Women in Political Realms: Path to Break the Loop

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WAVE Foundation emerged as a Civil Society Organization in 1990. Since its establishment, the organization has been implementing multifaceted activities for the socio economic development of poor and marginalized as well as the establishment of universal human rights and good governance. Besides, the organization is conducting issue based policy advocacy and campaigns. WAVE is driven by its motto "Together for Better Life" towards the vision of establishing "A just and Prosperous society". WAVE has organized it's all activities under 6 major programs: 1) Poverty Eradication and Livelihood Development; 2) Community Financing and Entrepreneurship Development; 3) Agri Food System Transformation; 4) Governance, Rights and Justice; 5) Social Development and Youth Empowerment; and 6) Climate Justice and Renewable Energy Promotion. It is now working directly with more than 17.5 million people all over the country and making significant contributions to the realization of the country's development plan and the achievement of Sustainable Development Goals.

WAVE believes, progress of Bangladesh is fundamentally tied to empowerment of its women. By unleashing the potential of women in leadership, we can build a more inclusive, equitable, and prosperous nation. It has been implementing such mentorship programs, networking opportunities, and initiatives to challenge gender-based stereotypes are critical in this journey toward equality. WAVE has been implementing 'Women in Leadership Project' over the years focused on building a network of 100 young women leaders (aged 24 – 29 years) in five countries of South Asia (Bangladesh, India, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka) and UK.

Under this, we are offering 20 participants to focusing on education, technology, enterprise, business, arts, culture, and development sectors. This concept is thought to be unique as there are very few platforms available to young women who bring them together cross-sectoral and offers opportunities to connect and collaborate with other young women in the region or with UK. We are contributing to this agenda by creating opportunities for dialogue to influence policies that benefit women and girls; work with partners to promote access and opportunity for women and girls and build their skills and confidence to achieve their potential and have more influence over decisions that affect their lives.

WAVE has unique experience to implement the project like `Breaking the Silence of Violence'. The project focuses on the elimination of disparity between men and women and takes programmes to advance the rights of women. It also organizes women and builds their capacities to stop violence against them and promotes women rights.

Page of
Contents

Acknowledgments

Acronyms

AL	Awami League
ASA	Association for Social Advancement
BNP	Bangladesh Nationalist Party
BNPS	Bangladesh Nari Progati Sangha
CBO	Community-Based Organization
CSO	Civil society organizations
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women
DWA	Department of Women Affairs
EMB	Election Monitoring Bodies
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
GBV	Gender-Based Violence
GO	Government Organization
GOVT	Government
JI-B	Jamaat-e Islami Bangladesh
JP	Jatiya Party
KII	Key Informant Interview
LR	Literature Review
MJF	Manusher Jonno Foundation
MP	Member of Parliament
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
NSC	National Standing Committee
RPO	Representation of People Order
SADC	Southern African Development Community
SAARC	South Asia Association for Regional Cooperation
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
UN	United Nations
UP	Union Parishad
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
VOA	Voice of America.

1. Abstract

The constitution of Bangladesh enshrines the State's commitment to promoting gender equality and guaranteeing women's equal opportunities and participation in all aspects of life. However, substantial obstacles still stand in the way of women's full participation in politics. Discriminatory legal frameworks, deeply rooted cultural norms, educational barriers, and a lack of support are some of these challenges. In addition to these impediments, societal attitudes, patriarchal values, limited access to education, challenges associated with property ownership further exacerbate these difficulties. It is evident that an array of structural, financial, psychosocial, and cultural impediments undermines women's participation in the public sphere, notably in the political sphere. It is a monumental task for women, together with all other actors, to deal with these issues and generate a conducive environment that allows women to engage in politics without significant barriers from local to national level.

To effectively address all of these concerns, it is critical to focus on giving women specific opportunities, resources, and support to strengthen their political power and leadership capacities, while simultaneously organizing an awareness campaign that includes members of their families and communities. The Representation of the People Order, 1972 was adopted in an effort to increase the number of women in politics. It sets rules for the election of 300 members of the Bangladesh National Parliament and the registration of political with the goal of reserving 33% of parliamentary seats for women by 2030.

Bangladesh has had a female Prime Minister and Speaker for a very long time, but there is still a long way to go before gender parity in leadership is attained. The required quota of 33% female representation on all political party committees by 2020 has not been attained. It has now been extended until 2030. While women's political participation has increased, their advancement to leadership positions has lagged to some extent. Moreover, the debate over quotas' effectiveness in increasing representation highlights the need for comprehensive structural changes. Collaborative efforts are crucial to establishing a gender-sensitive political atmosphere to attain an inclusive democracy. Bangladesh has made considerable progress in women's empowerment in politics despite persistent challenges, like cultural impediments. As Bangladesh advances further to becoming a middle-income country by 2031, progress toward gender equality in Bangladeshi politics is likely to be reflected, the potential for incorporating inclusivity and diversity. This process of gender equality and women empowerment in politics is continuing, though a little slowly.

In this regard, a National Researcher on behalf of WAVE Foundation conducted a study in Bangladesh titled 'Country Specific Research on Women's Political Participation: Bangladesh' to highlight the various opportunities and challenges that women experience, as well as the capacity gap that persists among women when entering and continuing in the realm of Bangladesh politics.

2. Introduction

Women face discrimination at all stages of their lives, including childhood, old age, schooling, expressing ideas, choosing a career throughout their lifetime. It has been noted that women everywhere, but particularly in Bangladesh, have not received enough encouragement or support to demonstrate the knowledge, experience, and skills they possess. It is also true that barriers to education, lack of support from family and community when pursuing a career in politics, movement restrictions, cultural norms, mistrust of women, and women's lack of confidence also play a significant role to engage in political sphere. Moreover, Women's political participation is hindered by factors such as a culture of silent, the belief that politics is a privilege rather than a right, and discriminatory laws. The main obstacles to women participating in politics include societal and individual mindsets, unequal opportunities for education and social skills, practical and legal barriers to property ownership, inheritance, and earning, and a lack of political parties' commitment to educating and developing female candidates.

According to the 2011 UN General Assembly resolution on women's political participation, women in every part of the world continue to be largely marginalized from the political sphere, often as a result of discriminatory laws, practices, attitudes, and gender stereotypes, low levels of education, lack of access to health care, and the disproportionate impact of poverty on women.

Many women have prevailed over these challenges to the great credit of society as a whole. However, opportunities for women must be equal, creating a level playing field. It has historically been observed that women have challenged and fought back for their rights on an individual basis throughout the world, particularly in Bangladesh, and have moved on to become great leaders. However, this needs to change. Only when women can decide on their own actions and initiatives, and when the government and political parties acknowledge that equal opportunities must be maintained for all, can effective leadership become evident and continue.

Women's participation in the political process is vital in creating societal harmony around the world, even though numerous obstacles persist in society. Gender quotas and capacity-building programs are two examples of measures that have made significant progress, even though issues like gender discrimination and limited educational access persist. At the same time, the debate of quotas' efficacy in enhancing representation further emphasizes the need for more extensive structural transformation. Coordinated and collaborative efforts are crucial to establishing a gender-sensitive political environment to attain an inclusive democracy.

Women still make up around half of the world's population, yet they are still disproportionately underrepresented in politics, which underscores the critical need for structural change. It is

essential to empower women through focused training programs and to address prevalent gender norms to promote an inclusive democracy. Vice President Kamala Harris of United States has highlighted the critical importance of incorporating women's perspectives to enhance democratic efficacy and advance human rights. Her advocacy underscores the essential role that women play in shaping a more equitable and effective democratic process.

Women leaders in Bangladesh have consistently demonstrated impressive effectiveness in organizing initiatives, whether social, cultural, or political. Starting with the language movement and continuing to this day, women leaders have primarily worked in the background to enhance mainstream political initiatives. Bangladesh has extremely few examples of women entering politics on their own merits. The reason was a lack of funds and muscle power to support their campaign, which unfortunately has grown into an inseparable element of our electoral process. Above all, favoritism in selecting candidates by top leadership is critical at the national level during elections. Locally, women encounter hurdles in pursuing their political careers, from the family to the institution. They encounter hurdles throughout her political life, especially social standards, a lack of money, structural barriers, and less education difficulty properly reading government orders, circulars, and manuals; and limited access to information, among other things. On the other hand, the female members of the Union Parisad, who were chosen through reserved seats and represent three of the nine wards in each union, are essentially performing a difficult job. However, because of the patriarchal mentality, there is essentially no competition because they are running against other women.

In Bangladesh, women are extremely in need of a process that can help them succeed. They also need a process that can help them become more confident so they can take part in decision-making within their families, communities, and the state. Women also need to feel like they are valuable and have the freedom to express their opinions and take charge of their lives, whether they are at home or not—in other words, they need to be free from gender stereotypes. In addition, it has been noted that increasing awareness is necessary, as is emphasizing the value of formal or technical education, enhancing leadership abilities for political party positions, mandating the provision of skill-based training—particularly in the areas of communication, negotiation, and leadership—and offering candidates mentoring support as well as expanding access to resources and information.

Reviewing the policy framework is crucial to comprehending the national context while also making sure it aligns with the goals of the research. The Bangladesh Constitution, the Representation of the People Order, the National Women's Development Policy, pertinent national laws, political party mandates, and online resources were among the main areas of concentration.

The research highlights the multifaceted challenges women encounter in political participation, encompassing both entry and long-term sustainability. Key obstacles identified include the male-dominated nature of political environments, inadequate support systems, limited access to influential networks, and entrenched patriarchal norms. Despite possessing the requisite skills and qualifications, women often face additional barriers such as the need for family consent, financial limitations, and difficulties in securing nominations.

The quota system has been implemented to enhance women's representation, though its effectiveness is subject to ongoing debate. Issues such as safety concerns, persistent discrimination, and economic constraints continue to impede women's empowerment in politics. To address these challenges, both NGOs and government agencies are actively engaged in capacity-building initiatives designed to help women overcome these barriers and achieve greater political representation.

If the issues of discriminatory laws, policies, and office orders are successfully brought to light, women will truly feel empowered to participate in and lead in politics, and their feeling of political leadership will be upheld.

2.1 Research Objectives

The primary objective of this research is to assess the participation of women in Bangladesh politics with a particular focus on electoral process both at national and local- from the candidacy nomination process and election campaign to post-election activities, Party politics— from student politics to central body. This study evaluates the laws, regulations and policies governing women's political involvement and diagnosis how these Acts, Laws and policies have translated into practice over the past decade, particularly since the Independence of Bangladesh since 1971. The study seeks to identify best practices, success and learnings to help address challenges and barriers faced by women political leaders and to promote greater participation of women in politics in Bangladesh.

This study aims to achieve the following specific goals:

To examine the enforcement of provisions regarding women's participation in politics under the Constitution of Bangladesh and other National Laws and Policies.

The objective of the study was to

- Identification of gaps in law and practice about women's political participation, and the impact of these gaps on Bangladesh's socio-political culture of society;
- Identify threats and challenges to women political leaders/women political activists throughout the political party participation life cycle and
- Place the Set of recommendations in promoting Women in political participation.

2.2 Methodology

As part of carrying out this multi-country study, in the first phase, the National Researcher representing Bangladesh team reviewed a broad range of pertinent literature connected to this topic. After reviewing the literature, the study team gathered input from stakeholders to create successful interventions, and translate research instruments into Bangla. This endeavour, which focused on women's political involvement and creating sustainable initiatives, covered 145 activities with 367 participants across 12 districts of the country. In this study, qualitative research

methods such as focus group discussions, key informant interviews, surveys, workshops, and sharing were employed for collecting information and data.

At the national level, focus group discussions (FGDs) were conducted with elected and former female and male political party leaders, trade unions, student unions, special units, and female politicians who had undergone capacity development or training. National experts, journalists, trade union leaders, student leaders, special units, elected and former political leaders, women politicians who have undergone capacity development, and training all participated in KIIs at the national level. The session was attended by journalists, NGO activists, and prominent female political party leaders at the national level.

In the Local Level FGDs, the Female Politicians contested hold and prior position, potential leaders, and CBOs Participants included the chairperson of the Male Union Parishad as well as members, and KII was held with current and past chairpersons, members, potential leaders, etc. A National Level Sharing was held, with the majority of prominent National political party leaders, local level chairpersons and members, specialists, NGO activists, and journalists in attendance. It should be noted that level two members of the gender-diverse community elected Union Parishad were interviewed using the KII in the local election.

The districts were covered under the Research are Dhaka (National), Gazipur, Manikganj, Narsingdi, Naogaon, Bandarban, Barisal , Rajshahi, Potuakhali , Chuadanga, Khulna and Jhenaidha. The details of qualitative study participants and are given below.

Table 1 FGDs, KIIs, Surveys, workshop and National Level sharing

Area	Total Number of Activity (Planned)	Total Number of Activity (Executed)	Total Number of participants (Intended)	Total Number of participants (Participated)
National	42	45	60	209
Local	89	100	131	158
Total	131	145	191	367

Activities		Number	Introduction of the stakeholder	Number of participants
a)	Focus Group Discussions at Local and National Level	10	National Level: 05 Local Level: 05	99
b)	Key Informant Interview	67	National Level: 35 Local Level: 32	67
c)	Workshops at Local and National Level sharing	05	National Level: 04 Local Level: 01	138
d)	Case Study Collection	06	All Local Level: 06	6
e)	Survey at the local level	57	All Local Level: 57	57
Total		145		367

Table 2 District wise Interventions: FGDs, KIIs, workshop and National Level Sharing, Surveys,
T=TOTAL IP=IN-PERSON OL=ONLINE

Sl	Districts	Workshops and National Sharing			FDGs			KIIs			Surveys			Case Study		
		T	IP	OL	T	IP	OL	T	IP	OL	T	IP	OL	T	IP	OL
1.	Dhaka	4	4	X	5	5	X	35	27	8	X	X	X	X	X	X
2.	Gazipur	X	X	X	1	1	X	6	6	X	11	11	X	1	1	X
3.	Manikganj	1	1	X	1	1	X	6	6	X	10	10	X	1	1	X
4.	Norsingdi	X	X	X	1	1	X	7	7	X	12	12	X	1	1	X
5.	Chuadanga	X	X	X	X	X	X	2	X	2	X	X	X	X	X	X
6.	Bandarban	X	X	X	X	X	X	1	X	1	X	X	X	X	X	X
7.	Rajshahi	X	X	X	X	X	X	2	1	1	10	10	X	1	1	X
8.	Barisal	X	X	X	X	X	X	3	3	X	5	5	X	X	X	X
9.	Jhenaidha	X	X	X	X	X	X	1	X	1	X	X	X	1	X	1
10.	Khulna	X	X	X	1	1	X	3	3	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
11.	Potuakhali	X	X	X	1	X	1	X	X	X	5	5	X	X	X	X
12.	Naogaon	X	X	X	X	X	X	1	X	1	4	4	X	1	1	X
		5	5	X	10	9	1	67	53	14	57	57	X	6	5	1

2.3 Limitations

Bangladesh's national parliamentary elections took place on January 7, 2024. Following the election, new parliamentarians were sworn in, and major opposition political parties did not participate. It was difficult to obtain appointments during Ramadan and Eid because they all have busy schedules, numerous meetings and training to attend, and tensions in the field between the opposition and the newly elected, among other things. Members of the Parliament set out a schedule at the national level, however due to their hectic schedules, they later amended or cancelled it. Same also has been happened at the local level, there was a schedule for upazila parishad. It was difficult to schedule time for this kind of connection at the local level as well. Some of the KIIs and FGDs were interrupted because to visitor interruptions.

3. Research Findings and the Discussion

The study explored the experiences of women, particularly those involved in politics or interested in politics. It looked at the challenges women encounter in political sphere, highlighting obstacles such as male-dominated environments, insufficient support, and resistance rooted in patriarchal norms where men are often the primary decision-makers. It also demonstrated the perspectives of a variety of people on being involved in and sustaining in politics, including academics, trade unionists, journalists, student organizations, and political leaders. It focused on the other challenges the women encounter in entering the political space. The challenges associated with personal biases, limitations and fears, candidacy profile, experience of violence and harassment, mode of canvassing and influence of third parties. Furthermore, the study identified real-world scenarios of women's abilities and capacity, political affiliation, family and immediate environment support, resource and financial support, the impact of the quota system and nomination and selection procedures. This research delves into the realm of women's skills and capacities, various support systems including quota system that either facilitate or impede women's participation in the political process.

Skills and capacity

The research suggested that women's participation often remains only symbolic, and their ability to shape governance and policy is not utterly realized. Even though they come from identical backgrounds, women frequently have to prove themselves more than men. Women leaders frequently have to make compromises to keep their positions. Entering politics seems to be one of the

> " Women's participation in politics is vital, and they actively seek to play a major role in policymaking process. Politics enables women the opportunity to influence the state and, eventually, their own lives. It is imperative to recognize women's responsibilities not only as political participants but also as leaders inside political parties and beyond."
>
> **Women UP member, Gazipur**

most difficult challenges because of a combination of factors such as the traditionally male-dominated realm of politics, lack of support from family and the party, men's reluctance to elevate women to leadership roles citing women's responsibilities for household chores and caregiving responsibilities, and limited access to political networks. The concerns of women are underrepresented in mainstream politics and government because they do not exist as a pressure group. Even though some women obtain opportunities through familial connections, they need develop essential skills to maintain their positions. Women who are elected for two or more terms confront similar hurdles. Whether it is at the local or national level, the culture of respecting women's decisions is vital. The majority of qualitative survey participants representing women stated, "There is little advantage in raising our voices or viewing ourselves as a pressure group. We come across the stigma that we cannot rely on men in both our families and communities.''
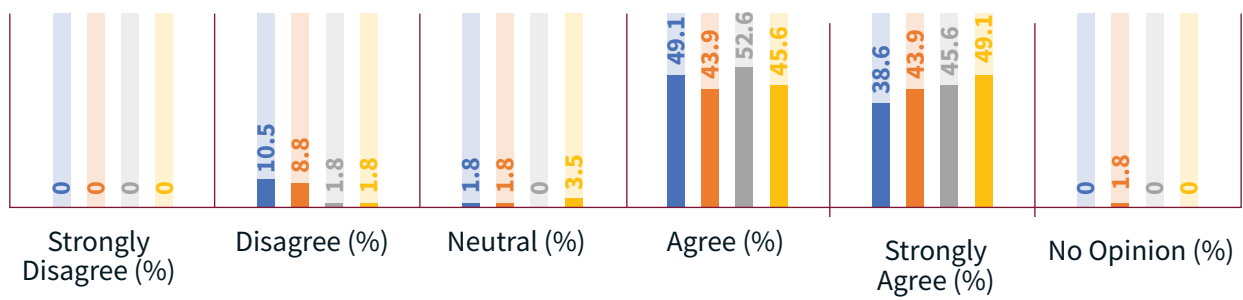
A number of study participants brought up the importance of the state to respect women in politics by acknowledging their contributions, collaborating with them, and listening to their voices. In this process, their voices need to be heard and taken into consideration when it comes to addressing the community's perspectives and shaping the nation to achieve the essence of liberty through the women's lens. It seems to study participants that through participation in training

" There are two facets to women's political participation in Bangladesh: the extent of their involvement and their ability to participate in political decision-making process. Nevertheless, real participation is still limited because of tokenism rather than true inclusion, even despite the Election Commission's sincere attempts to advance women in political leadership (30% quota as affirmative action). Women demonstrate significant leadership skills such as lobbying, negotiation, and communication. Nevertheless, systemic constraints inside political parties frequently hinder these skills from being engaged. Furthermore, no political party attempts or takes the initiative to improve women's political leadership skills."

National authority on women's empowerment

programs, workshops, seminars, and exposure tours administered by non-governmental organizations and the government, women are developing their ability to recognize obstacles. These are quite helpful because they were not well-informed about the Constitution, political party manifestos, Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), the National Women Development Policy of 2011, and other policy frameworks that advance women's rights, etc.

Graph one Survey Results on Skills and Capacity

- ■ Women have the skills to become leaders in the community-based organizations.
- ■ Women have the leadership skills and knowledge to join the political process at the local Government level.
- ■ Women have the potential to become parliamentarians (MPs and Ministers).
- ■ Capacity development is a must for women to become better leaders.

87.7% (Total of Strongly agree and agree) believes that women have skills to become leaders in the community-based organizations, 87.8% said the women have the leadership skills and knowledge to join the political process at the local government level, 98.2% expressed that women have the potential to become parliamentarians (MPs and Ministers) and but only 94.7% mentioned about the capacity development is a must for women to become better leaders. Besides the survey there are number of FGDs, KIIs and the workshops. Where the participants whatever they have mentioned are also reflected in the surveys too.

Graph Two **Survey Results on Support from family and immediate environment**
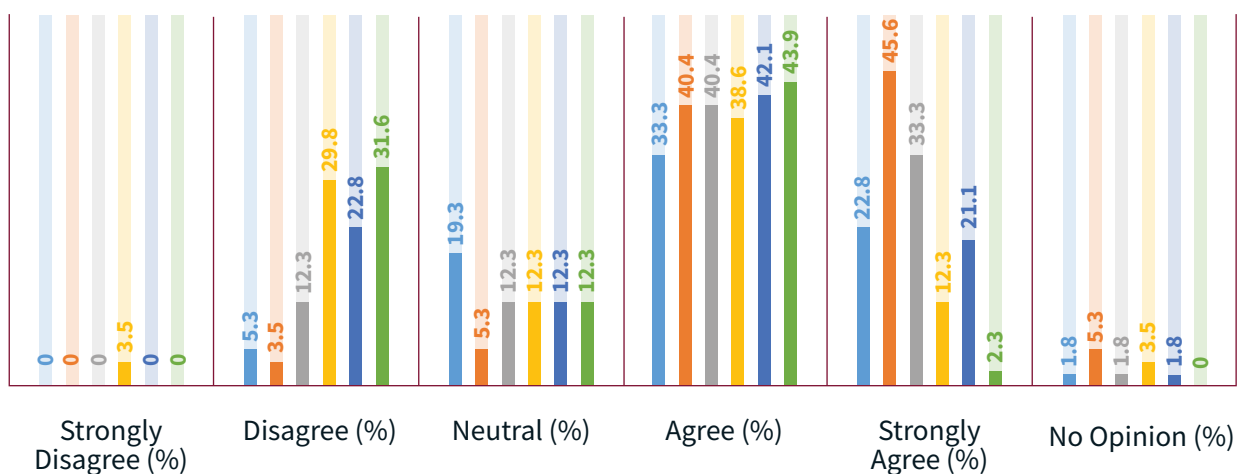
Legend:
- ■ The biggest hurdle for women in entering politics is the difficulty in getting the consent of the family.
- ■ The trple role (mainly the domestic role) is a burden for women to become political leaders.
- ■ Financial constraint is a main hindrance of women rntering politics.
- ■ Men should be gender-sensitized to support women in politics.
- ■ The Pertnership and support of male members in local/national government is satisfactory.
- ■ Support from government officers at the local/national level icsatisfactory.

Support from family and immediate environment

The study indicated that over half of the participants of FGDs and KIIs emphasized the issue of securing family consent as the largest barrier to women entering politics. It also implies that an equal percentage and more than three-quarters, of them identified the workload of a triple role (mostly domestic), as well as financial constraints, as the primary impediments to women entering or becoming political leaders. However, over half of the respondents stated that men should be sensitive to gender issues to support women in politics. Remarkably, 63.2% of respondents from FGD and KIIs felt that male members representing local and national government collaborate with them and provide satisfactory support. According to the study participants, gender sensitization is a major issue, and many individuals still do not grasp the expected responsibilities that men and women carry out in the home, society, and state. They usually do not challenge family members' conventional attitudes and prescriptions, which leads to discrimination and excludes women from

a true sense of participation, despite their strong desire. In many instances, women may not comprehend the consequences of embracing stereotypes, inequality in role distribution, burdens, and lack of equal access to education, networks, and resources. Women often believe that because their partner earns money, they must be the decision-makers, forgetting that they are also individuals with equal rights to express their rights.

At the local level, it is still difficult to get support from the family for a woman to enter politics. This is particularly relevant for women who have sort of support from their father's family but only a little from their in-laws. Husbands and in-laws frequently discourage women from entering politics, alleging that they spend too much time with men in the community. Family members show their support and enthusiasm, especially when they win elections. However, they believe that women generally confront serious obstacles.

Women ought to consider their family's opinions into account. They need to be concerned, for example, about whether their spouses will permit them to leave the house at midnight to attend to an essential official matter. In contrast to female politicians, male politicians have the opportunity to visit their community at midnight. One of the Union Parishad's (UP) female members from Jamirta Union of Singair Upazial under Manikganj District stated that her husband, as a community leader, could attend the Salish at any time, but as a female member of UP need always to find another male member when she received a call to attend a dispute resolution (locally known as Salish) in the community at night. Although she feels awful, accepts it as a social norm. However, she claims that this culture weakens her social acceptance in the community. Being a patriarchal society, it has many cultural barriers, as well as extreme religious beliefs that limit the potential of women in general. Women are still encouraged to prioritize taking care of their families by doing household chores and other duties. Social security and mobility are also undeniably crucial for women to engage and contribute to the societal and political sphere. Women are often discouraged from entering politics because of societal expectations and traditional gender roles, as it is still perceived as a male-dominated domain.

Resources and financial support

The study denotes that women frequently have less access to financial resources, political networks, and party support than men, which makes it difficult for them to participate effectively in elections. Lack of funds for campaigns is a critical issue because most women do not engage in any income-generating activity and hence do not have their income. They are hesitant to spend money on their own because they anticipate they will be verbally attacked by family and community members if they do not win. They face yet another challenge in carrying out their duties as elected members after winning the election. The efficacy of female members in fulfilling the expectations of the voters seems consistently low, and their performance is insufficient in addressing the demands of the disadvantaged sections of the constituency. All of these obstacles make it more difficult for women members to fully participate and succeed in politics. Moreover, a position can sometimes be obtained through bribery, which is unfair and drives deserving leaders out of politics. Financial constraints affect women. This problem affects even those from political households since, with rare exceptions; families do not support women financially in the same way that they do men.

Personal biases, limitations and fears

Women UP members expressed that instead of campaigning against men, they would rather run for reserved seats. Referring to the campaign, the Chairperson of a Union Parishad, Norsingdi, stated, "When I was a candidate, people would always ask me why I was around tea stalls and bazaars. Any male member may be sent to the campaign. As an independent candidate, I was hesitant; since I was competing against a male candidate. Despite my victory, women typically do not want to go against men due to social customs and the system's inherent bias in favor of men." Occasionally, female leaders have a lack of respect from their male colleagues, which hinders their capacity to take part in political affairs. Women are accountable for carrying out their productive, reproductive and community roles. If they fall short in any of these areas, the community and male participants in the parties indirectly tend to point the finger and disgrace them. In several instances, the wife joined politics at her husband's demand.

In these cases, the woman leader left the position at her husband's suggestion to maintain family harmony. In Bangladesh, many people live in extended families or receive assistance from relatives or housekeepers. With the growing trend of nuclear families, particularly in urban areas, mothers have fewer support alternatives for balancing their family responsibilities with a political career. Family responsibilities, whether at the national or local level, is a significant barrier to women's political participation. Support for female state officers in Bangladesh is unequal, with men having more access and support at the local level. Maintaining a balance between religious and secular influences on politics is a challenge for this country. Women's complete participation is still impeded by discriminatory laws and custom.

Profile of the candidate

Throughout the FGDs, KIIs and Survey, it covered wide range of women whose background is mixed, literate, completely no access to education, 2 transgender persons who were abandoned by the family, have education VI/VII standard , brought up with their gurus, women UP member elected in the reserve seats in the local level is a lawyer going to do her

> " When we decided to print posters, community members emphasized, either implicitly or explicitly, that it is not appropriate for women to appear on posters. Some people do not express support for women who appear on printed posters. To address the issue, we must visit them and resolve it."
>
> **Chairman, Union Parishad, Narsingdi."**

Bar at law in England, one chairperson who fought in the election as an independent candidate but her husband was from the opposition Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) , the party did not take part in the election, but she won due the husband; s popularity in the community but she has defeated present ruling party male candidate. Most of the non-literate candidates do not have very influential background but popularity in the community was the factor.

Nomination, selection and Canvassing landscape for women leaders

Survey findings: In the Survey 57 participants in 7 out of 12 districts where the women and men elected representatives, former local level elected representatives, potential leaders etc., took part in the survey and the reflection of them are as follows:

Graph Three Survey Results on Nomination and selection

0%

22.80%

1.80%

5.30%

19.30%

33.30%

- Strongly Disagree (%)
- Disagree (%)
- Neutral (%)
- Agree (%)
- Strongly Agree (%)
- No Opinion (%)
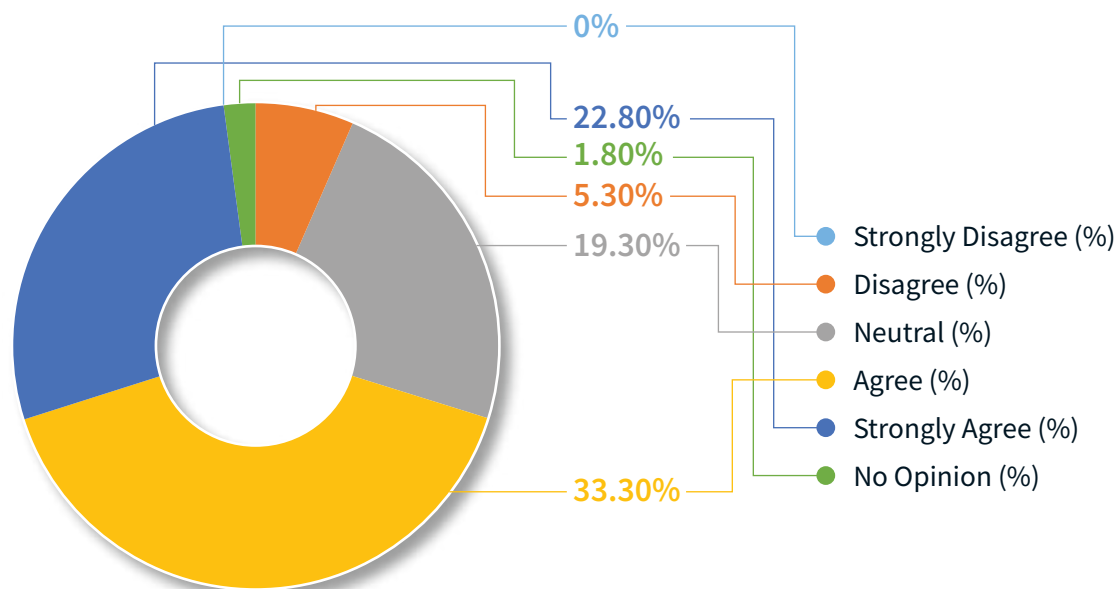
In the Survey 57 participants (elected representatives, former local level elected representatives, potential leaders etc., took part in the survey and only 56.1% mentioned that Training and capacity development should be initiated before women get nomination. Mostly did not answer as they did not find its relevant because to ask for nomination is a right and a choice.

- During the FGDs, KIIs, Workshops, the participants expressed that it is tough for women to get nomination from the party. Male politicians hold negative attitudes towards women, though these are not always expressed in front of qualified female candidates. They show superiority over women and considering women by telling 'You are a woman after all!' and are not interested in giving space to women.

- The participants mentioned that the obstacles exist in nomination processes, with biases against women who are divorcees or survivors of assault and women encounter nomination barriers, particularly if they are divorcees or have any kind of litigations against her, whether true or false, does not matter, where maintaining a "clean" image is critical.

- The participants also mentioned that regarding the Nominations, evaluations are not done upon performance. Men are usually preferred; women are not equally considered based on their achievements. Financial resources are crucial for winning elections. There is a prevailing tradition where male politicians continue their family's political legacy but even it is not applicable for the case of women, though it will bring the sense of equally in the nomination process.

Access to and control over resources

Women typically have very limited resources and receive very little from their parents, and the likelihood that they will inherit property from their in-laws is extremely low. The prevailing belief in society is that a "good woman" should never ask for a share of her inheritance. In particular, when it comes to going out, mingling with others, and bargaining, the women who manage their enterprises must abide by social and cultural conventions; otherwise, people often assume that women have illicit relationships with men. Fear is exacerbated by this stigma.

The quota system

According to the survey, 84.2% of respondents indicated that the current political system allows women to continue being involved in politics while 57.9% of respondents agreed that the local government quota system helps women progress in the political sphere. It revealed that 98.3% of respondents felt that the mandatory quota for women would help more women in the realm of politics. The qualitative research participants also noted that while the quota system is a useful temporary special measure to boost women's participation in politics, it also serves as a landmark for women to voice their concerns and affirm their presence in the political sphere in defiance of patriarchal social norms.

The qualitative research participants, who represented national leaders and experts, noticed that parliamentarians holding reserve seats came from social organizations and the development sector, and some of them led social movements and were cognizant of their duties. However, when they are in parliament, it was observed that they did not carry out their duties as expected. It is because they enter parliament primarily for self-interest and personal benefit, and their party political statements are continuously scrutinized.

Graph Four **Survey Results on the quota system**
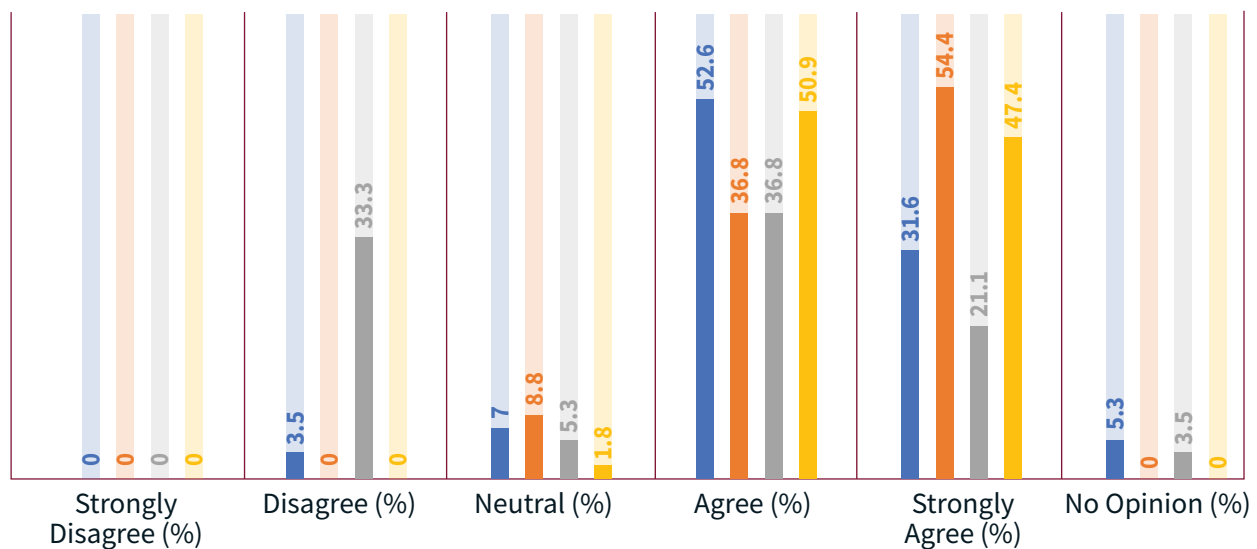
- ■ The potential for women to continue their involvement in politics is supported by the existing system.
- ■ The quota system in getting women appointed at the local government level is a move with great potential.
- ■ The quota system at the local government level works well for women to make progress in the political sector.
- ■ The mandatory quota for women should be increased to allow more women into politics.

Violence and harassment

The study participants expressed concern about the lack of security during elections and the distinctive nature of violence against men and women. Men are more likely to experience physical violence, extrajudicial killings, kidnapping, false accusations, etc., whereas women are more likely to experience cyber violence, including threats to withdraw nominations, sexual harassment when they go out, and not to protest if they encounter bigotry throughout the intricate electoral process. Additionally, they acknowledged that the likelihood of being sexually harassed or assaulted is a real concern. They reported that the opposing party or competitor might utilize this to restrict women's movements, prohibiting them from participating in election campaigns. The Gender Wall and Women's Participation in Bangladeshi Politics: An article by Ara, F. and Northcote, J. talked about violence and harassment in relation to public activities in general and politics in particular. The constant fear of political violence and sexual assault creates an intimidating climate for women to enter and remain in politics. Security is a major concern currently. While I am campaigning, the party ensures my security. There are security guards and party workers to keep us safe. In addition, I frequently travel with my husband. I don't have to worry about the distance or the time of day since my hubby is with me. However, many women do not receive this assistance and suffer, many leaving politics.

Progress of Women in Politics

According to the survey, 84.2% of participants indicate that the existing system supports women's continued participation in politics, while 86% of participants believe that the motivation for young women to enter politics is inadequate. The findings show that the system is supportive; they can join it, but their motivation to stay is quite low. The likelihood of sustainability is minimal in the absence of motivation. The members of the Union Parishad and Upazilla Parishad bear greater risk and stress than those of the parliament. While women at the local level encounter obstacles when participating in local dispute resolution processes, they nevertheless conduct *salishes*, remain close to the people's vulnerabilities, and respond to their needs without hesitation or concern for their safety. In their view, women leaders at the local level confront greater challenges than parliamentarians, but on a positive note, these challenges tend to strengthen them. Women are increasingly vocal and able to seek attention in cases of negotiation, dispute resolution, communication, presenting key topics to the party, and this is particularly noticeable in the left oriented political parties.

Increasingly, women are speaking up. Though it is not universal, there is a tendency to protest and defend. From the local level to the national level, the situation varies, as does the problem from person to person. According to the media report, Kotchandpur Upazila Parishad in Jhenaidah has elected transgender woman Sadia Akter

> "Women in leadership make organizations more sensitive and human-oriented. I struggle with envisioning women in positions of leadership. When I took on the post of general secretary, I was unsure how to perform as a female secretary, having previously only witnessed male leaders. I was wondering what I needed to do differently as a female leader."
>
> **National Level Student Leader**

Pinky as vice-chairman. In the third phase of the UP elections, transgender Nazrul Islam Ritu, an independent, was elected as the union parishad (UP) chairperson at the Trilochonpur union of Jhenaidah's Kaliganj upazila. Sultana Ahmed, popularly known as Sagarika, defeated her opponent convincingly in the Rajshahi City Corporation votes to become the nation's first transgender Councillor.
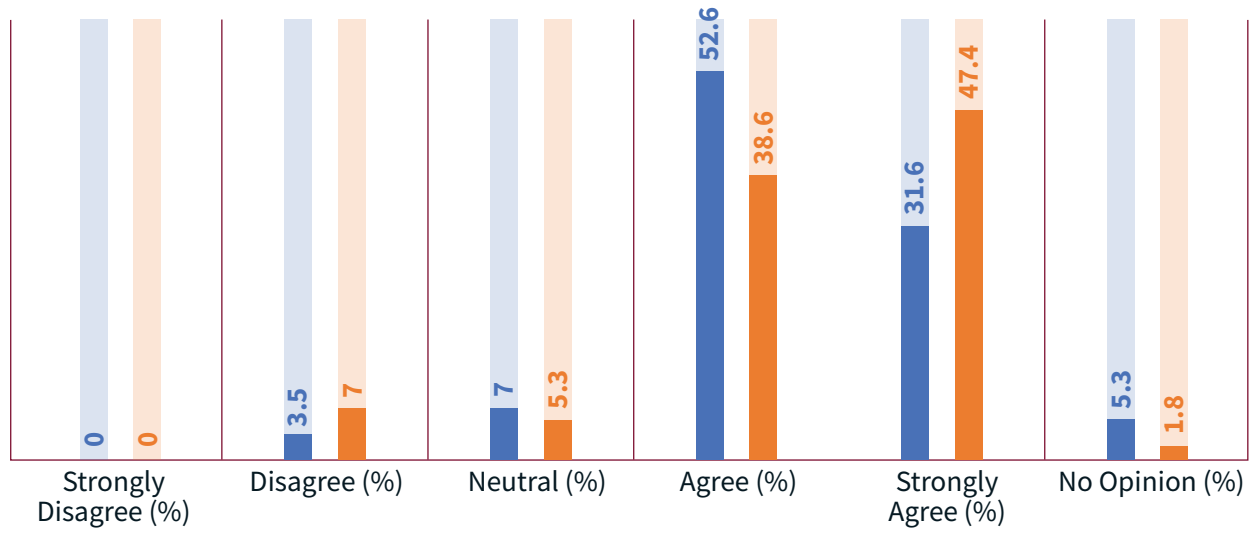
The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) was ratified and signed by Bangladesh, which did not impose any reservations on Articles 7 and 8, which state that their participation in political and public life is guaranteed. Ensuring the right to vote in every election and taking part in the establishment of state government and policy-making institutions is a duty shared by all state parties. Bangladesh remains accountable and is required to submit its national report to the CEDAW Committee. In addition to this report, In Bangladesh, support for female state officers is uneven, with men receiving more local-level access and support. The country faces challenges in balancing secular and religious influences within its political landscape.

> " Women entering politics can be ensured using reserve seats, but it remains to be seen how the party, the community, and the candidates themselves will react to this quota. People perceive the concept of quota to be a consolation for women because competing against a masculine norm is challenging; also, they have less confidence, political experience, and access to knowledge and resources. Women frequently believe that quotas are less stressful than other systems since they do not require them to battle with males for participation. However, some believe that despite the quota, women still had to battle for their rights and that it did not represent their inferiority. Still, others believe that the quota serves as a tool to ensure participation and a symbol of the end of patriarchal practices and norms."
>
> **Women Ex Member of Parliament, ex State Minister during the regime of BNP**

Discriminatory laws and norms still hinder women's full participation. Despite societal expectations and economic dependencies, women show potential for progress through social movements. Initiatives such as affirmative action and international commitments aim to improve women's representation, although stereotypes and lack of motivation continue to be obstacles. Progress toward gender equality in Bangladeshi politics is gradual but ongoing, with potential for increased inclusivity and diversity.

Graph Five: Survey Results Potential for continued involvement in politics

- The potential for women to continue their involvement in politics is supported by the existing system.
- Motivation for young women to enter politics is not very satisfactory.

Women demonstrate potential for advancement through social movements, despite cultural norms and financial reliance. Despite persistent barriers from prejudices and a lack of drive, initiatives like affirmative action and international pledges seek to increase the presence of women in society.

4. Analysis and Conclusion

Women experience opportunities, barriers /challenges when they enter politics to sustain in the politics and the entire research tried to see these with the evidence, interventions through FGDs, KIIs, surveys and workshops etc.

Family consent, financial constraints and the social norms and attitudes, symbolic involvement, gender discrimination, harassment, mainly mental harassment, triple burden, economic dependency, discriminatory laws and noncooperation from the family and the community plays a vital play role as a hindrance or challenges. On the other hand, there are some opportunities or achievements for the women in politics and these are Reserve seats, affirmative actions in the Bangladesh Constitution, constitution of the political parties, national policies and internation conventions, support from the NGOs in capacity building, building awareness, political environment in the family and in the community also play a positive role which motivates or inspires women to stay in politics.

In the Analysis section, the researcher tried to see whole picture in couple of segments.

- ■ **Women's role in the Politics**
  - ➢ Women's involvement often remains symbolic, with their potential to influence policy and governance not fully realized. Women often need to prove themselves more than their male

counterparts, even if they share similar family backgrounds. Women leaders often must compromise to maintain their positions. Many women in politics are in ceremonial roles and struggle to establish themselves genuinely. They have limited power even though they are elected or selected. The institutions they belong often try to see their roles as ceremonial, and not like to involve them in the decision making process rather prescribes easy solutions such as to handle simple matters , such as to give cards to the residents of the community, provide simple advice to the women assistance seekers only when they sit in their constituency, not go out for dispute resolution process, especially at night, not to be elected or selected in the top position of the party, again provide some ornamental role.

➢ Women who are elected for a couple of terms even face the same challenges. The culture of accepting the decision and the examples of less strong pressure groups among women, whether it is at the local level or national level, plays a vital role. Women mostly in the FGDs and KIIs said that "There is hardly any benefit in raising voices or to see ourselves as a pressure group. We face the stigma in both ways, in family and in the community that we do not have the trust of men.''

➢ In most of the FGDs and KIIs, the selected, elected members and the potential leaders said that the capacity of the women members is still low. There is no space for women to build their capacity or think as a political person. On the other hand, it is also true that women in politics are often well-skilled, but they must continually prove their capabilities beyond their male counterparts. Women are diligent and responsible, which helps them maintain their political roles despite challenges.

➢ Women's efforts at the community level are often undermined by a lack of trust and support from political parties, coupled with societal beliefs that question women's leadership capabilities.

➢ Though 87.8 % the surveyed people mentioned that women have skills to become leaders in the community-based organizations, 87.8% said the women have the leadership skills and knowledge to join the political process at the local government level, 98.2% expressed that women have the potential to become parliamentarians (MPs and Ministers) and at the same time 94.7% mentioned about the capacity development is a must for women to become better leaders. But women still lag of skills specially negotiation, communication, and social dialogues. They let go many opportunities where they can challenge the discriminatory behaviour or practice.

> " Women's participation in politics in Bangladesh has two dimensions: the scope of participation and access to political decision-making. However, despite efforts by the Election Commission to promote women in political leadership (30% quota as affirmative action), actual participation remains low due to tokenism rather than genuine inclusion. Women possess valuable skills for leadership, including communication, negotiation, and advocacy. However, these skills are often underutilized due to systemic barriers within political parties. Besides, none of the political parties put any effort into or have any initiative to develop the political leadership skills of women''
>
> **KII participants**

- **Challenges faced by the women in Politics**
  - ➤ The biggest hurdle for women in entering politics is the difficulty in getting the consent of the family, the triple role (mainly the domestic role), the financial constraint, less access to information and resources, lack of gender sensitization among the family members, community people, party leaders, administration etc. and in some cases among the women too.

  - ➤ The women do not usually do not challenge the stereotypical attitudes and prescriptions of family members, and this is causing discrimination and excluding women from the real sense of participation even though they have complete desire.

  - ➤ Women believe in many cases that they are dependent on men because the partner is earning, so they must be the decision maker, forget to think they are also individuals and have equal rights to exercise their rights. They think the gender roles they are playing in the household are destined for them, the social norms of their movement, the way of expressing the opinions are also designed by men and, if they go beyond these, will bring chaos in the family and will affect the children especially and, whatever the chance they have to join politics be ruined, so maintaining the silence against the discrimination.

  - ➤ The male-dominated society confirms the masculine nature of politics, lack of party support, and limited access to political networks are all identified as major political hindrances for women. Women at both parliamentary and local levels face obstacles due to a lack of support from male-dominated political parties.

  - ➤ Husbands and in-laws often restrict women from entering politics, complaining that they spend too much time with men from the community.

  - ➤ The social norms are the biggest problem in the community and in many cases women are also drowning into this believe, such as Women need to worry whether the husbands allow them to go to the community at midnight for an urgent official reason. Moreover, male politicians can go to the police station at midnight, whereas women cannot. Male politicians can visit their community even at midnight, but female candidates cannot. One of the members of the union parishad, mentioned as a woman member of the union Parishad, whenever she received a call to attend a dispute resolution (locally known as Salish) in the community at night, she has to tell find others make members to find another male member, because her husband is, beside him sleeping but unfortunately when her husband as, a community leader, receives a call, he without any hesitation attends the call and attends the Salish as well. She feels bad but, as a social norm, accepts the reality. Women often feel less confident and are afraid they won't be taken as seriously as men but according to her, this culture also weakens her acceptability in the community too.

- Women UP members stated that they preferred to contest for reserved seats because they would then not have to campaign against men. Regarding the campaign, the ChairMAN of a Union Parishad, Norsingdi mentioned that ''

'As a candidate, whenever I visited tea stalls and bazaars, people used to say, why did you come? You can send any male member to campaign. Again, when I was by myself pasting my posters, people in the community were telling me that a woman does not suit a woman. I was worried because I was contesting as an independent candidate and against a male candidate, though I won, but usually women do not want to go against men because of the social norms and the social system, which is basically biased towards men.'

- Discrimination throughout life makes women feel they are constantly in competition, which affects their confidence.

- The obstacles exist in nomination processes, with biases against women who are divorcees or survivors of assault and women encounter nomination barriers, particularly if they are divorcees or have any kind of litigations against her, whether true or false, does not matter, where maintaining a "clean" image is critical.

- The participants also mentioned that regarding the Nominations, evaluations are not done upon performance. Men are usually preferred; women are not equally considered based on their achievements. Financial resources are crucial for winning elections. There is a prevailing tradition where male politicians continue their family's political legacy but even it is not applicable for the case of women, though it will bring the sense of equally in the nomination process.

- Men usually consider quota as a comfort for women, they are not as competent as men, but if they can give some special attention, they might join politics, on the other hand women also think quota is less hassle for them, they do not need to fight against men.

- Under this category, the parties are required to: (a) elect the members of the committees at all levels including members of the central committee; (b) fix the goal of reserving at least 33% of all committee positions for women including the central committee and successively achieving this goal by the year 2020, later it was extended up to 2030.

- The nonfulfillment of the provision of keeping 33% women quotas in their political party mandate such as (a) elect the members of the committees at all levels including members of the central committee; (b) fix the goal of reserving at least 33% of all committee positions for women including the central committee and successively achieving this goal by the year 2020, later it was extended up to 2030. Very few political parties have commitment to have 33% women representation in their party. The quota-based system has yet to set indicators to measure progress towards this target. Furthermore, as the. Furthermore, as the RPO does not mention any disciplinary measures against failure to meet this target, political parties perhaps feel they are under no obligation to include women in democratic politics.

- **Patriarchal mindset**
  - Politics is for men. They have longstanding experience, courage to deal with and political issues.
  - Male party leaders consider men as the best candidates over the women as candidates.
  - If women take politics seriously, then her care-giving responsibilities and household chores will be hampered.
  - If, by chance, any negative comments the family hears about women who are in politics might jeopardize her family life.
  - One of the women members of the Union parishad mentioned just after the FGD , shared with the Researcher that some members of the Union parishad of Manikganj, who also took part in the discussion , speaks highly of women in front of others but extremely discriminates the women and treat women as nothing. She has mentioned, "'If I open my mouth or share any of the discrimination here in the meeting, I might not be able to work in my office'' (the Parishad).
  - Men often do not understand women-specific issues. Women leaders find it challenging to engage with politically unaware grassroots people.
  - While canvassing by women in the community or in the urban areas considers by the society not very much acceptable, they prefer the task to be done by men, for women pasting the posters, distributing the leaflets, having political conversations in tea stall, hat Bazar , market do not carry a positive value, which weakens women's morality.

All the statements made above are the reflections of the FGDs, KIIs, Surveys and the workshop where participants share their concerns and reflected in the Literature Survey.

5. Conclusions and Recommendations

This section of the report included a number of recommendations that were made in response to several challenges and concerns brought up by the study participants. Women require a wide range of skills to lead in politics successfully. They include effective communication skills for expressing their opinions and ideas, and negotiation abilities for navigating complex political situations, advocacy abilities for supporting causes that are meaningful to them and their constituency. They should also focus on improving participation capacities for taking part in decision-making processes.

Discriminatory social norms and attitudes remain in the legal, social, and practical domains attributed in particular to the lack of a peaceful, respectful, and gender-sensitive environment. The fear of silence that women experience rises when discriminatory laws force them to feel less confident and capable. The identification of insensitive gender norms is required for conscious capacity building, not merely to satisfy the objectives of the government and non-governmental organizations providing training for girls, boys, women, and men, as well as the other parts of

societies. To improve the representation of women in politics, independent supervision, and mentoring are also essential. If any rights are infringed upon, immediate action is required, especially about freedom of movement, opinion, and choice.

A set of recommendations are stated below that comprises capacity building, Mentoring support for the Political leaders, Network and Resources for the women leaders , Awareness Raising Activities, Legislative and Policy Reforms

A. Capacity Building

For political leaders

➢ Develop skills in conceptualizing and leadership, being more sympathetic and empathetic, breaking patriarchal leadership concepts.

➢ Training /Orientation on Party Constitution /Manifesto, Constitution and Laws, National Policies, Manuals, International Conventions related to Political empowerment;

➢ Provide training in financial management and public speaking to the female political activists, potential candidates as well as elected representatives;

➢ Study circle in the Party Office on the legal and social issues;

➢ The local Government Self Awareness Programme by the Government could be an attempt to motivate the members to fulfill their term with satisfaction, for this, introduce Self-Evaluation cards for the members of the Union Parishad and Upazilla Parishad, and it can be leveled at the national level with the members of parliament.

➢ Create pressure on political parties to change social norms/beliefs existed in the community, party practices through campaign;

➢ Learning/sharing experiences of the veteran leaders can be organized in the local and national level.

➢ Learning/sharing experiences of the veteran leaders can be organized in the local and national level, they can have the Q/A sessions, Dialogue, Talk show with the leaders to enhance their experiences and knowledge

For civil society organizations

▪ Building capacity for civil society organizations to advocate for women's participation in political transitions and governance processes

▪ Implement awareness-raising measures and sensitize community and religious leaders.

B. Mentoring support for the Political leaders

This needs to be continued; it boosts up the mental strength of the leaders

C. Create access to Network and Resources for the women leaders

▪ Women's economic empowerment gives women life choices, so connect the local level women leaders to the Income Generating Programme, because the financial

independence is essential for women's freedom and equality. This financial independence enhances their capacity to have their own fund for maintaining the regular communication with the Local Government institutions, visiting the areas to observe the situations of the community etc, mass campaign, door to door visit for updating themselves and to strengthen her negotiation skills. Funding and extension of support to the women leaders in connecting with different institutions will help them to take part in public life to help change stereotypes. Connect them with the Department of Social Welfare, Department of Women affairs they can access the opportunities of the different types of capacity building.

- Connect them with Organizations, institutions who have the facilities of library with computers and internet access, so the women leaders can develop their communication skills and knowledge enhancement.

- Connect the women leaders with the other experienced leaders locally and nationally to have the understating of the 'Models of Success' and it will inspire them in continuing her political career. Connect the women leaders with the Small-scale Community Projects, where they can learn how to exercise the participatory planning, it will help them in their institutions whey they are selected or elected to introduce the participatory planning, it ensures the transparency also.

D. Awareness Raising Activities

➢ Motivational discussion on quota system and its impact with the different decision making forum within the party structure, Media, CSOs, Activists and related related Policy makers.

➢ Publication of Small booklets on rights and empowerment to enhance the knowledge of the young political activists and related stakeholders.

➢ Pot Drama on women in Politics in different districts to break the loop on women's political participation and enhance support system within the community.

➢ Discussion between the National and local level leaders on existing social- cultural and Patriarchal norms, beliefs and practices.

➢ Foster a culture of impunity for positive actions.

➢ Highlight men who challenge existing social norms, as they become vulnerable when raising their voices against societal behaviors.

➢ Ensuring equal allocation of fund for female & male representatives.

➢ Support women to run for general seats. Provide resources and training to help women win elections. Introduce direct elections for the parliamentary reserved seats to ensure meaningful representation of all marginalized sections based on ethnicity, sexual orientation, disability and other personal characteristics.

E. Reformation of personal laws to ensure equal inheritance for women using the gender lens and find out the stereotypical sense in the laws

F. Rresearch on women's participation in politics, their voting behavior, consciousness and participation in the political parties

G. Formation of Anti-sexual harassment committee in all the institution including the party office, where women can lodge complaint or seek help is necessary

H. Legislative and policy reforms:

- Increase women's participation in the political party mandates from 33% to 50%.

I. Expanding opportunities of education, health care and employment to eliminate different   social problems like child marriage, family conflicts etc. and to create awareness among women about their low status in society.

6. Concluding Remark

Achieving gender equality and empowering all women and girls is the core of Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) No. 5. It states that if gender bias persists in society, there will be a tremendous waste of human potential; if we deny someone their equal rights—despite the fact that our constitutions and laws guarantee these rights—we are effectively depriving half of humanity of their rights. Gender bias must be addressed because it can appear in social, political, and legal spheres. In line with Sustainable Goal 5, it is critical to empower women in politics to battle with all odds. Politically empowered women will be able to develop a feeling of self-worth, sharpen their critical thinking skills, and eventually influence political reform. A reflection of a woman's willingness to participate, perform in, and continue in politics will be visible to all in the political sphere. Although there are barriers and challenges facing women in politics, the country is also witnessing some admirable initiatives, such as the state's affirmative action program, citizens' appointment of members or chairpersons from gender-diverse groups, and the state's dedication to guaranteeing women's political participation through national laws and policies. Civil society organizations may also play an important part in women's skill-development initiatives related to their rights, peace and security, microcredit, democracy, and political empowerment.

Case Study

"I think support and encouragement from the community boosts our confidence. Women who participate in their social activities, who raise their voices or work for community people, then community people and encouragement push them to join in politics. In my case, a Ngo encouraged me to join politics. Family support is also very important for women to join in politics. My husband played a key role in being a politician. Because I was not brave enough, sometimes I was afraid that I would not be able to perform as a politician. But he was always with me to encourage me. Women are mostly interested in the general seat. Now many of us have shown our interest in going for a general seat instead of reserved seats. Also, some of us have been elected to vice chair positions. We're all about gradual growth and development step by step. In my case, the situation is better, but usually, women are not becoming important in parishad. Their treatment of women is consistently disrespectful. Some people in our community ignore women's wishes or desire to join politics, thinking it is not that important. There are other responsibilities women have. Lack of financial solvency is an obstacle for us. Because of the financial crisis, we are not able to be a contestant in the election for a general seat. In comparison with a man, women do not have enough access to their property, and women do not have cash flow, so they must depend on others. It is an obstacle for us. Community people helped us, and some of them also showed their interest in contributing. Family and in-laws dislike the wishes of women to join politics. It is a question of honor for them and a challenge for women.

The specific challenge to continuing our responsibilities after joining the Parishad is that we women members do not get information about all the activities. The male chairrman and male members know all the information. After knowing all this, I strongly expressed my opinion and told them that in the future they must inform me as I am also responsible for my people. My people also like to see their members on the field. As men inherit their property, they are one step ahead of women. Women's financial condition is not the same. The men also have different donors to fund them for election. Whereas women must seek funds from relatives and family members, and because of that, constant request and pleas are there, which is sometimes very disgraceful. Another major obstacle to continuing politics is that we cannot not do our job properly as we are not getting our allocated funds equally. One female member is responsible for three wards, whereas one male member works in only one ward. Even in many cases, you will find that a male member is getting more funds than a female member. Lack of understanding of community people and their cooperation. Such as, in my area, with this limited allocation, I will

not able to make everyone happy, but my community will express their solidarity for most needy people. In every case, it will not be the same.

Freedom of movement is for men. They can move anywhere when needed. But women must be informed before traveling, at least one day before. Because of gender roles, women must ensure that they take care of children, their family members' food, etc. If I have a toddler, then I can't travel without children. Women do not feel secure about moving anywhere at any time. Because of all these, women cannot progress in their political careers as like men. I am educated, but I was also not capable of speaking as I should. Lack of confidence to present or share something. I have received training from NGOs like WAVE Foundation and other institutions. This training has helped me till now with how to conduct meetings in the Parishad, in Govt offices, etc. My suggestion is to organize constant training, updated and skill-based training for the women and the Govt. allocation for needs women UP members needs to be increased.

But I think women should continue their fight, raise their voices, find out ways to become more skilled, and constantly search for upgrading themselves if needed to sit with the political party to which they belong for their advancement. **"Women Union Parishad Member, Chinishpur Union, Norsingdi, Bangladesh.**

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Photo Gallery

Research Photo

Media Attention