 5 on gender equality and women's empowerment. Compared to other South Asian countries, Bangladesh is making progress on many gender-related indicators. According to the World Economic Forum's Global Gender Gap Report 2021, Bangladesh ranks 65th out of 156 countries in the Global Gender Gap Index (GGGI). Although Bangladesh's trend is slightly downward from 50th in 2020 to 65th in 2021, the country is still ahead of all South Asian countries. The GGGI considers four indicators: economic participation and opportunity, educational attainment, health and survival, and political participation (World Economic Forum, 2021).

Despite Bangladesh's impressive economic progress, violence against women is still widespread and unstoppable. In Bangladesh, women are often at risk of harassment and violence at home, in educational institutions, at work, and in public places. But the fear of violence, women, and girls have to endure, has not been addressed through political conversation. Whether at home, at work, in educational institutions, or in public places, women and girls do not feel safe from violence or even exercising their rights and entitlements.

A recent nationwide survey conducted by Plan International Bangladesh (2021) in eight divisions across the country shows that fear of violence is widespread among girls and young women. The report mentions that fear of violence negatively affects young women's career choices and aspirations. The occurrence of child marriages is also linked to fear of violence. The findings of the Plan International Bangladesh report are also presented in more detail in Section 2.

There are no other options but to rely on the laws and policies to address violence against women and girls and address the challenges of taking appropriate action. This leads us to advocate for the proper implementation of the law's provisions and to request specific funds in the budget. For example, the Women & Children Repression Act 2000 (amended in 2003) and the Domestic Violence Prevention and Protection (DVPP) Act 2009 became active in 2010, yet, it is evident that the implementation of both plans and laws have not been efficient. In addition, in 2018, the Government finalized the national action plan under the 'Child Marriage 2017'. As part of its commitment to addressing gender-based discrimination in a meaningful way, the Government of Bangladesh (GoB) adopted the National Women's Development Policy and Children Policy in 2011. These instruments set out measures to minimize gender-based inequalities and discrimination. In addition to laws and policies, adequate resources through budgetary allocations and efficient use of existing funds in the national budget are also critical.

In this regard, the Government began to formulate a gender budget in 2009. Initially, four ministries prepared gender budgets along with the national budget. Currently, 43 ministries prepare gender budgets and submit them to the Ministry of Finance (MoF) each year before the national budget. However, the budget is not enough to address the existing challenges in the area of violence against women for two reasons. First, the amount is inadequate to address the significant challenge. Second, the proper use of the allocated funds, which is crucial to achieving a satisfactory result, is not assured.

This study seeks to understand how policymakers manage the fear of violence when allocating resources and developing programs. In addition, this study will help to understand the current trend of resource allocation in the government budget that addresses the fear of violence among young women and girls in Bangladesh.

Therefore, the study aims to explore the following issues:

- Examine the trend of allocation for gender budget in fiscal year (FY) 2010 - FY2022;
- Assess the national budget over the period FY 2010 - FY2022 to understand how the problem of fear of violence among women and girls has been addressed;
- Suggest issues that should be addressed in a gender budget framework so that adequate resources are allocated within that framework to address the fear of violence among girls and women.

Methodology:

This study has conducted a quantitative analysis based on data from various published documents, including the annual budget documents of MoF, relevant ministries and departments, and Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS) [MoF (2019), MoF (2021), MoF (2021b), BBS (2013), and BBS (2018)], and qualitative analysis from the perspective of experts. To validate and complement the information from secondary sources and to gain new insights, an expert meeting (EGM) was initiated. A selected group of experts on this topic participated in the EGM.

The remainder of the paper is organized as follows: Section 2 provides a brief overview of the fear of violence. Section 3 highlights the need to provide resources for women and girls. Section 4 highlights the Government's initiatives on gender budgeting in Bangladesh. This section discusses various aspects of gender budgeting in Bangladesh, highlighting the actual allocation for women and whether there is a specific allocation for the problem of violence against women. Section 5 presents some of the highlights of the expert opinions (Annex Table 4) received during the EGM. Section 6 presents the issues that should be considered in a gender-responsive budget framework to address girls' and women's fear of violence. A set of general recommendations for girls' and women's safety and development are also presented in this section. The paper concludes in section 7.



OVERVIEW ON FEAR OF VIOLENCE AMONG GIRLS AND WOMEN

The rights of children and young people, especially girls, to security and protection from violence, exploitation, and abuse have been recognized as a core issue in most policies and conventions related to women and children. Over the last couple of decades, Bangladesh has formulated a wide number of policies and legislations focusing on women and girls' safety and protection from domestic violence, violence at the workplace, child labor, child marriage, child trafficking, etc. Moreover, the country has emphasized on implementing digital birth registration system lately to prevent child marriage, child labor, and other abusive practices against children and young people, especially girls. However, the loose coordination among the implementing agencies and proper financing and judiciary system have been blamed as core reasons behind the protection of girls and young women in Bangladesh.

The risk and reality of violence are felt by girls and young women across all areas of life in Bangladesh: at home, traveling on public transport, walking down the street, and in the workplace. The real experience of violence, whether physical or verbal, is a major barrier to achieving their rights, especially for girls. No definition of rape exists in the country's penal code, while at the same time Amnesty International's 2019¹ Year in Review records at least 2,392 cases of violence against women were reported on 2019. These included 1,623 reported rapes (331 against girls under 12 years old), 326 attempted rapes, and 443 cases of physical assault. The victims included Indigenous women and girls. At least 440 women and girls were murdered after physical assault, rape, or attempted rape. This multi-dimensional nature of violence against children, girls, and young women includes (but is not limited to) (1) corporal punishment in homes and schools, (2) child early and forced marriage (CEFM), (3) sexual harassment on the streets and on public transport, (4) domestic violence, (5) violence in the workplace, (6) gender-based violence (GBV) in its broadest sense, including domestic violence and intimate partner violence, and (7) trafficking.

Violence and fear of violence against women and girls further affect the mobility of women and girls outside their homes and limit their economic engagements. Women are hesitant to work outside the home when they live in an area where there is a perceived threat of sexual harassment against young girls. The deterrence effect of crime is influenced by the opportunity cost of work on the one hand, and the stigma cost of sexual offenses on the other (Chakraborty et al., 2018).

¹ <https://www.amnesty.org/en/countries/asia-and-the-pacific/bangladesh/report-bangladesh/>

Child marriage (at any age below 18) is a gross violation of a girl's human rights. It limits her chances of getting an education, economically solvent and securing her right to live a life with dignity, free from violence and exploitation. Though 'The Child Marriage Restraint Act 2017' set 18 as the minimum age of marriage for women and the age of 21 for men hence, Section 19 of the Act creates a legal exception to the minimum age that allows families to invoke special circumstances to override the law. A court decides whether special circumstances exist (weighing the interests of the girl). Such an exception provides a pathway to allow for child marriage.

On the other side, **sexual harassment** on the streets and on public transport impacts disproportionately on girls and women in Bangladesh. The vast majority (74%) of urban women report experiencing the threat of violence, sexual assault and harassment both at day or night. After dark, their mobility is almost entirely restricted. Statistics showed that they face severe level of harassment in public places such as bus terminals and train stations (87%), by the roadside (80%), and outside their schools and colleges (69%). The ability to move freely and safely in public spaces and live without fear of violence has important implications for gender equity as a whole, as it affects every individual's opportunities to develop and enjoy their full potential². Although a Directive of the Supreme Court exists to protect women in the workplace and educational institutions, however, this is not properly enforced³. A 2019 study⁴ found that most schools and colleges do not have any sexual harassment committees and there is a complete lack of awareness of the sexual harassment guidelines amongst private and public university students. Lack of clarity and concept among both management and workers end remains the main factors behind the scene. In addition, a lack of official reporting procedures and the social pressure to protect family honor (which together result in incorrect or under-reporting) and a lack of implementation of the Supreme Court directives 2009 mean that workers and students, particularly girls and young women, are often forced to navigate unwanted sexual propositioning, and frequently encounter verbal harassment (often of a sexual nature and under the guise of 'teasing'), personal abuse and coercion with no realistic chance of redress. This type of harassment is so common that it hampers the everyday life of women and girls of all ages, making them constantly anxious and fearful of regular movement.

Despite the National Plan of Action to Prevent Violence against Women and Children (2018-2025), there remains a lack of **clarity around definitions** of rape in Bangladesh's Penal Code, with no legislation existing to cover sexual harassment in public spaces. Laws pertaining to sexual violence do not fully protect children and young people especially girls in Bangladesh. The Prevention of Women and Children Repression Act of 2000 (and 2003, as amended) have provisions to protect girls in the age of 18 and younger from sexual abuse and violence but does not protect girls who are married under the age of 18. In cases of alleged sexual abuse and violence by a husband of an underage girl, the law protects girls 13 and under from statutory rape (Bangladesh Penal Code, S 375). Discrepancies exist between the Penal Code and the Prevention of Women and Children Repression Act that create confusion as to whether the law attaches criminal liability for this same act if a married girl is 14 or above. In other words, it is questionable whether the law forbids sexual abuse and violence in cases of married girls over the age of 13.

² Freedom to move, Action Aid, 2016

³ <https://www.dhakatribune.com/bangladesh/dhaka/2019/05/04/experts-implementing-laws-can-prevent-gender-based-violence-at-workplace>.

⁴ ActionAid (2019). Sexual Harassment at Educational Institutions and Workplaces –A study on the Implementation Status of the 2009 Supreme Court Guidelines; ActionAid Bangladesh, Dhaka.

GBV, including **domestic violence and intimate partner violence** impacts one in three women and girls globally and is usually initiated by male partners⁵. The GoB Report on Violence Against Women Survey 2015⁶ states that 72.6% of ever-married women have experienced some type of violence at the hands of their husband, 54.7% during the previous 12 months. The Domestic Violence (Prevention and Protection) Act 2010 and the Children Act 2013 provides a system of responses that integrate the services of health, justice and social protection. The laws stipulate actions to remove offenders from domiciles, provide free medical treatment, counselling, rehabilitation, witness protection and offer legal protection. As such, Bangladesh has met the minimum legal requirements to create response mechanisms, however, there are still limitations to be remedied. In addition, evidential laws need to expand to provide special testimony protocols to handle vulnerable witnesses in cases of sexual abuse and violence. Without such protocols, victims of sexual abuse and violence remain disadvantaged and potentially re-traumatized in the actual prosecution of the crimes against them.

Laws against **child labor** do not fully protect children in general; policies do identify specific activities as hazardous and forbid all labor that interferes with a child's education until the age of 12 (and allows for light work that does not interfere with a child's education over the age of 12). The laws however do not forbid work that is harmful to a child's health or physical, mental, spiritual, moral or social development. Though a government order issued⁷ on 13 March 2013 identifies 38 processes/activities hazardous for children. However, that does not apply to the case of child domestic workers considering the harmful, long hours and the environment of work. Although Children Act 2013 prohibits child servitude or the sale of children, the ban is general in interpretation and limited in terms of scope. Current Labor Laws do not address this situation either⁸.

Technology like; mobile, internet and use of social media have grown exponentially in Bangladesh. Despite all its advantages, women and girls are experiencing **cybercrimes** including online violence, harassment, bullying and blackmailing. Girls and young women are the primary recipient of offensive, aggressive sexual acts and defamatory messages in cyberspace from anonymous and fake sources in most cases. The form of this evident violation ranges from cyberstalking, revenge porn, cyberbullying, and trolling. The laws that are pertinent to the abovementioned types of offenses are the Children Act, 2013; the ICT Act, 2006; the Digital Security Act 2018 and the Pornography Control Act 2012 to prevent online violence and harassment against girls and young women. There are certain cybercrimes that are gender-specific however, the laws have not been made specifically to address such offenses. Some cyber-related crimes affect women more, such as cyber pornography, cyber bullying, morphing, etc. which are not defined in any law.

Since the emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic, when the Government declared a "general holiday" in Bangladesh, people stayed at home and many people became unemployed. So, financial loss led to frustrations and deteriorated mental health disruptions. This caused more pressure on women—both physically and mentally (MJF, 2020).

⁵ <https://olc.worldbank.org/content/tackling-violence-against-women-and-girls>.

⁶ <https://evaw-global-database.unwomen.org/en/countries/asia/bangladesh/2015/report-on-violence-against-women-vaw-survey-2015>

⁷ https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---asia/---ro-bangkok/---sro-new_delhi/documents/generic-document/wcms_486739.pdf⁸ <https://www.wvi.org/sites/default/files/2019-11/Bangladesh%20Report.pdf>

Moreover, recurrent disputes and violence over dowry demands have been registered for various reasons, including income loss (Cappa & Jijon, 2021). Domestic violence and rape of women and children (i.e. girls under 18) have increased during the pandemic (Reza, 2021). A study reported that 919 women and children were victims of rape between January and September 2020. In addition, 21 women and 18 children were killed after being raped during the pandemic (Chowdhury, 2021).

In order to mainstream gender equality and to eliminate the gender disparity, the Government of Bangladesh started gender budgeting in FY 2009-10. As an instrument, gender budgeting aims to ensure that gender mainstreaming is integrated into the budgetary system and process and the budget allocations at all levels are decided with a gender perspective. Analyzing the gender budgets of Bangladesh, it has been discovered the gender budget allocation in FY 2017 has increased by 29.1% compared with FY 2016. Among the 40 ministries, the allocation for 34 ministries increased and decreased for six ministries in FY 2017.

While analyzing the **gender budgets** over the previous years gives an idea that a certain amount of allocation is already given for gender mainstreaming. There are a large number of projects in action to resolve all the issues related to gender-based violence but haven't seen the greater impact which mostly shows a lack of synchronization. However, there are some other factors of the gender budget as well.

Lack of adequacy: The allocated budget for the development of women and girls is not sufficient to bring a significant change in society. At the same time, fighting against gender-based violence requires special attention while planning and budgeting. Therefore, an increased allocation is required with special analysis and at the same time, the existing allocation needs to be utilized effectively.

Monitoring and reporting mechanism: There is a need for a proper monitoring and reporting mechanism of the actual expenditures of GBV related programmes. It will not only support the government to identify the potential risks and progression but also give a projection of inconsistencies and coordination gaps among different ministries. Such analysis will navigate for the next year's planning and to increase or decrease the allocation of the budget in specific areas. Besides, the gender budget does not differentiate the allocation for the females working in informal sectors. According to BBS 2018, 91.8% of women work in the informal sector whereas 85.1% of the employed population are in the informal sector. However, we haven't seen any specific allocation of them in the budget. The FY budget addresses various issues but ignores the related consequences of those issues. For instance, addressing the issues of proper sanitation, safety at the workplace, public places, educational institutions, transportation, etc. are missing. In order to ensure the protection of women and girls, all relevant issues and consequences need to be identified and addressed through the allocation and proper utilization.

No reference of fear of violence: Lastly, the relevant policies and budget do not address fear of violence. The fear of facing violence has a substantial negative impact on women and girls. It restricts the movement and limits the potentials of women and girls, which has a direct impact on national growth. Such unseen challenges should be recognized through the policy instruments.

The budget should also include allocations to reduce the fear of violence before thinking about eradicating GBV and ensuring gender equality to achieve SDG goal 5. The Ministry of Finance needs to address the limitations and take measures accordingly. Otherwise, it is not possible to reduce the fear of violence along with the violence against women and girls.

In view of the growing concern over violence against women and the fear of violence, it is critically important that there are substantial policy and legal measures which should be backed by adequate financial allocation. Policies and laws are not enough on their own. Women need to be protected from the violence of all forms from everywhere. They also have to be empowered through education and skills so that they can be employed and engaged in income-earning activities. And in order to make their participation economic and to make social life free from fear of violence, there should be a rule of law and implementation of legal measures. At the same time, awareness building among every section of society is a must. Resources are also needed to create massive awareness programs throughout the country.

WHY GENDER BUDGET

3

The gender budget is about looking at the national budget through a gender lens. Measures in the national budget affect different population groups differently depending on their economic situation, geographic location, gender, and occupation.

Not all budget measures result in benefits for all equally. Therefore, budget measures must address the needs of all segments of society. Otherwise, the benefits of the government budget will be unequally distributed. Since women are lagging behind in accessing the government's opportunities for all citizens, gender-specific measures for women need to be developed. For example, schools provide education to both boys and girls, and through education, they can improve their situation. However, marginalized parents do not like to spend money on their daughters' education due to difficult financial circumstances. Scholarship programs aimed exclusively at girls, therefore, benefit them. A national budget is an important tool for initiating programmes and providing funding for the implementation of activities under these programmes that can benefit women.

The gender budget has been formally defined by organizations and scholars taking into account the above context. The OECD (2016) refers to the gender budget as a budget that integrates a gender perspective into the overall context of the budget process. Others have also defined the gender budget as a tool and system that allocates resources to critical areas and programmes to meet women's socioeconomic needs, reduce gender gaps in resource allocation, and incorporate gender perspectives into policy-making. (Stephenson, 2018; Sodani & Sharma, 2008; Stokshy, 2006).

Gender budgeting, then, has a larger goal than simply allocating funds to the Ministry of Women and Children Affairs. It is an approach to identifying the gendered impacts of fiscal year planning formulated by the Ministry of Finance.



GENDER BUDGET IN BANGLADESH



4.1 Initiation of gender budgeting in Bangladesh

Although the concept of gender budgeting emerged in the early 1990s, Bangladesh accepted the concept in FY2005-06 as part of the Bangladesh government's commitment to gender mainstreaming and addressing existing gender inequalities. Since FY2009-10, the government started to implement the gender budget. It has been implemented with special attention to gender allocations to ensure budgetary allocations and distributive justice. Gender budgeting primarily aims to make public spending more gender-equitable and gender-friendly to protect women's economic and social dignity.

Initially, only four ministries (the Ministry of Women and Children Affairs (MoWCA), the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Social Welfare, and the Ministry of Agriculture under the MTBF) had started to prepare gender budgets annually. Later, the GoB included 43 departments in this gender budgeting process (MoF, 2019). Each ministry analyses its own initiatives and assesses gender sensitivity by assigning 100 points based on 14 factors. These are then forwarded to the MoF to use the RCGP (Recurrent, Capital, Gender, and Poverty) model.

To improve the monitoring of financial resources and increase the ability to report on allocated financial resources to achieve gender equality, the Finance Department of the Ministry of Finance introduced the RCGP database in 2003. Through this, all expenditure data in the database is disaggregated by gender to provide an indication of the percentage of funds allocated to initiatives that advance women. Since then, Bangladesh has adopted a new approach to the budget formulation by using the MTBF process instead of the traditional budget formulation process, which was first introduced in 2005-06. The national budget should be formulated based on MTBF so that the relationship between policy objectives and resource allocations is made explicit (Siddique, 2013).

A gender-specific budget report is prepared for each ministry and published alongside the Ministry of Finance budget documents. These reports include detailed sections on relevant ministry policies, ministry-specific national policy guidelines that affect women's progress, and targets and indicators to help achieve the ministry's gender equality goals. The reports also highlight gender inequalities reflected in the ministry's policies, hurdles to achieving the goals, and more.

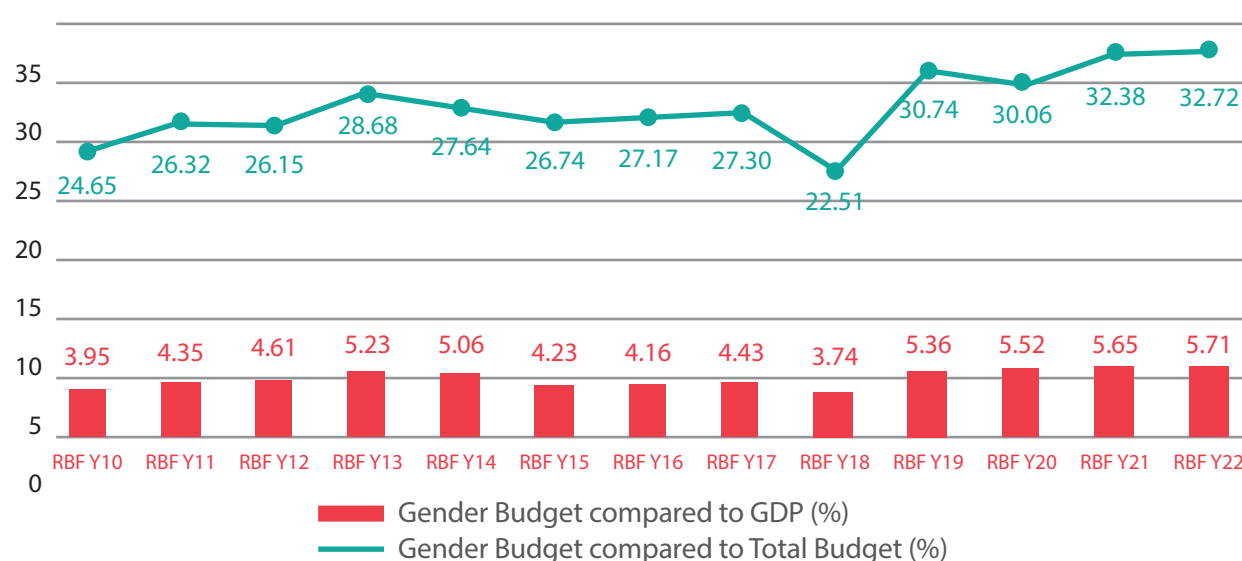
Women's participation in ministerial activities and their share in total expenditure are also covered in detail, which is necessary to assess the indicators of socio-political empowerment used to analyze gender inequality indices. Bangladesh has made progress in providing data on women involved in the gender-responsive decision-making process and enacting legislation that requires women to participate in the political decision-making process, such as reserving one-third of all local Government (union parishad) positions for women. This indeed illustrates the progress of the country (Kabir et al., 2018).

According to the MoF, five factors are central to Bangladesh's gender budget initiative—recognizing the economic relevance of the domestic sector and the necessity for governmental investment in these activities; acknowledging the roles, responsibilities, and capacities of men and women are distinct and must not be stereotyped with preconceived views; recognizing the fact that apparently, gender-neutral budget allocation may affect men and women differently; examining budget welfare results for men and women as well as boys and girls; and enabling women to participate in the economic growth process.

4.2 Allocations for gender budget

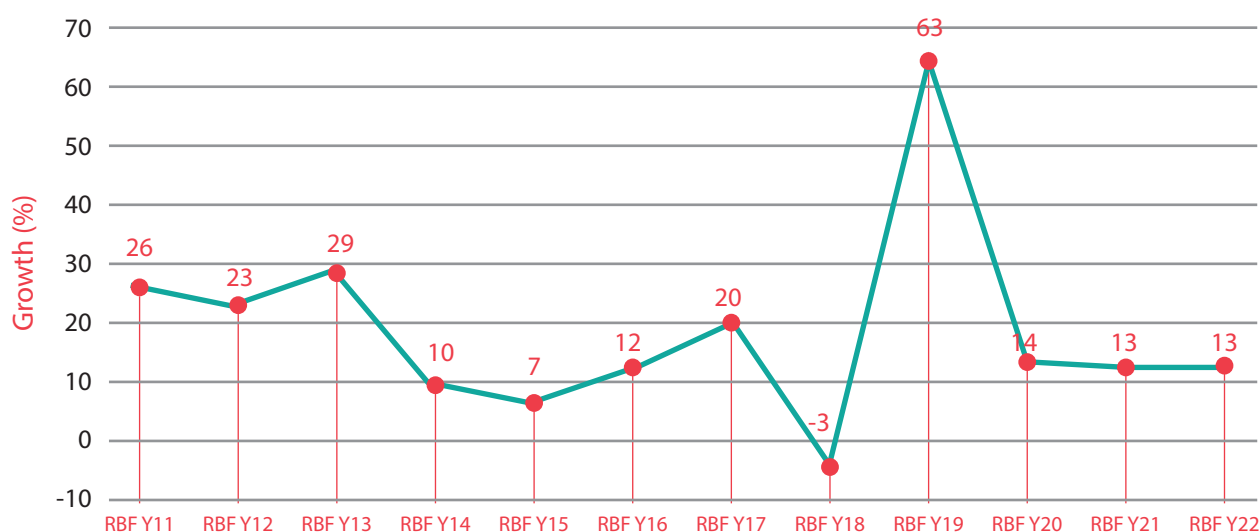
The size of the gender budget has been increasing over time since more allocations are being made for this. A comparison of allocation for gender budget during the last decade indicates that in fiscal year (FY) 2009–10 gender budget as a share of total Gross Domestic Product (GDP) was 3.95 percent which has increased to 5.71 percent in FY2021–22. A similar trend is observed in the case of gender budget as a share of the total annual budget (Figure 1).

Figure 1: Trend of Gender Budget in Bangladesh



Source: MoF (2021b)

Figure 2: Yearly Growth Pattern of Gender Budget in Bangladesh

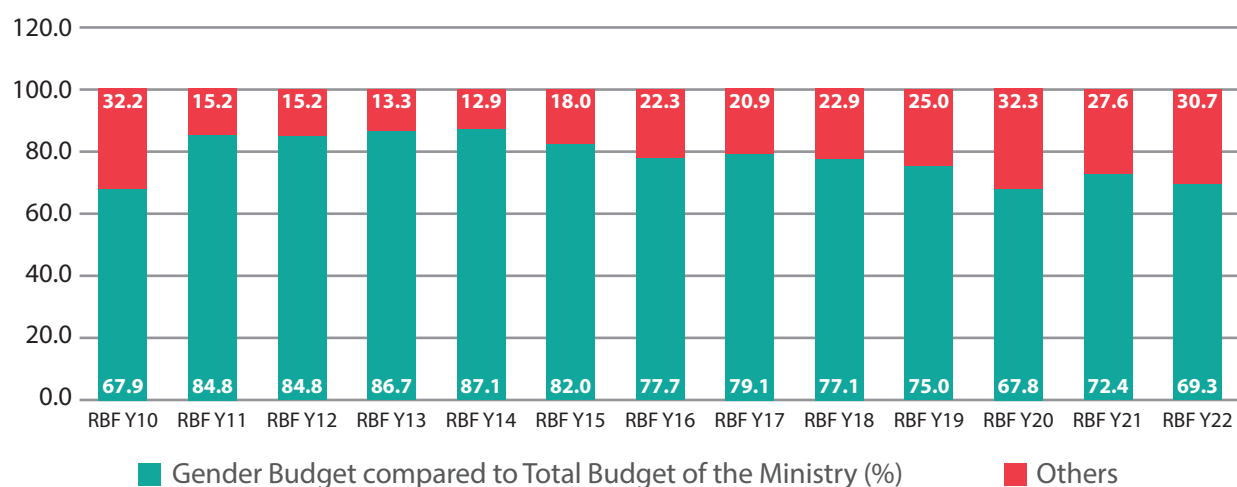


Source: Illustrated based on the gender budget of MoF

The yearly growth pattern of the gender budget of Bangladesh indicates that there are fluctuating trends in the case of growth in the gender budget (Figure 2). After RBFY2012–13, the growth started to fall drastically. But there was a sharp rise in RBFY2018–19. The growth rate of the gender budget allocation in RBFY2020–21 was 13 percent, and it has remained the same in the recently proposed budget.

The MoWCA receives the highest allocation on account of the gender budget. During the last decade, the allocation for the MoWCA varied from 67.9% (RB FY2009–10) to 87.1% (RB FY2013–14). Unfortunately, since FY2014–15, the MoWCA received a lower allocation than previous years (Figure 3). For the past five years, the average percentage of gender budget in this ministry was 72.3%. On the other hand, the budget allocation for other sectors within MoWCA has increased in the last five years. Interestingly, in FY2021–22, the Ministry of Disaster Management and Relief (MoDMR) allocated the highest share of their total budget for women in development (70.7%) followed by MoWCA. Of course, the Ministry of Primary and Mass Education allocated the highest amount for women in development (Table 1). However, none of the ministries allocated any budget which specifically addresses the fear of violence. The existing gender budgets over the years discussed the violence against women and girls prominently and proposed and planned several programmes. In comparison, addressing fear of violence among women and girls is nearly missing in the gender budget.

Figure 3: Allocation for Gender Budget (% of total) of the MoWCA



Source: MoF (2021b)

Table 1: Allocation for Women Development in selected Ministries in FY22

Ministries	Total Allocations (in crore)	Allocation for Women Development (%)
Ministry of Women and Children's Affairs	4179	69.3
Ministry of Social Welfare	9123	49.2
Ministry of Disaster Management and Relief	9951	70.7
Ministry of Primary and Mass Education	26314	59.3
Ministry of Labour and Employment	1365	41.3

Source: MOF (2021b)

4.3 Some relevant programmes

A number of special programmes were planned to develop women and children in FY2021–22. The programmes include: Vulnerable Group Development (VGD) Programme; Women Voluntary Social Welfare Centre; modification and implementation of national policy for women; and maternity allowance for the ultra-poor and pregnant women. The following projects have been scheduled to be implemented in FY2021–22 to tackle the issues related to women and children: (i) implementation of Multi-Sectoral Programme on Violence Against Women (4th Phase) project; (ii) implementation of Accelerating Protection for Children Project; and (iii) implementation of Investment Component for VGD Programme (2nd Phase).

Despite a number of good measures described in the national action plan, little progress is observed in terms of ground-level work. In addition, COVID-19 has affected the country's progress in terms of the prevention of gender-based violence. However, some measures have been taken to tackle the negative impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on violence against women in Bangladesh. Table 2 presents the impact of COVID-19 on women and measures undertaken by the Government to offset the negative effects on women.

Table 2: Impact of COVID-19 on Women and Some Relevant Programmes

Impact of COVID-19 on women	Gender projects and programmes in FY22
Increase in rape, domestic violence by partners and violence against women and girls in general	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 67 one-stop crisis centers for women and children's victims of violence in divisional districts and medical college hospitals in 6 districts have been set up—47 in district sadar hospitals and 20 in upazila health complexes. • Instant support is being provided through the mobile app 'Joy'. • Women and Children Repression Prevention (Amendment) Act, 2020 has been enacted. • Allocation for "Multi-sectoral Programme to prevent Violence Against Women" decreased from BDT 27.40 crore in RBFY2021 to BDT 17.56 crore in BFY2022
Increase in burden of unpaid care and domestic work	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Child Daycare Act 2021 has been drafted and awaits enactment
Increase in child marriage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No measures taken
More susceptibility to health risks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No measures taken

Source: Author's compilation based on CPD (2021) and MoF (2021)

4.4 Weaknesses of gender budgeting

The existing gender budget is still inadequate for addressing the challenges faced by women and girls. Moreover, there are a few limitations regarding gender budgeting in Bangladesh. These are summarized below.

The allocated budget for the development of women and girls is insufficient to bring any significant change in society. The adversities experienced by young girls and women have become common problems everywhere. The problem is increasing over time. The number of women and girls facing gender-based violence is increasing consistently. However, resources for them are not growing significantly. Resources are needed to provide a safe and secure environment to the women and girls, give them relevant knowledge and available services to protect them, and take other essential measures to tackle the problem.

The methodology for preparing a gender budget is unclear. Information on allocation for various programmes is available. For example, there are allocations for programmes such as, setting up one-stop crisis centers for women and children victims of violence in divisional districts and providing instant support through the mobile app "Joy" for violence prevention are available. There is a lack of information on how much budget has been used for these particular programmes.

Also, a reporting system is required to demonstrate the actual expenditure of any programmes for gender development. This type of reporting will help the Government identify whether the budget is sufficient, and it will also disclose the operational procedures of different ministries so that changes in allocation can be made easily. For example, the "Multi-sectoral Programme to Prevent Violence Against Women" allocation has been reduced from Tk 27.4 crore in RBFY2020–21 to Tk 17.56 crore BFY2021 22. This decline is unexpected and there is no valid explanation for such reduction. Any change or amendment can occur as we pass an extraordinary time due to the pandemic. But there should be transparency in terms of such changes.

Lack of transparency in expenditure may diminish the accountability of the gender budget. The gender budget does not reveal the actual expenditure. Respective ministries do not report the allocation and exact use of the gender budget. Gender budget only provides information on allocation but not the actual expenditure, which provides scopes for misuse of resources. There is no record of utilized and unutilized resources of the total gender budget allocation.



SUMMARY OF EXPERT VIEWS



Experts who took part in the EGM, have shared their insights with the study team on fear of violence and gender budgeting. Their views revealed several aspects of fear of violence and gender budget and broader issue on gender equality and required measures to improve women's situation in Bangladesh. A summary of the discussions with the experts is presented below.

i. Women cannot report: The phones that women use are often under the control of their husbands or in-laws. Therefore, they share information about violence over the phone with anyone or report it to the police. They are unable to share information and are also scared to use their own mobile phones in fear of being victimized for sharing the information. So, violence-related crimes go unreported.

ii. Information and data are not adequately available: The lack of actual numbers or information about women being victimized is related to the above. This should be made available. The lack of data hampers any action which can be taken to prevent violence as possible measures cannot be taken in line with the enormity of the problem.

iii. Women in the informal sector are not included in the gender budget: The informal sector (mostly agriculture) should be included in the budget, with adequate funding. A large number of women work in the informal sector, whereas they lack access to adequate sanitation and access to enough security. Also, there is a lack of daycare services. Moreover, allocation is required to ensure retirement benefits for informal workers.

iv. Volunteers can help victims report with confidentiality: Volunteers or human rights workers can act as rapporteurs on violence against women and girls. As the women facing violence cannot often report the crimes directly, they can share information with human rights workers and volunteers who can further monitor and report on the human rights situation. Government should appoint community-based volunteers.

v. Allocations should be transparent and must align with gender-sensitive issues: The utilization and application of gender budgets for women are not publicly disclosed. Hence, there is a lack of transparency. The sectors which require allocation most are often left out in the process. Gender-sensitive issues should be considered more and a cell for gender experts should be created separately in this regard.

vi. Early and child marriage must be prohibited: Early marriage and child marriage must be prohibited for which respective laws should be implemented. Additionally, child marriage cases should not go unreported, and local governments and organizations need to be more aware and alert in this context.

vii. More discussions, debates, and trainings should be arranged: More awareness campaigns, training, and workshops should be organized, leading to creating greater awareness and changing the social perspectives. There should be an allocation for various awareness programmes. Awareness campaigns should be arranged to let women and girls know that they will get support from the Government if they face any unwanted situation during the pandemic. Religious leaders and local representatives should be included in such awareness programmes in rural areas. Moreover, short documentaries, self-defense training, billboard advertisements, leaflets, and posters can help raise awareness.

viii. Male involvement must be increased: Related to the above, male involvement is essential for an effective shift in the perspective and breaking the gender barriers. No awareness-related programme or discussion can be successful without male participation.

ix. Teachers and educational institutions have a bigger role to play: It is observed that girls, as well as boys who are abused by relatives often, cannot share the incident with parents; so they can share these problems with their teachers, especially in rural areas. Special cells or counseling centers can be built for this purpose in education institutions. Moreover, the topics related to violence against women and girls, sex education, and moral education should be included in the school curriculum.

x. Parenting module should be developed: There must be a change in traditional parenting—a parenting module can be made and a particular budget can be allocated for this.

xi. Mainstreaming education and the labour market is essential: Including women in the mainstream education and labour market is necessary. Ministries, as well as NGOs, can contribute in this regard.

xii. Accountability needs to be strengthened: To properly utilize the allocations, accountability must be ensured. This will help increase the efficacy of the expenditure and determine the priorities.

xiii. Proper experts and monitoring mechanisms are required: Factors stunting women empowerment need to be addressed first to address violence against women and girls. There must be adequate expert and proper observation to monitor and assess the gender budget.

xiv. Community-based governance needs to be emphasized: In remote places, particularly in border areas, the role of community governance in preventing violence against women and girls is crucial. Stronger community governance can help improve the situation a lot, requiring a separate budget allocation.

xv. Budget allocation is required for indigenous women: For the safety of indigenous women, a budget allocation is required. To achieve the goal, it is necessary to reduce the drug's prevalence. Moreover, the indigenous people's basic needs (food, medical care, etc.) must be provided.

xvi. Allocations for vulnerable women and shelter homes are needed: Allocation is needed for keeping shelter homes open during the lockdown period with improved facilities. Support measures are required in case any victim of violence does not want to go back to her home due to fear of violence. Sufficient facilities should be ensured i.e. availability of adequate furniture, food, and other basic needs. Female staff should be available for all kinds of support needed. In addition, the allocation for some special allowances should be available for vulnerable women, especially during the pandemic.

xvii. Issues involving public transport need to be addressed: As a result of increasing cases of harassment in public transport, women's participation in economic activities gets hampered. Hence, there should be an allocation in the budget for addressing women's safety in public transport.

xviii. A nationally representative survey is needed: To have a clear picture of the impact of violence against women and girls on the national economy, a nationally representative survey, and a need assessment are required. There needs to be an assessment of cases of violence to address them properly, and a comparative analysis of victim and non-victim can be done.

xix. One-stop crisis center needs to be implemented to prevent cybercrime: There must be a one-stop-crisis service to report cybercrime—a growing crisis—particularly during the pandemic. Hence, allocation is required to establish a cell in the Ministry of Home Affairs.



BUDGETARY FRAMEWORK TO ADDRESS FEAR OF VIOLENCE

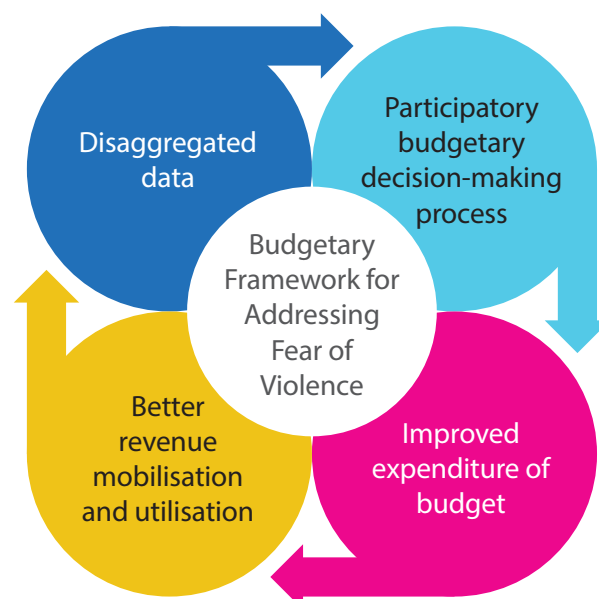
6

A review of the gender budget reveals that ministry-wise gender budget does not provide any disaggregated information. Therefore, it is not known how much is allocated to address the issue of fear of violence among girls and young women, and the impact of such allocation. Given the severity of the problem, there is a need for dedicated and adequate financial allocation to tackle the issue. Budget allocation is needed for several types of activities that can help reduce the fear of violence and the occurrence of violence against women and girls.

6.1 Budgetary framework for addressing fear of violence

In order to address and eliminate the fear of violence among girls and women, the current gender budget framework has to be redesigned. Four pillars of the budget framework recommended here include: **gender-disaggregated data; the participatory budgetary decision-making process; improved expenditure of budget; better revenue mobilization and utilization.** Figure 4 presents a budgetary framework highlighting these pillars. Table 3 provides a broad budgetary framework and actions required for improved outcomes under which the issue of fear of violence among girls and women should be addressed.

Figure 4: Budgetary Framework for Addressing Fear of Violence



Source: Authors' illustration

Table 3: Budgetary Framework for Addressing Fear of Violence

Pillars for budget framework improvement	Actions required for improved outcomes
Disaggregated data on fear of harassment and violence	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Gender disaggregated data needed for monitoring outcomes of budgetary allocation• Data on fear of violence among girls and women should be generated nationally on a regular basis• Gender disaggregated tax data• Gender disaggregated data on the distributional impact of public expenditures• Such data should be available and accessible to all for assessment, monitoring, and analysis
Participatory budgetary decision-making process	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• A bottom-up approach in the preparation of gender budget involving relevant stakeholders who can provide insights from the grassroots and field level. Stakeholders should include: women's organizations and elected representatives• Stakeholders should be provided with capacity development for effective participation in the gender budgeting process.
Improved expenditure of budget	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Strengthening reporting on spending on gender budget, including on measures for addressing fear of violence among girls and women.• Regular tracking of fund disbursement on gender-specific objectives.• Among the ministries and departments on gender-disaggregated expenditures. Improved alignment of budgetary allocations for various line items under gender budget.• Timely disbursement of funds for gender development including on programmes related to reducing fear of violence.• Distinguish between fully (100 percent) women targeted programmes and pro-women programmes in the budget.• Monitor trends of even allocations in the budget and actual expenditures
Better revenue mobilisation and utilisation	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Better designing of direct and indirect tax measures, so that women are benefited and empowered.• Tax benefits should be designed for women.• Benefits of tax measures targeted at women should be estimated.

Source: Authors' illustration.

6.2 Budgetary measures to address the fear of violence

While the above framework will form the basis for improving the budgetary mechanism for women and girls and reducing fear of violence among them, there should be several specific measures in order to eliminate the fear of violence against women and girls. These measures will have to be backed by adequate funding from the Government. Annex 1 also presents these with information on the responsible ministries and agencies.

(i) There should be an opportunity to share information regarding any incidence related to violence. This can be facilitated by establishing desks in different drug stores, police stations, local government offices, or in easily accessible places for women. Some experienced staff should be recruited to provide adequate support and be available when needed, and training facilities should be ensured for them if needed. The helpline numbers should always be active so that women can have access from their homes as well. Actual numbers and exact information about victims should be reported. Awareness campaigns can be arranged to assure the victims about the support and justice available for them. Offices of local Government, police stations in rural areas should be active enough to provide the necessary support. The responsible ministries and departments for implementing these tasks would be the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, MoWCA, Ministry of Local Government, Rural Development & Co-operatives and Public Security Division, Ministry of Home Affairs.

(ii) Preparation process of the gender budget should be made transparent. Some indicators/criteria need to be fixed to evaluate the performance of 43 ministries. Ministries should set a few targets they want to achieve. Functions of the ministries should be well-defined and accountability to the taxpayers should be ensured. Proper monitoring of meeting those criteria should also be initiated. The ministries should be accountable to disclose the utilized and unutilized portions of the total gender budget. MoF, MoWCA, Ministry of Social Welfare (MoSW) are the responsible ministries/departments for this purpose.

(iii) All types of gender-sensitive issues should be included in the gender budget as addressing the gender issues also requires resources. Gender lens should be used while evaluating any issue. Cells can be formed with various gender experts in different ministries to identify what needs to be added to the budget. A group of experts should be appointed to assess, monitor, and execute the gender budget. MoF and MoWCA can accomplish these tasks.

(iv) Coordination with the one-stop crisis centers is essential to prevent violence against women and girls. For this, several cells can be created in schools, hospitals, and police stations and a budget should also be allocated if needed. Experienced female teachers and female police officers need to be assigned. Synchronization among the cells and nearest police stations and hospitals should be ensured. Responsible persons should get sufficient training to provide all types of support. Social workers, volunteers, human rights workers should be active to inform women and girls about the available cells and services. Doctors should always be available to attend to violence-related cases. These tasks will be implemented by the Ministry of Education, Ministry of Primary and Mass Education, Ministry of Health, Public Security Division, Ministry of Home Affairs, MoWCA, and MoF.

(v) Elimination of evidence on violence should be stopped and sufficient allocation of resources should be ensured to maintain a database for urban and rural areas. Each violence case should be recorded in the database with all available evidence. Offices of local Government and police stations in rural areas should be active enough to provide the necessary support. Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, MoWCA, Ministry of Local Government, Rural Development & Co-operatives, Public Security Division, Ministry of Home Affairs, and MoF are the responsible ministries/departments for these tasks.

(vi) Digital violence should also be addressed in the budget with equal importance and accordingly, appropriate budgetary allocations should be made. To attain that, awareness campaigns should take place to inform people of cyber-crimes and the usage of the internet. Awareness programmes should be arranged to educate women and girls about the available services and laws to support them. The significance of the existing laws should be explained at various places such as gender cells, one-stop centers, and educational institutions. There are also existing laws that should be appropriately implemented. These tasks can be implemented by the ICT Division, Ministry of Education, Ministry of Primary and Mass Education, and MoWCA.

(vii) Resources for more dedicated and safe public transport throughout the country are needed. Immediate support should be provided if any victim calls the helpline number informing of harassment in public transport. Ministry of Road Transport and Bridges, MoWCA, and MoF are to be the responsible ministries/departments for that.

(viii) Number of shelter homes should be increased and the existing shelter homes should be accessible to all women and girls who need those. This requires higher resource allocation in the budget. Awareness campaigns should also be arranged to let the women and girls know that they would get support from the Government if they need to leave their house following violence or if they fear any violence. The Government should make necessary arrangements if any victim does not want to go back home as well. MoWCA, Ministry of Social Welfare, and MoF should implement these tasks.

(ix) There should be dedicated budget for the safety of indigenous women. It is necessary to reduce the drug's prevalence in areas where they live. Moreover, the indigenous people's basic needs (food, medical care, etc.) must be provided. In border regions, proper safety precautions must be performed. It is necessary to deploy a sufficient number of police officers, including female cops if possible. Department of Narcotics Control, Public Security Division, Ministry of Home Affairs, Ministry of Food, Ministry of Health, MoWCA, and Ministry of Foreign Affairs is the responsible ministries/departments.

6.3 General recommendations for addressing fear of violence

(i) Early marriage and child marriage must be prohibited for which respective laws should be implemented. Additionally, girls' education should be made compulsory up to high school. Basic vocational trainings can be provided to girls. Special employment-generating opportunities can be created for girls and women. Various awareness programmes, trainings, and counseling sessions can be arranged to empower them. Awareness programmes for parents can also be initiated to develop children's voices and agency. Offices of local Government and police stations in rural areas should be active enough to provide the necessary support. MoWCA, MoSW, Ministry of Local Government, Rural Development & Co-operatives, MoF, Public Security Division, Ministry of Home Affairs, and Ministry of Labour and Employment are the responsible ministries/departments for this purpose.

(ii) Fund allocation is required to develop the skills of women for all types of work. Gender stereotypes at workplaces should be removed. Discussions and counseling sessions should be arranged to make women understand the importance of breaking taboos. MoWCA and MoF should be the implementing agencies.

(iii) It is also essential to allocate an adequate budget for changing the perspectives of both males and females. To attain that, awareness campaigns should be organized; short documentaries can be made; knowledge may be disseminated through billboard advertisements, leaflets, posters, etc. MoWCA and MoF are to be the responsible ministries/departments for that purpose.

(iv) Gender-inclusive curriculum should be introduced, and necessary resources should be allocated. Moral education, human behavior, among others, and sex education should be included in the curriculum. Different extra-curricular activities—emphasizing gender equality—including debates, quizzes, and discussions can be organized. Teachers, religious leaders, political leaders, different representatives of the society should receive training on the gender-inclusive education system, gender-neutral language, and so forth. Teachers must be assessed to uphold the quality of education. Training on self-defence mechanisms such as karate should be taught. These tasks can be implemented by the Ministry of Education, Ministry of Primary and Mass Education, Ministry of Youth and Sports, and MoF.

(v) Awareness campaigns for both females and males should be arranged frequently, and proper measures have to be taken so that the perpetrators get penalized. Legal support and support for any damages should also be provided. Offices of the local Government, police stations in rural areas should be active to stay connected with households in their respective areas. Moreover, the issue of gender-based violence should be made a mandatory subject in high school. Property rights of women need to be established as well. MoWCA, Ministry of Education, Ministry of Primary and Mass Education, Public Security Division of the Ministry of Home Affairs, National Legal Aid Services Organization and Ministry of Local Government, Rural Development & Co-operatives are the implementing agencies.

There should also be some measures in view of the COVID-19 pandemic which has increased violence against women.

(1) Allocation is needed for keeping shelter homes open during the lockdown period with improved facilities. Support measures are required in case any victim of violence does not want to go back to her home due to fear of violence. Proper safety and security should also be ensured. Sufficient facilities should be guaranteed i.e. availability of adequate furniture, food, and other basic needs. Female staff should be available for all kinds of support needed. MoWCA, Public Security Division of the Ministry of Home Affairs, Ministry of Social Welfare, and MoF should be the implementing agencies.

(2) There should be an allocation for various awareness programmes. Awareness campaigns should be arranged to let women and girls know that they will get support from the Government if they face any unwanted situation during the pandemic. Helpline numbers should always be active with available staff to provide required services. MoWCA and MoF are the responsible ministries/departments.

(3) Finally, the allocation for some special allowances should be available for vulnerable women. During the pandemic, a special allowance can be provided based on the extent of the vulnerability of women and girls. MoWCA, MoSW, and MoF are to be the implementing agencies.

CONCLUSION

Bangladesh has made progress in achieving the SDGs despite having numerous challenges. However, to make ample and expected progress, proactive measures are needed to address the issue of violence against women and girls. It needs to be treated as a serious violation of human rights and a threat to achieving gender equality and women's empowerment. It also needs to be acknowledged that it comes with social and economic costs. Just formulating laws will not be enough to end impunity for violence against women and girls. This is a larger social, cultural, and structural problem in a male-dominated society, that is widely viewed as an effective means of exerting power and control over women. Unfortunately, the cultural conditions in which we live are all about demonstrating power and undermining the weaker segments of society. To make matters worse, the prevailing culture of victim-blaming encourages perpetrators and makes it more challenging to report back against incidences regarding violence.

In this context, this report has sought to identify a number of actions that would be useful in reducing the fear of violence and stopping violence against women in the context of gender budgeting. It is evident that without protecting women and girls from the fear of violence, the growth momentum of Bangladesh will be interrupted, and the achievements of the past decades will be lost. Therefore, this study recommends that appropriate policies and measures should be adopted and backed by adequate resources through the fiscal year budget.

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ANNEXES



Annex Table 1: Recommendations with Specific Tasks and Responsibilities

Recommendations	Specific tasks	Responsible ministries/departments
Women should have full access to technology, their own gadgets, and all the facilities that ensure human rights	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Campaigns to increase women's awareness of using devices can be arranged. • Workshops or training sessions can be organized to make women aware of the available services so that they can seek help anytime they experience any unwanted situation. • Women and girls should be trained to use modern technology in order to reduce their fear of violence and other obstacles they face. • Offices of local Government, police stations in rural areas should be active enough to provide the necessary support. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • National Human Rights Commission, Bangladesh • ICT Division • MoWCA • Ministry of Local Government, Rural Development & Co-operatives • Public Security Division, Ministry of Home Affairs
Opportunity to share information regarding any incidence related to violence should be ensured	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A desk can be established in different drug stores, police stations, offices of the local Government, or in such a place that is easily accessible for the women. • Some experienced staff should be recruited so that they can provide adequate support and be available when needed. • Training facilities should be ensured for the responsible staff if needed. • The helpline numbers should always be active so that women can also have access from their homes. • Actual numbers and exact information about violence incidence should be reported. • Awareness campaigns can be organized to popularize the support and judiciary provisions available for violence survivors. • Offices of local Government, police stations in rural areas should be active enough to provide the necessary support. • Existing laws should be implemented properly. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ministry of Information and Broadcasting • MoWCA • Ministry of Local Government, Rural Development & Co-operatives • Public Security Division, Ministry of Home Affairs

Recommendations	Specific tasks	Responsible ministries/departments
Informal sector (mainly garments, agriculture) should be included in the budget and adequate allocation should be made	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Proper sanitation facilities for both male and female employees working in the informal sector should be ensured. • Adequate security (community policing, street lights, safe transportation) for women should be ensured in public spaces. • Daycare facilities need to be initiated for the women working in informal sectors. • Allocation is required to ensure the retirement benefit of the informal workers. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ministry of Agriculture • Ministry of Labour and Employment • MoWCA
Domestic violence needs to be included in the budget and appropriate policies should be formulated	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Specific allocation for the implementation of the law should be allocated • Local level campaigns should be arranged frequently. • Proper measures have to be taken so that the perpetrators get penalised. • Gender-based violence issues should be included as a compulsory topic in the high school curriculum. • Legal support and support for the damages need to be provided. • The local government offices and police stations in rural areas should be active to stay connected with households to offer support on an immediate basis. • Property rights of women need to be established. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MoWCA • Ministry of Education • Ministry of Primary and Mass Education • Public Security Division, Ministry of Home Affairs • National Legal Aid Services Organization • Ministry of Local Government, Rural Development & Co-operatives
Digital violence should be addressed in the budget with equal importance and appropriate budgetary allocations should be made	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Awareness campaigns should take place to inform people of cyber-crime and the usage of the internet • Awareness programmes should be arranged to inform women and girls about the available services and laws to support them. • Significance of the existing laws should be explained at various places, such as gender cells, one-stop centers, and educational institutions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ICT Division • Ministry of Education • Ministry of Primary and Mass Education • MoWCA

Recommendations	Specific tasks	Responsible ministries/departments
Every detail and method of preparing a gender budget should be made transparent	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some indicators/criteria need to be fixed to evaluate the performance of 43 ministries. • Ministries should set a few targets they want to achieve. • Functions of the ministries should be well-defined and accountability to the taxpayers should be ensured. • The ministries should be accountable for disclosing the utilized and unutilized portions of the total gender budget. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MoF • MoWCA • MoSW
All types of gender sensitive issues should be included in the gender Budget as addressing gender issues also requires resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gender lens should be used while evaluating any issue. • Cells can be formed with various gender experts in different ministries to identify what needs to be added to the budget. • A group of experts should be appointed to assess, monitor, and execute the gender budget. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MoF • MoWCA
Impact of any type of violence on GDP needs to be addressed and allocation to record the well-being and happiness of people should be made	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Every case of violence should be recorded in the database with all available evidence. • Adequate economic research needs to be conducted using the data from the database. • Allocation for a nationally representative survey is needed to collect data for the overall well-being of people. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ministry of Information and Broadcasting • MoWCA • MoF
Child early and forced marriage have to be stopped	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Specific allocation for the implementation of the national plan of actions 2018 should be allocated. • Girls' education should be made compulsory up to high school. • Basic vocational trainings can be provided to girls. • Special employment generating opportunities can be created for girls and women. • Empowering girls and women through various awareness programmes, trainings, and counseling sessions. • Awareness programmes for parents can be initiated to develop children's voices and agency. • Offices of local Government and police stations in rural areas should be active enough to provide the necessary support. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MoWCA • MoSW • Ministry of Local Government, Rural Development & Co-operatives • MoF • Public Security Division, Ministry of Home Affairs • Ministry of Labour and Employment

Recommendations	Specific tasks	Responsible ministries/departments
To coordinate with the one-stop crisis centers, several cells can be created in schools, hospitals, and police stations to prevent violence; budget should be allocated if needed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Experienced female teachers and female police officers need to be assigned. • Synchronization among the cells and nearest police stations and hospitals should be ensured. • Responsible persons should get sufficient training to provide all types of support. • Social workers, volunteers, human rights workers should be active to make women and girls aware of the cells and services available. • Doctors to attend violence-related cases should always be available. • A woman will be given all the available options and helped with the required one. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MoWCA • MoSW • Ministry of Local Government, Rural Development & Co-operatives • MoF • Public Security Division, Ministry of Home Affairs • Ministry of Labour and Employment
Sufficient allocation of resources should be ensured to maintain a database for both urban and rural areas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Each case of violence should be recorded in the database with all available evidence. • Offices of local Government and police stations in rural areas should be active enough to provide the necessary support. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ministry of Education • Ministry of Primary and Mass Education • Ministry of Health • Public Security Division, Ministry of Home Affairs • MoWCA • MoF
Gender transformative curriculum should be introduced and necessary resources should be allocated	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Moral education, attitude & behaviour among others and comprehensive sexuality education should be included in the curriculum. • Training on self-defense mechanisms such as karate should be taught. • Teachers, religious leaders, political leaders, different representatives of the society should receive training on gender transformative education system, gender-neutral language, and so forth. • Assessment for teachers should be initiated to ensure the quality of education. • Different extra-curricular activities—emphasizing gender equality—including debates, quizzes, and discussions can be organized. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ministry of Education • Ministry of Primary and Mass Education • Ministry of Youth and Sports • MoF

Recommendations	Specific tasks	Responsible ministries/departments
Public transport should be accessible and safe for everyone	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limiting vehicle capacity is required • Immediate support can be provided if any gender violence survivors call the helpline number. • Implementation of laws is required to stop violence & harassment. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ministry of Road Transport and Bridges • MoWCA • MoF
Number of shelter homes should be increased and the existing shelter homes should be accessible to all women and girls in need	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Campaigns can be initiated to raise awareness about the shelter home. • The Government should make necessary arrangements if any gender violence survivor does not want to go back home. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MoWCA • Ministry of Social Welfare • MoF
Allocation of a budget is needed for the safety of indigenous women	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prevalence of drugs needs to be stopped. • Basic needs (food, treatment, education, etc.) of the indigenous people should be met. • Proper safety measures need to be taken in border areas. • Sufficient number of police officers and if possible female police officers need to be assigned. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Department of Narcotics Control • Public Security Division, Ministry of Home Affairs • Ministry of Food • Ministry of Health • MoWCA • MoF
Allocation is required to develop skills of women for all types of work	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gender stereotypes at workplaces should be removed. • Discussions and counseling sessions should be arranged to make women understand the importance of breaking the stereotyped activities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MoWCA • MoF
Adequate budget allocation is required for the gender transformative society development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Awareness campaigns should be organised for engaging men and boys to eradicate violence and harassment against women and girls. • Short documentary can be made. • Dissemination of knowledge through billboard advertisements, leaflets, posters, etc. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MoWCA • MoF

Source: Authors' illustration.

Annex Table 2: Specific Recommendations in View of the Covid-19 Pandemic

Recommendations	Specific tasks	Responsible ministries/departments
Allocation to keep the shelter homes open during the time of lockdown with improved facilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support measures are needed if any gender violence survivor does not want to go back home due to fear of violence. • Proper safety and security should be ensured. • Sufficient facilities should be ensured i.e. availability of adequate furniture, food, and other basic needs. • Female staff should be available for all kinds of support needed. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MoWCA • Public Security Division, Ministry of Home Affairs • Ministry of Social Welfare • MoF
Allocation to organise various awareness programmes should be ensured	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Awareness campaigns should be arranged to let women and girls know that they would get support from the Government if they faced any unwanted situation during the pandemic. • Helpline numbers should always be active with available staff to provide required services. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MoWCA • MoF • Ministry of Information and Broadcasting
Allocation for some special allowances should be available for most marginalized women	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A special allowance can be provided based on the vulnerability of women and girls during the pandemic. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MoWCA • MoSW • MoF

Source: Authors' illustration.

Annex Table 3: Checklist for Discussion with Experts

1. Do you know about the national budget in the context of issues related to the fear of violence among girls and young women in Bangladesh?
2. If yes, what do you think about the efficiency of the budget to reduce the fear of violence among girls and young women in Bangladesh?
3. In what ways the budget is adequate/inadequate to reduce the fear of violence among girls and young women in Bangladesh?
4. In which sector do you think the budget allocation needs to increase in order to reduce the fear of violence among girls and young women in Bangladesh?
5. Why and how the particular sector will be effective to reduce the fear of violence among girls and young women in Bangladesh?
6. Which year's national budget do you think has been the most effective one to address the issue of gender violence?
7. Why that particular one was effective according to you?
8. After analysing the budgets, what are the obstacles to reducing the fear of violence among girls and young women in Bangladesh?
9. How can they be improved?
10. In the last year's budget, National Plan of Action has been formulated to implement a national women development policy and prevention against women—are you aware of this?
11. If yes, how is this plan being implemented?
12. Despite being one of the most prevalent problems, why the Government is not allocating an adequate budget to address this issue? Give us your opinion.
13. How are the budgets addressing these four arenas (domestic violence, violence in educational institutions, violence in work places and public places) of violence?
14. Which year's budget was the most effective one to address these four arenas particularly?

Annex Table 4: List of Participants at the EGM

1. Ms. Shahana Huda

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2. Dr. Sayema Haque Bidisha

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4. Mr. Rafiqul Islam

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5. Dr. Fazila Banu Lily

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6. Dr. Tania Haque

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8. Ms Zakia Haque

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