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IN BRIEF:

MAKING EVERY WOMAN AND GIRL COUNT IN BANGLADESH

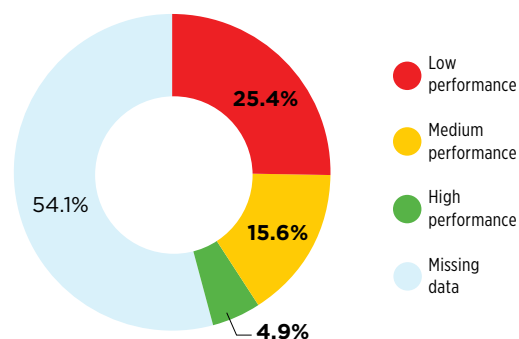
THE ISSUE

A national assessment on gender statistics, conducted in 2018, revealed three interrelated challenges:

- The availability of gender data and statistics are uneven – across sectors and topics, as well as in regularity and timeliness. While there are numerous laws, policies and plans to address gender equality and women’s empowerment, the gender data and statistics needed for monitoring and reporting are not available for many areas, and those statistics that are available are not updated.
- Surveys and censuses are not conducted regularly. Moreover, the national statistical system (NSS) does not have designated statistics – meaning there is no assurance that data collection will be resourced and done regularly.

FIGURE 1

How is Bangladesh doing on gender data in 2020?



Source: [Women Count Data Hub](#).

- Systems to facilitate efficient access and dissemination are virtually non-existent. The Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS) and the statistical system, in general, do not have a dissemination policy or advance-release calendar. Access to statistics is complicated for non-government users.

WOMEN COUNT RESPONSE:

- **Creating an enabling environment:** Coordination mechanisms were established to strengthen coordination of gender statistics activities in the NSS.
- **Increasing data production:** The technical capacity of the national statistical system is being strengthened to collect data on unpaid care work to improve the monitoring of the SDGs.
- **Improving data accessibility and use:** User-producer dialogues will be organized to improve gender statistics analysis and use in planning, budgeting, policy-making, and decision-making.

RESULTS

To respond to COVID-19-related challenges, UN Women provided timely data on the impacts of the pandemic that fueled evidence-based emergency responses, through rapid gender assessments. In addition, institutional mechanisms were strengthened and expanded; the 8th Five-Year Plan now includes both a Gender Strategy and a dedicated chapter with gender indicators in its results framework. Methodology development of a time use survey (TUS) began in November 2020 and has already generated interest from policymakers, including calls from Parliament to develop a Satellite Account of unpaid care and domestic work. A data-reprocessing study is fueling a push to mainstream gender across all BBS surveys. Key results in 2020 include:

1. Creating an enabling environment

- **The latest Five-Year Plan (FYP) now includes Gender Strategy and the first-ever chapter on gender.** UN Women supported the Ministry of Women and Children's Affairs and the BBS in the preparation of a Gender Strategy that is now incorporated in a gender chapter within the 8th FYP (2021–2026). The Plan's results framework includes 15 gender-specific indicators and calls specifically for a TUS to help track SDG 5.4.1.

FIGURE 2
Measuring Progress in 2020



Progress in Bangladesh was significant, as evidenced by the institutionalization of coordination mechanisms on gender statistics, the inclusion of a Gender Statistics Strategy in the Five-Year Plan, data reprocessing and conducting Bangladesh's first ever time use survey.

- **An institutional mechanism on gender statistics strengthens coordination and boosts gender data production, including on time use.** Composed of a Steering Committee, a monitoring committee and a technical committee, this inter-ministerial coordination mechanism is central to improving the governance, production and use of gender statistics in Bangladesh's NSS. The mechanism, which includes the Ministries of Women and Children Affairs (MoWCA), Health, Education and Planning, was central to the implementation of the TUS (completed in April 2021). Furthermore, the Parliament has requested that the data from the TUS is used by the BBS to create a satellite account for the valuation of time use activities, which is expected to in turn inform policy-making to address unpaid care and domestic work.
- **The Gender Cell is now considered a strategic unit and knowledge center that has been institutionalized within the structure of the BBS.** The Gender Cell, established as part of Women Count activities, was supported to study how the BBS can generate data for gender-related SDG indicators by processing and re-processing existing data. It contributed also significantly to the design of the TUS. Recently, the Gender Cell has started contributing to other BBS departments to include a gender perspective or gender modules in other surveys. For example, the BBS units on 'hygiene statistics' and disability statistics approached the Gender Cell to ask for guidance in collecting data for these sectors. The Gender Cell also plans to provide support for the upcoming Labor Force Survey.

- **Bangladesh’s national SDG Monitoring and Evaluation Framework (MEFSDG) was updated to include missing baseline and target information and is nearly doubling the data available since the Women Count project began.** Gender-related data from existing surveys can now be used to generate around 60% of gender-related SDG indicators, including on time use based on UN Women’s support. This is a notable increase from the 37% of gender indicators for which data were readily available at the project’s inception. The Ministry of Planning initiated this exercise and included as many gender indicators in the framework as possible. The TUS served as a crucial reference for SDG 5.4.1 to set the 2021 baseline of the MEFSDG, and its targets for the next 9 years. The MEFSDG will be used to inform Bangladesh’s Voluntary National Review (VNR) on SDG progress.

2. Increasing data production

- **Bangladesh began conducting its first-ever time use survey, despite the pandemic, and Parliament requested tracking of the contribution of women’s unpaid work to national GDP.** Despite COVID-19-related challenges, the BBS and UN Women continued developing the time use survey as planned, including the questionnaire, manual, and survey plan. The BBS conducted a sampling exercise, pre-tested the questionnaire, and trained both the Gender Statistics Cell and subnational officials, including 72 data collectors, producers, editors and coders who learned detailed techniques for TUS data collection and analysis. TUS data collection began in November 2020, with a sample of 8,000 households in 64 districts and was completed in April 2021. The BBS also received a request from the Parliament to develop a satellite account based on TUS data to measure women’s unpaid care and domestic work to estimate its contribution to national GDP. Additionally, with support from UN Women, the Ministry of Women and Children Affairs is updating the national action plan of the National Women’s Development Policy to include women’s unpaid care and domestic work issues, in line with the initial findings of the TUS.
- **New gender data provided national and regional analysis on the impact of COVID-19 on women and girls.** The first RGA was part of a regional series of surveys conducted in April 2020 across 11 countries, with nearly 2,300 respondents in Bangladesh.

Among other things, it found that women were far more likely to lose their jobs or decrease their working hours than men (83% of women versus 14% of men in formal employment); women were also more likely than men to report spending increased time on unpaid care and domestic work (55% of women versus 44% of men noted increased domestic work). The second RGA, a national rapid gender analysis, was conducted in May 2020, mainly as a desk review by UN Women and the Gender in Humanitarian Action Working Group, but also drawing on the regional RGA survey data. The report noted that it is critical to mitigating the immediate and long-term impact of COVID-19 on child marriages with a comprehensive multisectoral response to preventing child marriage through access to education, psychosocial support, sexual health and reproductive rights and social protection. It also recommended including efforts to end violence against women in national response plans, properly train and equip front-line service providers and CSOs, and ensure that referral pathways are clear and include prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse within protocols and codes of conduct for quarantine centers.

- **A data processing/reprocessing study is helping mainstream gender across all BBS surveys.** Conducted with technical support from UN Women, the study analyzed existing BBS surveys, identified data gaps in relation to gender-related SDG indicators and proposed a methodology to include gender indicators in all BBS upcoming surveys. The BBS plans to organize a workshop with all its departments and wings to share the report (to be published in 2021) and start implementing its recommendations to mainstream gender in all BBS surveys¹. In 2021, BBS will also organize a workshop with line ministries to validate the study and to develop a strategy to minimize gender data gaps in Bangladesh. The BBS is developing a guidance note that will further use findings from the report and it will upload the study on its website for wider dissemination.

3. Improving data accessibility and use

- **Gender microdata is now available to researchers for further analysis.** Data accessibility is poised to increase with a BBS commitment to upload all survey findings on their webpage at the earliest possible time and to make microdata available to researchers. This institutional commitment was made by the

¹ Such as the Agriculture Census, Labor Force Survey, and Household Income and Expenditure Survey

Secretary of the Statistics and Informatics Division. Microdata are also being made available to researchers through a clearance process.

- **Two policy briefs supported by UN Women are expected to fuel evidence-based decision-making.**

The first brief, on gender-based education, found that girls' enrolment is high in primary education but drop-out rates are high in secondary school and there is low participation in tertiary education – the main factors cited being high rates of child marriage and violence against women. The brief, published on the BBS website is expected to inform future decisions of the Bangladesh Bureau of Educational Information and Statistics (BANBEIS) to improve female participation in tertiary education. The second policy brief, on Gender-Based Employment and Wage, will be published in 2021 and will raise awareness about the gender gap in the employment sector in Bangladesh.

PLANS FOR 2021*

The Women Count project in Bangladesh ended in April 2021 with a focus on completing the field data collection of the TUS before project closure. Despite its conclusion, UN Women will continue to support

activities to provide gender-related data for informed decision-making, in the following ways:

- The BBS will release primary data by September 2021. UN Women will support its analysis and dissemination through seminars and workshops with media and stakeholders. A forward-looking policy advocacy strategy has also been discussed by UN Women and BBS;
- Discussions will continue developing a satellite account using time use data at the request of the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Planning;
- User-producer dialogues, postponed from 2020 due to COVID-19, will be organized by BBS;
- A gender compendium-2022 will be developed and a minimum set of gender indicators for Bangladesh will be finalized and disseminated;
- The BBS will conduct a national violence against women survey with support requested from UN Women;
- The BBS will also organize a workshop with line ministries to validate the data reprocessing study and to develop a strategy to minimize gender data gaps in Bangladesh.

* Plans for 2021 may be further adjusted as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.