

**RIGHTS, SHARES, AND CLAIMS:  
REALISING WOMEN'S RIGHTS IN SOUTH ASIA**

DONOR AND RESOURCE MAPPING FOR  
PROMOTING WOMEN'S HUMAN RIGHTS IN BANGLADESH

2011-12

SOUTH ASIA  
WOMEN'S FUND

**SAWF**

### About South Asia Women's Fund (SAWF):

SAWF is a regional women's Fund, committed to supporting women-led interventions to enhance and strengthen access to women's human rights and countering violations thereof. It has worked closely with partners to support human rights in the context of conflict, identity, socio-economic deprivations and in relation to violence against women. In its present phase, it is committed to supporting the emergence of a regional human rights movement, which would address national and regional concerns. Its work is focused on developing a regional mandate that is informed by national realities, and is responsive to the rights and needs of the individual woman. The organisation, currently works in Bangladesh, Nepal, India, Pakistan and Sri Lanka.

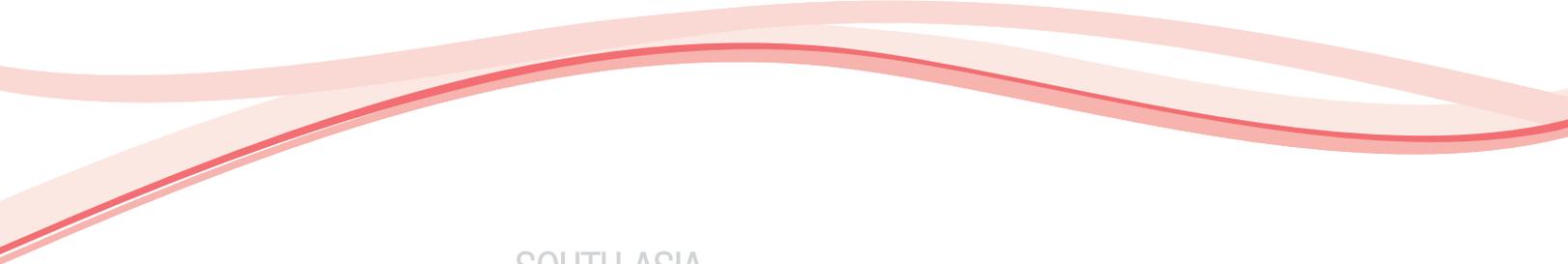
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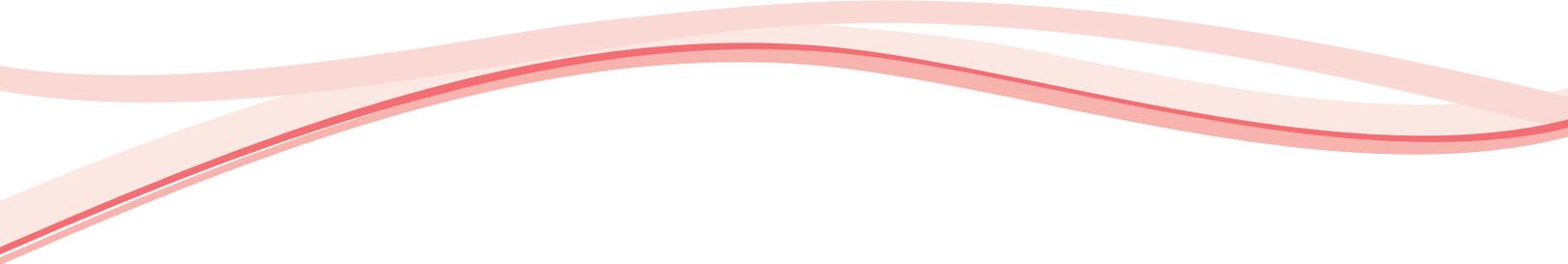
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## ABBREVIATIONS

ADB- Asian Development Bank

AL- Awami League

BNP- Bangladesh Nationalist Party

CHT-Chittagong Hill Tract

CIDA- Canadian International Development Agency

CSOs- Civil Society Organisations

DANIDA- Danish Development Aid

DFID- Department for International Development

EKN- Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands

GEM- Gender Equality Mainstreaming

GoB- Government of Bangladesh

INGOs- International Non-Governmental Organisations

JICA- Japan International Cooperation Agency

LCG- Local Consultative Groups

LEGAL- Legal Education and Gender Awareness Leadership

MFI- Micro Finance Institutions

MJF- Manusher Jonno Foundation

MSPVAW- Multi-Sectoral Programme for Violence Against Women

NGOs- Non-Governmental Organisations

NGOAB- Non-Governmental Organisation Affairs Bureau

ODA-Official Development Assistance

OECD- Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development

PRSP-Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper

SDC- Swiss Development Cooperation-Bangladesh

UNICEF- United Nations Children's Fund

USAID- United States Agency for International Development

VAW- Violence Against Women

WAGE- Women's Advancement and Gender Equality

WROs- Women's Rights Organisations

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## CHAPTER I- INTRODUCTION

98% of Bangladesh is Bengali speaking and 2% includes tribal groups<sup>1</sup>. The small tribal population is mostly located in the south-eastern hill tracts known as the Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) and smaller dispersed tribes in other parts of the country. Over 89% are Muslim, 9.6% Hindu and the remaining belong to other religions, such as Christianity and Buddhism<sup>2</sup>. Gender, class and caste hierarchies impact state and society, which have influenced the demands and strategies by women groups in their movement for women's human rights.

The Constitution of Bangladesh guarantees equality before law for all its citizens and specifically mentions under section 28 (2) that "women shall have equal rights with men in all spheres of the State and of public life"<sup>3</sup>. However since there is an omission regarding equal rights in private life, citizens- particularly women, have to seek rights in private life under personal laws. Codified religious laws govern personal laws in Bangladesh, as set by Islam for Muslim women and men. The omission in the constitution continues to have far-reaching implications on women's rights in the personal domain. This is because codified religious laws contain inequities that place women in a disadvantageous position.

Existing patriarchal values further affect women's lives in their home and society. This is obviously demonstrated by the way women experience discrimination, neglect and violence, which start at birth and continue throughout a woman's life cycle and permeates at every level starting from schools, workplace, public spaces and home. While patriarchal values have influenced men's attitude and behaviour towards women, such values have also impacted on how women treat women<sup>4</sup>. Even though it is socially and culturally determined that the rightful place for women is in the family, it is within this domain that women face discrimination, deprivation and exploitation. These turn into promoting and justifying violence against women<sup>5</sup>.

In Bangladesh, violence against women is a result of inequities existing in the balance of power between women and men. According to a recent study at least 60% men in urban and rural areas believe that sometimes a woman deserves to be beaten, and a similar percentage of men

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<sup>1</sup> [http://www.indexmundi.com/bangladesh/demographics\\_profile.html](http://www.indexmundi.com/bangladesh/demographics_profile.html)

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Constitution of Bangladesh, p.7

<sup>4</sup> Naripokkho (2011) Situation Analysis Report on Violence Against Women in Bangladesh, p.1

<sup>5</sup> Sultan (1997) cited in Baseline Report on Violence Against Women in Bangladesh Prepared by Naripokkho and Bangladesh Mahila Parishad and coordinated by IWRAP Asia Pacific, 2007

also believe a woman should tolerate violence to keep her family together<sup>6</sup>. A national survey on demography and health found that 55% men agree that any of the following factors were sufficient grounds for wife-beating: i) going out without husband's permission; ii) neglecting the children; iii) arguing with the husband; and iv) failing to provide food on time<sup>7</sup>.

Dowry related violence is on the rise in Bangladesh even though it was not present two decades ago. Impacting girls' and women's mobility is the increase in stalking and harassment in public spaces. Sometimes girls are even withdrawn from school and development practitioners believe that this is also an indirect cause for an increase in early marriage in the name of ensuring security for girls<sup>8</sup>.

There is also workplace violence that includes verbal, physical, mental and sexual harassment. A recent study found that three to five women out of ten experience violence at the workplace<sup>10</sup>.

*Shalish* (practice of informal dispute resolution) has become a common occurrence by which poor, rural women (and sometimes men) often become victims of extra judicial penalties for transgressing community norms. This is also a means of controlling women's sexuality and maintaining power/class-domination over the poor and marginalised. Poor women and girls/women with disability and tribal girls/women are frequently under the domination of local elites and opinion makers, the rich and the politically powerful<sup>11</sup>.

Women and girls with disabilities suffer greatly due to society's attitude towards disability and women, and are often regarded with shame, resentment and hostility<sup>12</sup>. Trafficking is another major violations, which contributes greatly to violence against women and girls and infringes on their right to mobility, choice, decision-making and physical integrity.

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<sup>6</sup> Cited from the Naripokkho (2011) Situation Analysis Report on Violence Against Women in Bangladesh : Men's Attitude and Practices regarding Gender and Violence against Women in Bangladesh, Preliminary Findings, Naved, Huque, Farah and Shuvra, ICDDR,B, November 2011

<sup>7</sup> Cited from the Naripokkho (2011) Situation Analysis Report on Violence Against Women in Bangladesh : The Bangladesh Demographic and Health Survey, NIPORT, 2005

<sup>8</sup> Cited from the Naripokkho (2011) Situation Analysis Report on Violence Against Women in Bangladesh : Does Dowry Improve life for Brides? A test of the Bequest theory of dowry in Rural Bangladesh. Lucina Suran, Sajeda Amin, Lopita Huq and Kobita Chowdhury. Population Council 2004 No. 195

<sup>9</sup> Combined Sixth and Seventh Alternative Report to the UN CEDAW Committee

<sup>10</sup> Cited from the Naripokkho (2011) Situation Analysis Report on Violence Against Women in Bangladesh : Baseline to know the extent and severity of violence against women at workplace in selected sectors, Human Development Resource Centre, Dhaka, 2011

<sup>11</sup> Combined Sixth and Seventh Alternative Report to the UN CEDAW Committee

<sup>12</sup> Cited from the Naripokkho (2011) Situation Analysis Report on Violence Against Women in Bangladesh : Out from the Shadows: Sexual Violence Against Children with Disabilities, Handicap International and Save the Children Fund, 2011

A major concern now is generating resources for women right's work considering the current global recession. In the last decade donor organisations, particularly the bilateral donors have had to revise their missions and strategies. In Bangladesh, many of the women's organisations and smaller non-governmental organisations were dependent on grants from bilateral donors. A considerable number of such organisations have grown into reputed organisations working for women's movements, such as Naripokkho<sup>13</sup>. However since the Paris Declaration, which impacted upon aid effectiveness, bilateral donors, who were the major source of support for women's human rights have had to review and downsize their in-county operations.

This has created a considerable drawback in delivering women's rights activities for the smaller organisations. Donor money is being mostly channelled to the government and multilateral organisations. The funds are being managed by trust funds. The current mode seems to be difficult for small women's rights organisations and other similar non-governmental organisations to access funds independently and for their specific focus of work. Furthermore within the humanitarian sector, there have been certain shifts, which prioritise specific sectors of development over others<sup>14</sup>.

### Brief Overview of Women's Human Rights Movement in Bangladesh

The history of women's rights in Bangladesh is intertwined with that of the Indian subcontinent, going back to the anti-colonial movement against the British and then Pakistan. Significant actors in the promotion of women's rights have been women's organisations, other non-governmental organisations, donors and the government<sup>15</sup>.

women's activities in anti-colonial movement and social welfare activities were led mainly by a small group of elite and middle class women who administered their work through national level organisations and small charities. The main focus at that time was women's education and legal reforms.

There are now a wide range of women's organisations starting at the local community level to district and national level. There is similarly a vast array of non-government organisations

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<sup>13</sup> Naripokkho emerged from a workshop of women development workers who met to share their personal and work experiences. Today, Naripokkho is one of the most vocal women's groups in the country.

<sup>14</sup> KII interview with NGO leaders and study data on NGOs projects

<sup>15</sup> Nazneen, S. and M Sultan 2009. Struggling for autonomy: the NGOisation of Women's Organisations in Bangladesh. Development 52.2: cited in Pathways of women empowerment and BRAC Development Institute 2011- Mobilising for Women's Rights and the Role of Resources

that identify poor women (rural and urban) as their main beneficiary group. After 1971, *i.e.*, post independence, the focus of women's organisations expanded to include political empowerment, economic equality, legal reforms of customary and gender-biased laws, violence against women and reproductive rights. Women of ethnic minorities particularly those in the CHT like those in the plains have struggled actively for collective land rights and against armed conflict.

Also, post-independence Bangladesh gave rise to non-governmental organisations and civil society organisations, which were recipients of international aid comprising of funds, commodity aid and technical assistance. The NGOs were able to reach poor people with diverse services and thus international aid started to provide more funds towards the NGOs<sup>16</sup>.

During the 80s and 90s, NGOs provided various basic services augmenting the government services that benefitted millions of people. As a result of their work, the NGO Affairs Bureau was established in 1990 through an administrative order of the Government. Its prime objective was to provide one-stop service to the NGOs operating with foreign assistance and registered under the Foreign Donations (Voluntary Activities) Regulation Ordinance, 1978. In addition, it facilitated the activities of the NGOs in the country, and ensured their accountability to the state and thereby to the people of the country. Initially, it was located in the President Secretariat's Public Division and, later on, in the Cabinet Division. In 1991, with the re-introduction of parliamentary form of government, the NGOAB was placed under the Prime Minister's Office as a regulatory body of the NGOs with the status of a government department<sup>17</sup>.

As of February 2011, there are 2,104 NGOs<sup>18</sup>. Many other organisations are also registered with the social welfare department and other regulatory bodies. Majority of the women's rights organisations (WROs) are also registered with NGOAB in order to facilitate the receipt of funds for their work.

NGOs in Bangladesh are registered under different Acts. These are (1) The Societies Registration Act, 1860; (2) The Trust Act, 1882; (3) Voluntary Social Welfare Agencies (Regulation and Control) Ordinance 1961; (4) Co-operative Societies Act, 1925 and (5) The Companies Act, 1913 (amended in 1914). NGOs registered under these above mentioned acts are controlled in accordance with (1) The Voluntary Social Welfare Agencies (Regulation and

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<sup>16</sup> ManusherJonno 2011. Study on MJF Partners NGO Governance.

<sup>17</sup> <http://www.ngoab.gov.bd/>

<sup>18</sup> NGOAB website dated 5th April 2012

Control) Ordinance 1961; (2) The Foreign Donation (voluntary activities) Regulation Ordinance, 1978 (amended in 1982) and (3) The Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Ordinance, 1982. The highest number of NGOs is registered under The Societies Registration Act, 1980<sup>19</sup>.

WROs along with many NGOs work for women's rights, livelihoods and empowerment. The approach and strategies of these organisations are determined by Bangladesh's social and political context and this includes the political patterns, the tendencies towards civil society in line with political parties, religion in politics, development of the large NGO sector and the influence of donor funding in promoting women's right. While Bangladesh went through various governments, both democratic and military, women's organisations along with some NGOs and civil society continued to be active in pro-democracy movements and thus established strong links with human rights and other cultural movements.

Awami League (AL) and Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) are the two main political parties and they are more or less similar in their position on gender equity and their programmes for women include mainly education, income generation and quotas for women in elected bodies. In 1988, during a period of military dictatorship by General Ershad, Islam was introduced as the state religion, which was protested by women's organisations and CSOs alike. By giving legal recognition to a religious party *i.e.* Jamaat -e-Islami meant inevitable impediments in the way of women's development and progress.

During the 80's women's movements for rights included campaigning for legal reforms on dowry related violence as well as state violence. WROs transformed their work mode to become organised and professional like NGOs contrary to voluntary or social welfare approaches. Around the same time demands for gender mainstreaming in government policy were also being made. However, as a result of both BNP and AL entering into alliances with the Islamic party-Jamaat-e-Islami, to form coalition governments from late 80's onwards, it became increasingly difficult for the women's movement to negotiate for women's rights or challenge the personal religious laws adversely affecting women. Since democratic governments came into power in 1990, various civil society organisations<sup>20</sup> which include NGOs and WROs have become politicised undermining the articulation of collective interests that might clash with party coalition interests or indicate favour for a particular party thus affecting women's progress.

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<sup>19</sup> TIB 2007

<sup>20</sup> CSOs in Bangladesh refer to all society organisations which includes NGOs, community based organisations, media, professional associations and WROs

Organisations working on women's rights have thus preferred to deal directly with the government irrespective of the governing party in order to preserve their credibility and autonomy and not be considered as an appendage of a political party. Another reason for this approach is that the state is responsible for ensuring equality and rights and in line with this, the larger WROs and NGOs consider legal or policy reform as one of their major focuses.

Since the 90s, major concern in Bangladesh in women's movement includes violence against women. This includes fatwa (religious edict), violence in police custody, sexual harassment, trafficking, domestic violence, acid violence and violence against women from ethnic minorities.

### Players Involved in Women's Human Rights Work in Bangladesh

Primary players involved in promoting women's human rights work in Bangladesh include the government, donors and a range of non-state organisations: NGOs, INGOs, social movement based organisations and several bilateral and multilateral donors. The government and donors (called development partners in official terms) contribute almost equally towards the development expenditure in the country, with donor accounting for nearly half of it<sup>21</sup>. A sizeable portion of external funding to NGOs is channelled through government agencies<sup>22</sup>.

#### Government

The Government of Bangladesh has undertaken several policy and programme initiatives pertaining to gender equality and women's empowerment. Five-year plans since the 90s have been explicit about women's empowerment: for the first time five-year plans speak of gender (gender mainstreaming in IV Five-Year Plan<sup>23</sup>). The National women's Development Policy was launched in 1997, as was the National Action Plan to implement the Beijing Platform for Action. In the late 1990s, women's groups were invited to input into the PRSP resulting in a focus on women's rights and advancement (need ref).

More recently, the GoB has enacted and developed the following policies and programmes:

- National Plan of Action against Sexual Abuse and Exploitation of Children including Trafficking (2002-2007)

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<sup>21</sup> Evaluation of the Implementation of the Paris Declaration, Phase II, Country Evaluation Bangladesh. FINAL REPORT. Submitted to Ministry of Finance, Government of Bangladesh, December 2010.

<sup>21</sup> Pathways to Women's Empowerment (2011)

<sup>22</sup> Pathways to Women's Empowerment (2011)

<sup>23</sup> Pathways of Women's Empowerment and BRAC Development Institute 2011: Mobilising for Women's Rights and the Role of Resources : Synthesis Report - Bangladesh

- National Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking of Women and Children 2008.
- National Strategy for Accelerated Poverty Reduction II (October 2008), and the Revised version FY2009-11 (December 2009), which includes significant initiatives for gender sensitive budgeting with the involvement of line ministries and participation of citizens' groups.
- The National Education Policy Formulation Committee formed in April 2009 has recommended reforms for increase in women's enrolment and quality education.
- National women's Development Policy (revised) 2011 and National Plan of Action (2012)
- National Plan on Action on Domestic Violence (2010) for the implementation of the legislation on domestic violence.

### Non-state Organisations

Non-state organisations working to promote women's human rights in Bangladesh are almost always classified as NGOs in official terminology and their legal status is registered as such. Many organisations however would rather identify themselves as membership based organisations and social movement based organisations<sup>24</sup>. However given the legal framework available for such organisations they are officially recognized as NGOs.

As of November 2012, it is estimated that the number of civil societies organisations registered with various governmental authorities totalled 250,000. Among these, it is estimated that less than 50,000 organisations are active<sup>25</sup>. In order to receive foreign funding, organisations must also be registered under the NGO Affairs Bureau (NGOAB), which is directly under the Prime Minister's Secretariat<sup>26</sup>. As of November 2012, there are 2,170 NGOs registered to receive foreign funding in the country, these also include INGOs (less than 10%) working in the country such as OXFAM, Plan International, Population Council, etc. Even though a small percentage of registered organisations receive foreign aid, according to studies, women's organisations and NGOs have been mainly dependent on foreign aid (bilateral aid)<sup>27</sup>.

<sup>24</sup> Pathways of Women's Empowerment and BRAC Development Institute 2011: Mobilising for Women's Rights and the Role of Resources: Synthesis Report - Bangladesh

<sup>25</sup> International Center for Not-for-Profit Law (2012): NGO Law Monitor Bangladesh.  
<http://www.icnl.org/research/monitor/bangladesh.html> [11/9/2012 4:18:05 PM]

<sup>26</sup> Pathways of Women's Empowerment and BRAC Development Institute 2011: Mobilising for Women's Rights and the Role of Resources: Synthesis Report - Bangladesh

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

## Donors

Multilateral international financial institutions (the World Bank and ADB) are the principal source of aid for Bangladesh and the role of bilateral donors (UK and Japan) is also significant. Gender equity appears as an explicit focus area for all 4 big donors however under-allocation for gender equality and women's empowerment that plagues ODA globally, is also true of aid in Bangladesh<sup>29</sup>. While gender equality continues to be a central concern for bilateral donors; direct access to their monies for NGO's including women's organisations is extremely difficult. They are able to access the bilateral commitment to these issues mainly through INGO's.

Only few donors are currently providing direct funding to NGOs, including women's rights organisations: Denmark, Netherlands, and Norway. INGOs such as CARE, Oxfam and foundations such as The Asia Foundation are other organisations providing financial support to civil society organisations (see later sections on donors).

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<sup>29</sup> See Lydia AlpízarDurán (2012): Strengthening Financing For Gender Equality And Women's organisations. Discussed At The United Nations Commission On The Status Of Women. Fifty-Sixth Session, 27 February – 9 March, 2012, New York

## CHAPTER II - OVERVIEW AND METHODOLOGY

The donor mapping exercise in Bangladesh took place from August 2011 to March 2012. This document presents the findings of the mapping exercise with respect to Bangladesh.

The objectives of the mapping exercise were to:

- Assess the resources available for women's rights work
- Identify the challenges and opportunities in delivering women's rights work by women's groups and organisations
- Identify areas of capacity building and support for the women's groups

### Methodology

The exercise was carried out in two phases:

Phase 1: The first phase of the mapping exercise was about collecting and collating information from WROs and NGOs working with women's rights and issues. This information was collected through a structured questionnaire sent out to selected organisations referred to by key informants who had been informed by SAWF about this study.

All NGOs and WROs have to be registered with the NGO bureau in Bangladesh and their contact information is strictly monitored. Given this, all of them do maintain an email address and therefore, do have access to the Internet. The two main networks that were approached for this study were: WE CAN and STEPS – both working on women's issues. Other NGO leaders were approached to identify WROs and NGOs in remote locations of Bangladesh. Response was not received from any of the resource persons contacted for list of respondent organisations except WE CAN. About 115 organisations were contacted with expectations that at least a hundred organisations would respond. Contact was made through email and followed up via phone. Impression from phone conversations seemed positive however only 56 organisations responded over a period of almost two and half months. The information from the 56 organisations was entered in a database prepared by SAWF and was analysed to assess the trends. A summary report was submitted for Phase 1. The data from the questionnaires submitted by 56 organisations was submitted in excel which was analysed by the team leader of the mapping exercise.

Phase 2: The second phase included in-depth interviews with key actors in the women's rights sector and donor community as well as further discussions with about 50 % of the respondent NGOs to better understand the problems they face in accessing resources.

During both phases, secondary literature was also reviewed, mostly from the web and those supplied by some of the phase 2 interviewees.

While a number of documents were reviewed– main reference for findings of this study were two similar mapping exercises carried out recently in Bangladesh. These were:

- Donor Mapping: Diakonia Bangladesh (March 2010)
- Pathways of women empowerment and BRAC Development Institute 2011- Mobilising for women's Rights and the Role of Resources.

Documents provided by donors containing information on their strategies and funding priorities were also reviewed.

Key interviews were held with women activists, donor representatives and NGO leaders. All meetings with donor and women activists were documented.

Out of the 9 organisations interviewed, in Phase II, 5 were headed by women. The other 4 had women in senior management positions and at least 85 % of their target beneficiaries were women. 2 of these organisations worked with tribal communities and 1 of them was headed by a woman. Except for one, all organisations interviewed here have health programmes for women.

### Challenges Faced in Undertaking Study

One of the main challenges in this mapping exercise was the poor response rate of organisations to the survey questionnaires sent out via email in Phase I. The reasons for this include:

- Many of the middle-sized and larger NGOs did not find it necessary that they should respond to this exercise and most asked what they would gain out if it if they indeed gave their time to respond to it.
- The staff of the organisations reported unavailability of time. Some NGOs reported that since it was in the last quarter of the year, they were hard pressed to complete scheduled activities as per their project proposal and donor requirements.
- Getting a response on the questionnaire took considerable follow-up, lasting a couple of months.
- Although 50% i.e., 23 NGOs were selected for in depth interviews in Phase II only 9 were finally interviewed because of unavailability of respondents. Among the 9, not all were based in Dhaka and hence some interviews were conducted over the phone rather than face to face.

## CHAPTER III - KEY FINDINGS AND INSIGHTS

### Organisations Working to Promote Women's Human Rights in Bangladesh

The 56 organisations selected and surveyed for this study represent different types of organisations working on women's issues in the country. A majority of them (40 out of 56) are registered with the NGO Affairs Bureau, enabling them access to foreign aid. These include:

- Large centrally based (Dhaka-based) NGOs
- District based NGOs – most covering more than one district
- Indigenous community based NGOs
- Research based women's organisations
- Legal aid organisations for women
- Research organisations
- Organisations working with disabled
- Women workers-based organisations
- women's networks<sup>30</sup>

### Location

Majority of the organisations surveyed for this study were based/located outside of Dhaka (73%), even though majority of the NGOs in the country are based in Dhaka. This was done purposely, in order to obtain information from organisations spread across the country. Even so, Dhaka as a location has the highest number of organisations in this survey (27%). NGOs based in Rangamati (7%) and Chittagong (5%) were next in line.

### Operational Area

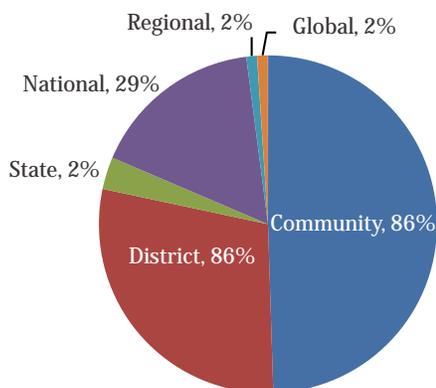
In terms of area of operation, surveyed organisations tend to work at multiple levels, with a majority (85%) reporting that they work at the local/community levels. Many working at local and community levels are also working at the district levels. Smaller percentage of organisations, those based in Dhaka, reported working at the national level. While some

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<sup>30</sup> Only three women's network responded to Phase 1. These are STEPS, WE CAN and Karmojibi Nari which are all supported by donor funding. The indigenous network is the Jumma Network which focuses on rights of tribal minorities in general which is why Jumma Network was not contacted in this study.

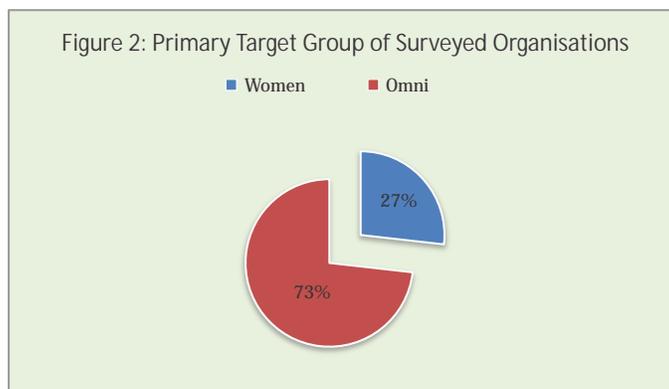
organisations working at the local/community level and district levels also reported operating at the national level (mostly in terms of policy advocacy and networking), few of those reported working at national level also had some presence in communities and district levels. The vast difference in percentage of organisations working at national and community levels may be attributed to the fact that a smaller proportion of surveyed organisations were selected from Dhaka. And it is the Dhaka based organisations that tend to be working at the national levels.

Figure 1: Operational Area of Surveyed Organisations



### Primary Target/Focus Groups

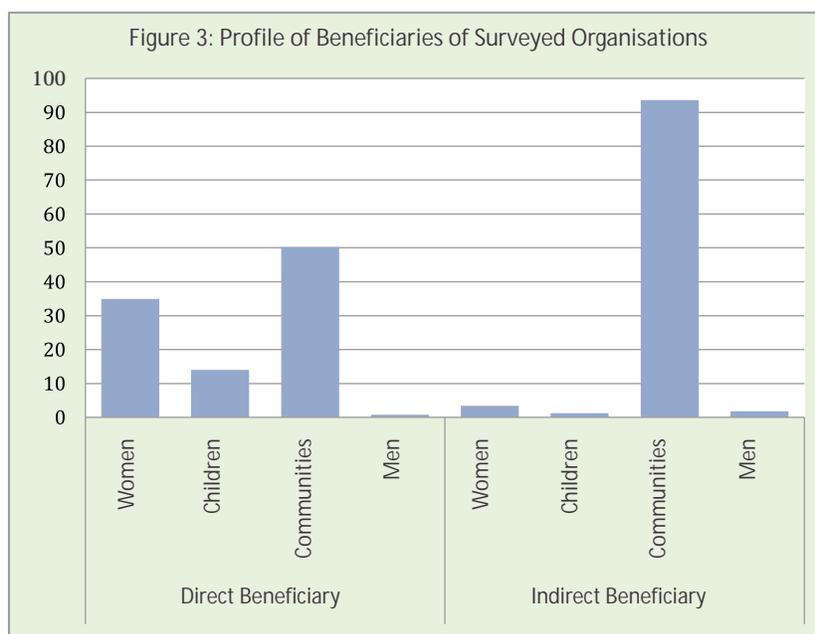
Majority of the surveyed organisations (73%) focused on a wide range of target groups and not just on women.



Apart from the 15 NGOs that have been identified as working directly and solely with women, all the other surveyed organisations reported that their target groups included women along with men, children and communities.

Two of the surveyed organisations exclusively work on the issue of women with disability and a few others that have or had programmes for women with disability. Seven organisations work with minority communities and are led by women from minority communities, specifically tribal.

When reporting on beneficiaries of their programmes as well, organisations tend to report entire communities as beneficiaries rather than women exclusively.



While fewer surveyed organisations reported women as the main (exclusive) target group or (exclusive) beneficiary of their programmes, their budget allocations indicate that larger proportion of organisations do allocate bulk of their funds towards women beneficiaries (25% allocate 100% of the budget towards women and 54% allocate more than half their budget towards women).

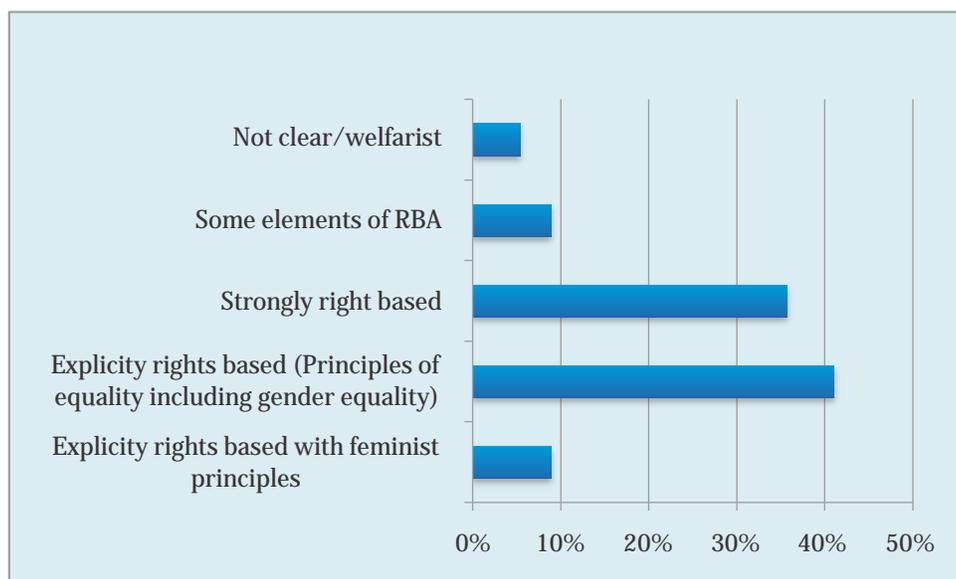
### Rights Based Framework

Based on information provided by organisations on their aims and objectives, strategies, priority activities and changes brought about by their work in the lives of

women, surveyed organisations were mapped for the degree of their affinity with rights based approaches (see Annex II for explanation of the various categories used in this study).

The overview is that majority of the surveyed organisations clearly fall within the rights based framework with only 5% falling under the welfare approach category. A smaller proportion of organisations can be classified as explicitly rights based with feminist principals while a larger proportion and majority among the surveyed are 'explicitly rights based'.

Based on discussions with several organisations, it appears that some of the surveyed organisations that now have a strong or explicit rights based approach did indeed start out as organisations working with a welfare approach. Over the years, with exposure to other development organisations and to a large extent influenced by donor's requirement for rights based approach, many organisations originally based on a welfare framework, evolved and adopted rights based approach.



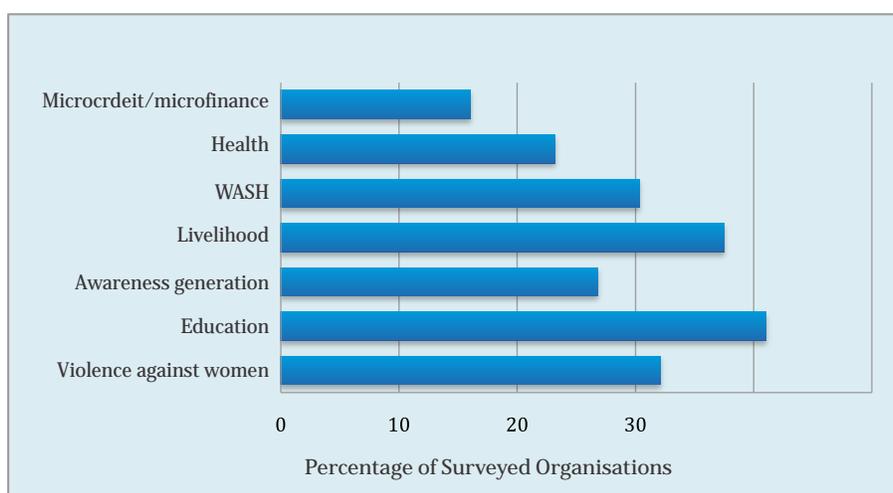
### Priority Activities

The top five priority areas of activities undertaken by surveyed organisations include: education (41%), livelihoods (38%), violence against women (36%), water and sanitation (30%), and awareness generation (27%). Activities under the area of health

were also reported by 23% organisations and microcredit/microfinance was reported by 16% organisations.

It is interesting to compare this list of priority activities with a survey of NGOs in Bangladesh in 2003 (almost a decade ago) that listed awareness generation as the most common activity among NGOs (93%), followed by credit services (90%), followed by health services (56%), sanitation services (52%), education services (45%) and advocacy activities (42%)<sup>31</sup>.

Figure 5: Priority Activities of Surveyed Organisations



While health, education, sanitation, micro credit and awareness generation continue to remain among the most common activities, two new thematic areas have entered this list (of common activities): livelihoods and violence against women. The former clearly also confirms the general perception of NGO work in the country whereby economic empowerment from ‘culture of entrepreneurship’ (promoting micro and small enterprises and income generating activities) have indeed been noted as the most lasting contribution of NGOs towards the economy, women’s empowerment, and generating social capital<sup>32</sup>.

<sup>31</sup>World Bank (2005): The Economics and Governance of Non Governmental Organisations (NGOs) in Bangladesh. Poverty Reduction and Economic Management Sector Unit South Asia Region. CONSULTATION DRAFT. August 2005.

<sup>32</sup>Farida Chowdhry Khan, Ahrar Ahmad, and Munir Quddus (2009): Recreating the Commons: NGOs in Bangladesh. The University Press Limited, Dhaka.

Bangladeshi NGOs in general and women's organisations in particular have looked at economic empowerment as central to freeing women from multiple disadvantages. As shown in the following sections, when NGOs report on the most significant changes in the lives of women beneficiaries of their programmes, they speak of increased confidence, voice, agency and decision making by women in matters affecting their lives. They link this to both, their economic empowerment (through income generation, micro enterprise, credit and savings) as well as to the awareness generation related work with women (and communities).

### The Case of Microcredit

According to official data, nearly one-third of NGOs registered with the Government of Bangladesh are also serving as MicroFinance Institutions (MFI) with latest figures suggesting that 659 NGOs are licensed as MFI under the Microcredit Regulatory Authority<sup>33</sup>. In the sample for this study, about 20% of the organisations surveyed were registered Microfinance Institutions and a slightly smaller percentage (16%) reported microfinance among their priority activities.

The role of micro-credit in women's empowerment or in poverty alleviation is bitterly contested among Bangladeshi organisations working on women's issues as much as debated in development discourses. Women are overwhelmingly represented as 'beneficiaries' ever since microfinance was popularised in the mid 1970s in Bangladesh<sup>34</sup>. Three-quarters of clients of MFIs by 2004 were poor and two-thirds among those were poor women<sup>35</sup>. Although microfinance's initial objective was not primarily in the social area, if at all, most MFIs did later identify one or more social goals including women's empowerment, children's school attendance, awareness of and demand for health services<sup>36</sup>.

The popularisation of microfinance and the space for participation of NGOs as MFI led to proliferation of new NGOs in the country as well as many existing NGOs taking on

<sup>33</sup> [http://mra.gov.bd/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=category&layout=blog&id=29&Itemid=80](http://mra.gov.bd/index.php?option=com_content&view=category&layout=blog&id=29&Itemid=80)

<sup>34</sup> Armendáriz, Beatriz and Roome, Nigiel (2008): Gender empowerment in microfinance. Published in: In Suresh Sundaresan, ed., *Microfinance: Emerging Trends and Challenges*, New York: Edward Elgar Publishing, Ltd (2008). Also available online at: <http://mpr.ub.uni-muenchen.de/31040/>

<sup>35</sup> David Hulme and Karen Moore (2006): *Why Has Microfinance Been A Policy Success In Bangladesh (And Beyond)*. Global Poverty Research Group, Economic and Social Research Council. WPS 041.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

microfinance as one of their activities<sup>37</sup>. The early 1990s in particular was a period of rapid expansion of access to microcredit. Procedures were by then established and standardised, and computerisation became more common, allowing the MFIs to intensify monitoring. Large NGO MFIs used donor funds, and, increasingly, member savings and interest payments, to replicate new branches across the country<sup>38</sup>.

According to one set of analyses, there is no empirical evidence of the impact of pro-women bias in microfinance on balance of power in households and on the health, education and well being of all household members<sup>39</sup>. It is also argued that women-bias in micro-finance is not necessarily motivated by the aim of empowering women but because women are easy 'clients' for microfinance- they are more honest, more likely to return loans and easier to work with<sup>40</sup>. There are other analyses, however, that measure how microfinance has impacted women's empowerment positively in terms of: mobility, economic security, ability to make small purchases, ability to make larger purchases, involvement in major household decisions, relative freedom from domination from within the family, political and legal awareness, and participation in public protests and political campaigning.

Earlier studies have also indicated that while microcredit (programmes) has the potential to both, undermine or exacerbate men's violence against women<sup>41</sup>.

Many NGOs, and women's organisations have indeed been implementing microcredit programmes and are registered MFI in the country, while some have made a conscious decision to stay away from it. A handful of Bangladeshi NGOs, have maintained their commitment to fostering radical social movements through awareness-building and mobilisation against instances of injustice and barriers of access to public entitlements, without recourse to providing microcredit<sup>42</sup>. Interview with experts for this study also confirm these analyses and trends.

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<sup>37</sup>Anu Muhammad (2009): Grameen and Microcredit: A Tale of Corporate Success, *Economic & Political Weekly*, August 29, 2009 Vol. XLIV no 35. Also available online at: [http://www.academia.edu/206069/Grameen\\_and\\_Microcredit\\_A\\_Tale\\_of\\_Corporate\\_Success](http://www.academia.edu/206069/Grameen_and_Microcredit_A_Tale_of_Corporate_Success)

<sup>38</sup>David Hulme and Karen Moore (2006): *Why Has Microfinance Been A Policy Success In Bangladesh (And Beyond)?*. Global Poverty Research Group, Economic and Social Research Council. WPS 041.

<sup>39</sup>Armendáriz, Beatriz and Roome, Nigiel (2008): Gender empowerment in microfinance. Published in: In Suresh Sundaresan, ed., *Microfinance: Emerging Trends and Challenges*, New York: Edward Elgar Publishing, Ltd (2008). Also available online at: <http://mpira.ub.uni-muenchen.de/31040/>

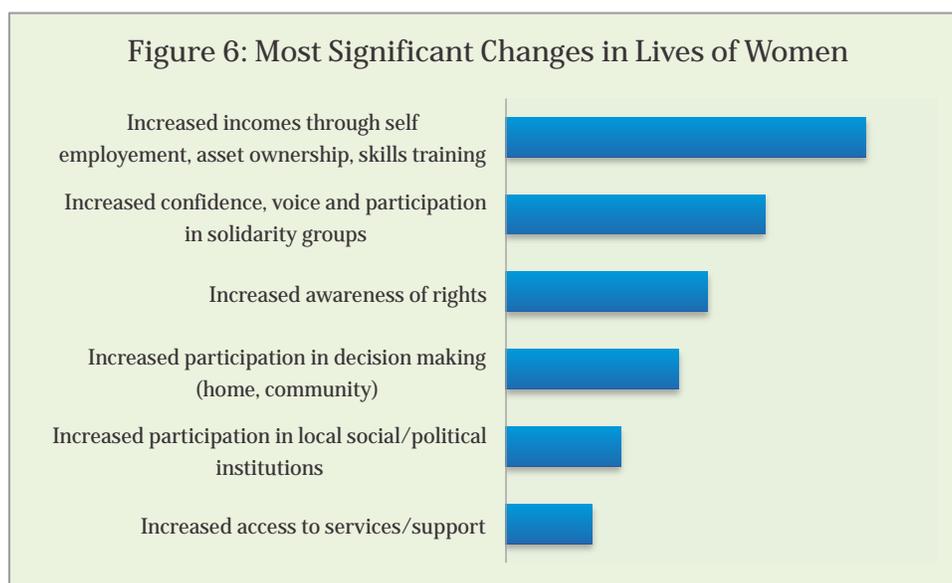
<sup>40</sup>See Anu Muhammad (2009) and Armendáriz, Beatriz and Roome, Nigiel (2008) for instance

<sup>41</sup>Men's violence against women in rural Bangladesh: Undermined or exacerbated by microcredit programmes?

<sup>42</sup>Kabeer, N. (2002) *We don't do credit: Nijera Kori social mobilisation and the collective capabilities of the poor in rural Bangladesh*. Dhaka: NijeraKori. As quoted in David Hulme and Karen Moore (2006)

## Most Significant Changes Made in the Lives of Women Beneficiaries

Most surveyed organisations describe changes in the lives of women beneficiaries in terms of improvements in their economic conditions. Since livelihood is an important area of work for many in the sample, the identification of economic betterment as a 'significant' change brought about by their work is to be expected. Another set of significant changes in the lives of women beneficiaries is in the area of improved awareness, increased voice and agency. Organisations consider women's participation in solidarity groups at the local levels (community based organisations of women) as well as higher levels of networking among women as important changes brought about by their work. They see women as more aware of their rights, more confident and with more bargaining capacity to fight for their rights and resist violations. Another area of change is seen in terms of women's participation in local governance institutions and as leaders. Training provided by these organisations for building confidence and leadership skills among women members have been credited for such changes. Yet another area of change observed by surveyed organisations is in terms of increased access to services for women, facilitated by the work of these organisations: access to services in the area of education, entitlements such as safety nets and support services such as legal aid.



The area of justice for women is widely disputed in Bangladesh with organisations divided over their stance on extra legal arbitrations through the practice of 'shalish' or

village courts. While some donors and organisations are working to improve this practice to make it gender responsive and rights based, many contest its legitimacy and fear that it leads to suppression of justice. In many cases related to rape or violence against women, mediation through village courts system has led to settlements rather than convictions and punishments<sup>43</sup>.

### Range of Annual Budgets

Annual budgets of surveyed organisations ranged from a few hundred thousand takas to over 28 billion takas. The high end of the budget spectrum only comprise two organisations and of those two only one *i.e.* BRAC, stands out with the highest annual budget at over 28 billion taka. BRAC of course is recognized as the single largest NGO in Bangladesh with highest outreach and widest network, with a large proportion of their funds coming from Microfinance. Only 30% of the budget of BRAC comes from foreign grants while the remaining is through Microfinance Loans and other assets and investments<sup>44</sup>. BRAC infact is considered also to be a model for increasing self-sufficiency of NGOs and many NGOs that are also operating as MFIs increasingly look to Microfinance as a strategy for reducing dependency on donor. To what extent this strategy has worked for most organisations is not clear (except in the case of BRAC). Experts interviewed for this study expressed their scepticism towards this strategy, not only for its potential to replace donor funding but also in terms of its effectiveness in poverty alleviation.

Figure 7: Annual Budget Range of Surveyed Organisations

Annual Budget Range of Surveyed Organisations	
less than 999,999	4
1,000,000-5,000,000	14
5,000,001 - 10,000,000	3
10,000,000 - 15,000,000	3
15,000,001-20,000,000	8
20,000,001 - 50,000,000	9
50,000,001 - 100,000,000	4
100,000,001 - 500,000,000	7
500,000,001 - 1,100,000,000	2
1,100,000,001 - 30,000,000,000	2

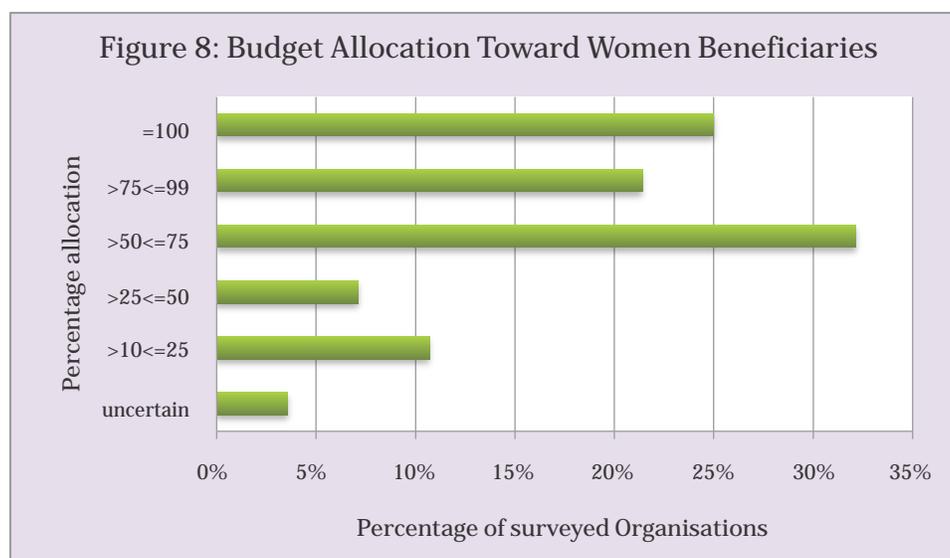
<sup>43</sup>Through interviews with experts consulted for this study.

<sup>44</sup> BRAC Annual Report 2012

The high end of the budget range of surveyed organisations is restricted to only one organisation, while most organisations (25%) have annual budgets of less than 5 million takas (roughly \$60,000).

The range of budgets is similar for the 11 organisations that are also registered MFIs (from 437,000 -28 billion).

In terms of share of women beneficiaries in the total budget of the organisations, 25% of the organisations reported that 100% of their budget is allocated towards women beneficiaries alone (corresponding somewhat with about 27% reporting that women exclusively were their target group and 35% reporting that women were exclusive beneficiaries of their programmes). A larger majority of 54% report that over half of their budget is allocated exclusively towards women beneficiaries. Hence, even when organisations count women among ‘communities’ as beneficiaries, their financial allocations show bias in favour of women beneficiaries.



Although these figures are based on estimates provided by NGOs in specific response to the survey questionnaire, there is no systematic monitoring/reporting on budget allocations towards women.

The study was unable to assess allocations of donors towards gender equality (apart from the global data that is available from OECD) since such figures do not exist. Another similar study conducted in 2010-2011 concluded that: *“neither GoB nor the donors monitor the provision of development funding to NGOs or gender related programmes in terms of aid flows”*<sup>45</sup>.

<sup>45</sup> Pathways of Women’s Empowerment (2011):

## Most Prominent Fundraising Challenges

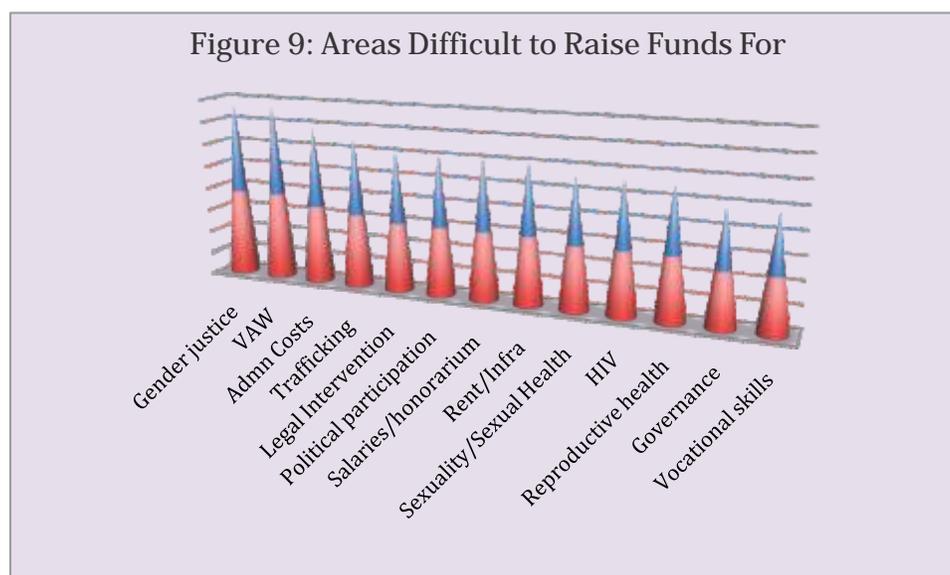
Surveyed organisations shared issues or specific activities or costs that they found difficult to raise funds for. One set of these pertains to issues such as gender justice, violence against women, trafficking, political participation, sexuality, HIV, reproductive health and governance and the other to specific types of activities such as providing legal intervention or vocation skills training to women. Significant proportion of surveyed organisations identified overhead costs of running their organisation, such as administrative costs, rents, and infrastructure as difficult to raise funds for.

Data collected from this study indicates an irony in the area of Violence Against Women. While it tops in the list of priority activities for most surveyed organisations and even as it is a priority for donor funding and government funding, many surveyed organisations expressed that it was difficult for them to raise funds related to Violence Against Women. During interviews, women rights activists explain that while funding available for VAW as a subject has increased, it is only available for a certain type of approach, for instance, for supporting the Shalish system of local arbitration and mediation and the implementation of the Act for the Prevention of Domestic Violence. VAW is no longer understood (in funding architecture) as linked with economic and political empowerment of women or in terms of changing mind-sets and attitudes. Those applying for funds for VAW are expected to use funds to implement specific (donor identified and promoted) strategies such as Salish. Another example shared was that while funding is available for implementation of the law, there is no funding available for (no focus on) gender sensitisation of the police. Funding was not available for direct assistance to women survivors of violence: legal aid, psychosocial support, support for rehabilitation, etc.

The reasons for difficulty in raising funds for the above-mentioned ranged from internal capacity issues to conditions and priorities of donors. Almost one-third of the reasons cited for not being able to raise funds were that organisations found themselves limited in capacity to raise or absorb funds. In almost all cases where organisations said they found it difficult to raise funds for administrative costs, it was because of lack of funding for the same (most donors have limited funds allocated towards administrative costs of recipient NGOs). Shifting donor priorities and tendency of donors to fund larger NGOs/management firms or governments were also cited as reasons why they found it difficult to raise funds.

Interviews with experts indicate that the competitive bidding process now being followed by almost every donor poses several challenges for organisations working in

Bangladesh. First of all, not many organisations, especially those led by women from marginalized communities and working in far off areas, are not able to bid for grants. In addition, most donors prefer funding through larger NGOs and INGOs or setting up local institutions who can “manage and monitor” the large amounts disbursed. Hence, many women’s groups largely become dependent on these organisations who bid for grants and then disburse grants through contract arrangements with smaller organisations.



In addition to difficulties in raising funds due to capacity or donor environment issues, many organisations find it difficult to simply register with the NGOAB or renew their registration to be able to access foreign funds in the first place. The problems are not just related to the inefficient system or the cumbersome process; it is also due to corruption in the system. During interviews, many representatives from organisations recounted that the senior officers of NGOAB directly ask for ‘monetary gifts’ in return for registrations/renewals.

### Women in Decision-making

Women’s representation in governing and executive bodies of surveyed organisations vary with 7% organisations (4) not having a single woman in either bodies and 18% and 21% reporting an all-woman governing and executive body, respectively. The majority (38%) had between 25% and 50% women in their governing bodies, followed

by 25% whose governing bodies included between 50-75% women members. Similar patterns are observed in executive bodies; with majority organisations (41%) reporting that 25% to 50% of their staff was female. Only 21% organisations had an all-women staff. Overall, 33% of women members of executive bodies were also members of governing bodies and there is tendency for less duplication.

Figure 10: Percentage of Women in Governing and Executive Body of Respondent Organisations

No. of samples falling in the ranges	=0	>0 <=10	>10 <=25	>25 <=50	>50 <=75	>75 <=99	=100	Overall % of Women
% of Women in Governing Body	4	0	4	21	14	3	10	57.05
	7%	0%	7%	38%	25%	5%	18%	
% of Women in Executive	4	0	3	23	12	2	12	58.10
	7%	0%	5%	41%	21%	4%	21%	
% of women from Executive in Governing Body	11	0	15	23	1	0	6	33.43
	20%	0%	27%	41%	2%	0%	11%	

Those organisations (10) showing an all-woman team in governing and executive bodies are all explicitly women's organisations, while for the other organisations, often led by men, there is a tendency towards increasing women's representation in senior management positions and in governing boards.

### Donors Financing Women's Rights Related Work in Bangladesh Official Development Assistance to Bangladesh

There are a total of 19 bilateral donors, 4 multilateral donors and 13 UN agencies registered as 'development partners' in the country<sup>46</sup>. The World Bank, UK Department of International Development (DFID), the Asian Development Bank and the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) are among the top 4 donors in the country, accounting for over 80% of the ODA<sup>47</sup>.

<sup>46</sup> LGC Bangladesh. [http://www.lgcbangladesh.org/LCG\\_DP\\_Plenary\\_Members.php](http://www.lgcbangladesh.org/LCG_DP_Plenary_Members.php)

<sup>47</sup> Pathways of Women's Empowerment and BRAC Development Institute 2011

According to various sources, Official Development Assistance to Bangladesh has significantly dropped from the 1970s (since just after independence) to recent years. While ODA approximated about 10% of the GDP in the 1990s, in 2010, this had dropped to 2%<sup>48</sup>. However ODA still accounts for 48% of the 'development expenditure' of the country<sup>49</sup> and almost 98% of it is disbursed to governments<sup>50</sup>.

Of the total foreign aid to the country, loans are increasingly becoming a larger part than grants. From a near equal share through the decades of 70s, 80s and 90s, by 2010, loans comprised 68% of the total foreign aid while grants comprised only 32%<sup>51</sup>. The World Bank is the single largest donor accounting for 23% of the total aid and it is almost entirely in the form of loans. The ADB is the second largest donor accounting for about 16% of aid, again almost entirely in the form of loans. Japan, the third largest donor provides 14% of total aid, split equally between loans and grants. Almost every other donor, other than UNICEF provides aid in the form of both loans and grants although the share of loans is a small percentage.

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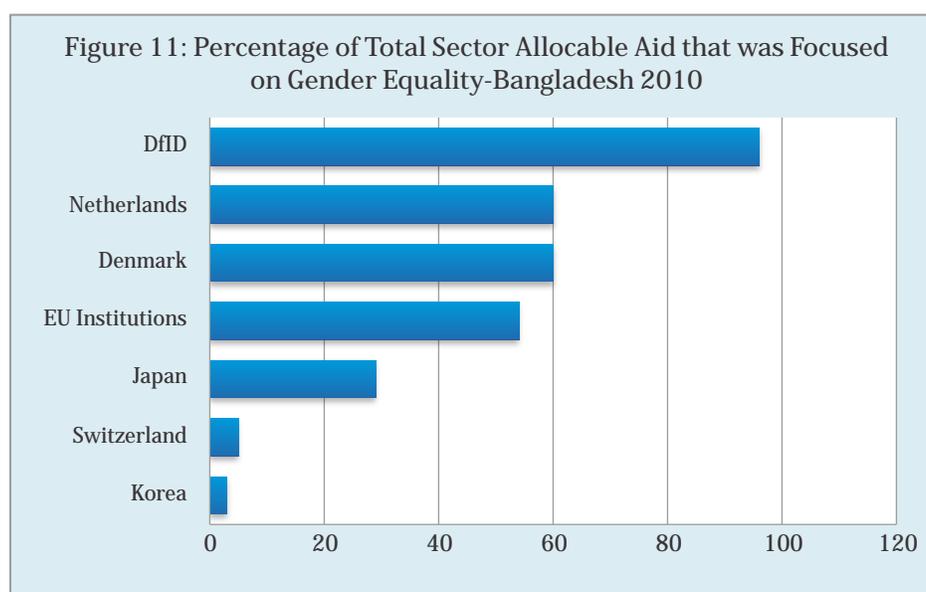
<sup>48</sup> Pathways of Women's Empowerment and BRAC Development Institute 2011

<sup>49</sup> Evaluation of the Implementation of the Paris Declaration, Phase II Creditor Reporting System: Data extracted on 19 Nov 2012 02:56 UTC (GMT) from OECD.Stat

<sup>50</sup> Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh (2011): Aid Management in Bangladesh - A Review of Policies and Procedures. Aid Effectiveness Unit Economic Relations Division, Ministry of Finance

## Aid Focused on Women's Empowerment and Gender Equality

ODA has been assessed for its allocations towards gender equality and women's empowerment and data for select donors indicates that the range of percentage allocations is very wide. Most ODA even in this area is channelled through the government and DFID emerges as the donor with the most focus on gender equity, followed by Netherlands and Denmark, EU Institutions and Japan. This data is for donors for whom Bangladesh is among top ten recipients.



Source: OECD 2012: *Aid in Support of Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment: 2009-2010*<sup>52</sup>

In terms of ODA to women's equality organisations and institutions, its proportion is even smaller within the entire civil society sector, accounting for \$ 6 million in 2010, a little over 10% of total ODA going directly to civil society. Only two donors contribute to it: Netherlands (68%) and Sweden (32%)<sup>53</sup>.

<sup>52</sup> Statistics based on DAC Members' reporting on the Gender Equality Policy Marker, 2009 - 2010 Creditor Reporting System database

<sup>53</sup> All statistics pertaining OECD obtained from online Creditor Reporting System: Data extracted on 19 Nov 2012 02:56 UTC (GMT) from OECD.Stat

## Overview of Select Donors Funding Women's Human Rights Work in Bangladesh

As described earlier, most donors are not financing civil society organisations directly but are either financing them through direct support to governments or through special trusts that have been set up. The following section provides a brief overview of the kind of funding that is available for women's organisations/organisations working for women's human rights in the country:

- *Manusher Jonno Foundation*<sup>54</sup>

Manusher Jonno Foundation was established in 2005 as a trust fund for providing financial support to civil society organisations in work related to promotion of human rights and governance. MJF focuses on four thematic areas: Rights of the Marginalized Populations including in CHT; Combating violence against women; Protection of Working Children and Vulnerable Workers; Ensuring Responsiveness of Public Institutions for Rural Poor.

In the year 2010, their primary donor was DFID; over \$ 10 million was disbursed to about 125 partners (civil society organisations) for various projects focusing on the 4 thematic areas. The grant size ranges from a minimum of \$36,230 to a maximum of \$1 million. Project period ranges from 1 year to 4 years although majority of their grants are made for 2 years (50%) or 3 years (45%).

Only organisations registered with the NGO Affairs Bureau or the Department of Social Welfare of the People's Republic of Bangladesh are eligible to apply for their funds. Funding mechanism calls for 'concept notes', successful organisations are then required to submit a full technical and financial proposal, which is appraised and if found fitting, is submitted to the governing board for approval and the Government for permission. The annual report of MJF lists beneficiaries disaggregated by gender for at least 2 of the 34 thematic areas: VAW and rights of marginalised populations.

In addition to being a national grant making organisation financed by foreign aid, MJF also serves as an intermediary organisation for large projects being funded by donors such as the World Bank.

- *Swiss Development Cooperation-Bangladesh*<sup>55</sup>

SDC has been operating in Bangladesh since its independence in 1971. In terms of women's empowerment and gender equality, SDC has had the approach of 'gender

<sup>54</sup> From Annual Report 2010 and website: <http://www.manusherjonno.org/>

<sup>55</sup> From SDC Cooperation Strategy Bangladesh 2008–2012 and website: [http://www.swiss-cooperation.admin.ch/bangladesh/en/Home/Principles\\_and\\_Cross\\_cutting\\_themes/SCO\\_B\\_Gender\\_Platform](http://www.swiss-cooperation.admin.ch/bangladesh/en/Home/Principles_and_Cross_cutting_themes/SCO_B_Gender_Platform)

mainstreaming' since 1995 and gender is listed as one of their two cross cutting issues in their most latest country cooperation strategy (the other being HIV/AIDS). Gender focus is described in terms of i) situation analysis being done through a gender lens and ii) gender disaggregated data being used for planning and monitoring of outcomes. More recently, the SDC office in Bangladesh has set up a Partners Gender Platform comprising focal points from its partner organisations (civil society) for the purpose of reinforcing Gender Equality Mainstreaming (GEM) in program work, organisation and policy level. In terms of their thematic focus, in the current Country Strategy paper (2008-2012, employment and income' and 'local governance' have been listed.

While SDC partners with both government and the NGO sector, they also explicitly state that they will work with "movements, watchdog organisations, or farmers associations", in order to stay informed of local reality. A list of their project portfolio for 2008-2012 shows project grants to 7 with non-state organisations (NGOs), 2 with government (Ministries), 3 with international organisations (UN, INGO, World Bank). Two of the NGO partners of SDC during this period were part of the SAWF study.

The grant period ranges from under one year to over 4 years with most projects for 2-3 years and with many projects going beyond one phase of grant cycle (Phase 1- Phase 15). The grant size ranges from US\$ 600,000 to US\$ 8.4 million.

- *DANIDA: Danish Development Aid*<sup>56</sup>

The government of Denmark has been providing development assistance to Bangladesh since its independence and considers Bangladesh to be one of their main recipients of aid. Gender equality constitutes one of five political priorities in the global strategy for Denmark's development cooperation, "Freedom from Poverty – Freedom to Change" launched in 2010. DANIDA in Bangladesh addresses gender equity through a combination of 'mainstreaming' approach and specific programme activities on women's rights.

For the year 2011, their disbursement target for the country was around US\$ 32 million, distributed across their 4 thematic areas: Human Rights and Good Governance (19%), Water and Sanitation (35%), Agriculture and Fisheries (41%) and Others/ local support to NGO etc. (5%). NGOs are also partners under the various thematic areas, especially under the Human Rights thematic area there are three sub-

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<sup>56</sup> From <http://bangladesh.um.dk>. Information on project period and grant size was not readily available.

components: i) support to human rights NGOs; ii) support to the National Human Rights Commission; and iii) support to the Violence against Women programme (the multi-sectoral programme of the government).

According to one report, DANIDA development cooperation strategy has changed significantly and the Human Rights and Good Governance programme which was the main source of funding for NGOs has been downsized and restructured and the Programme Support Unit (PSU) is being abolished. Under the new HRGG-III programme the number of partnerships will be fewer and staff size will continue to shrink<sup>57</sup>. There is also a move towards funding Danish NGOs who in turn will partner with local NGOs, rather than support local civil society directly<sup>58</sup>.

- *Netherlands*<sup>59</sup>

The current Dutch development cooperation in Bangladesh is organized along the lines of three thematic areas: Food Security, Water and Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights. Education also used to be a thematic area until 2010 and has been withdrawn since. In thematic areas that don't deal explicitly with women's rights, there is a focus on women as beneficiaries in terms of improving access and control over resources. While most financing is channelled to the government, NGOs are important partners as well, with more than half the programmes under the sexual and reproductive health and rights area being implemented in partnership with a consortium of NGOs and INGOs.

- *CARE-Bangladesh*<sup>60</sup>

CARE Bangladesh is among the largest INGOs working in Bangladesh. CARE raises its funds from various donors internationally as well as nationally and partners with a large number of NGOs (36 in 2012) in the country for implementation of those projects. Gender equity is defined as one of the programme approaches of the organisation.

Their current project portfolio includes 22 projects, the duration of projects ranging from 1 to 6 years. Their donors include governments (US, Japan, EC), private foundations (Bill and Melinda Gates, Bog Lottery Fund UK, Wal-Mart Foundation) and

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<sup>57</sup>Pathways to Women's Empowerment (2011)

<sup>58</sup>Ibid.

<sup>59</sup>From <http://bangladesh.nlembassy.org/services/development-cooperation>

<sup>60</sup>From <http://www.carebangladesh.org>

the UN. Information on grant size was not readily available. Some organisations being funded by CARE Bangladesh were reviewed as part of this study.

## Trends in Funding for Women's Human Rights in Bangladesh

Trends in funding for women's human rights must be understood in the context of overall trends in Aid. One of the most significant shifts in aid patterns can be attributed to the Paris Declaration which had led to greater focus on partnerships with governments: more aid to governments and lesser to civil society. As described earlier, the proportion of ODA that is directly available to civil society is a miniscule proportion of overall aid. The funds from the bilateral and multilaterals will now be mainly channelled to the government and support for civil society organisations will be set up through large trust funds<sup>61</sup>.

Many donors such as the DFID have completely stopped financing civil society in Bangladesh directly, instead donor have set up a trust fund – Manusher Jonno Foundation - via which NGOs may access donor funds (in the area of human rights and governance). Some other thematic fund trusts have also been similarly established, for instance, for poverty alleviation, as a mechanism for NGOs to access donor funds.

Discussions with surveyed organisations and experts indicate that the challenge funds themselves, though large in size, have funding constraints – they do not give out small grants and tend to prefer giving out large funds (in millions US\$). The management agencies also try to reduce their administrative burden and rather than managing small grants to many small NGOs, they prefer to give large allotments to 3-4 large organisations. Therefore, even when funds are available for civil society, they are not easy to access for small, grassroots organisations. The small women's organisations usually have limited organisation capacity, and are often not able to articulate and present their work as per donor requirements. While many organisations have come together as networks and consortia to bid collectively, many smaller women's organisations are not as linked or associated with such networks.

The other trend is that accessing donor funds has now become a competitive process involving bidding and writing of elaborate technical proposals for pre-defined programme areas and limits on the kinds of strategies and activities that would be funded. As interviews with experts and surveyed organisations reveal, this often

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<sup>61</sup> Pathways to Women's Empowerment and Brac Development Institute 2011 and KIIs under this study

means that the root cause analysis and structural changes required to address them are left out of project proposals.

Women's organisations, as all other NGOs, find themselves in a space where their role is being defined as passive recipients of aid, being sub contracted to carry out programmes, activities and strategies that are decided at the level of givers and governments. Organisations also find themselves in competition with each other, scrambling for dwindling resources that are being made available for human rights work. Another trend emerges from donor need to reduce their administrative burden by giving large chunks of funds to few large organisations rather than smaller grants to several smaller organisations.

After prolonged discussions with representatives of three donors in Bangladesh (DFID, Danida and the Netherlands) as well as with women activists, it was confirmed that access to funds for work related to women's rights is currently available mostly through larger management agencies (e.g. Maxwell, Chemonics) or larger NGOs (BRAC, ManusherJonno Foundation) and international NGOs<sup>62</sup>. This trend of funds disbursement and management is likely to continue in the future.

Yet another trend in aid mechanisms that poses a severe challenge to the work of organisations working on women's rights is that donors have moved away from long term, dynamic partnerships with recipient organisations, to short term, project based partnerships. Long term and meaningful engagement with communities, with women, geared towards changing social norms and practices have been replaced by short-term activities for training, awareness generation, etc., whereby women's organisations find it difficult to sustain and continue their work in communities once the grants have expired.

Finally, specific focus on women's empowerment has dwindled and been replaced by 'gender mainstreaming' across various thematic areas. Gender mainstreaming translates into making sure project outcomes are sensitive to gender as a factor and that women are well represented among beneficiaries. Addressing structural inequalities and working directly with women (and communities) to change mind-sets or to provide specific support services to women (for instance survivors) receives little attention. Donors interviewed for this study claimed that they prioritise working with

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<sup>62</sup> Since the International NGOs are skilled and have good showmanship especially proposal development, they too take up a large part of the available funding which affecting funding for all organisations. There is also concern over the monopoly the INGOs along with the larger Bangladeshi NGOs will have with the bidding process.

and for women and so there is no need for separate gender programmes or interventions – these can be incorporated within the other sectoral project activities.

Considering the current mode of distribution of donor funds, the smaller organisations struggle to access these, while larger women’s organisations such as Naripokkho, say that they have built credibility with donors and demonstrated capacity through management, report writing, and liaison and therefore do not face problems in getting funds<sup>63</sup>. Similarly other large NGOs also do not face as much difficulty in gaining donor funds because of their reputation. The smaller and mid-level organisations that have been working with women at the grassroots and are promoting the women’s movement at the community level are unable to demonstrate their work/results in a language and format appreciated by donors. They also face difficulties in writing proposals in the technical format and the language required by the donors, hence they lose out of funding opportunities.

INGOs are gainers in the revised aid architecture and are preferred recipients for NGOs given their capacities to absorb funds, write proposals and reports as well as manage projects as per donor requirements. INGOs serve as conduit for transfer of donor funds to smaller organisations who they sub contract (enter into agreements with) for specific project activities.

A similar study on financing for women’s human rights in Bangladesh concluded that the nature of partnership between donors and recipient organisations has changed over the years. Some private foundations (Ford Foundation and the Asia Foundation), that had played a crucial role in supporting innovative ideas put forth by women’s rights organisations, had either moved away from Bangladesh or had become limited in their funding. Long-term funding, which used to be the practice, has been phased-out by bilateral donors (and by extension by INGOs) and there has been a shift to project based funding. The previous relationship of solidarity and donor staff’s interest in ensuring funding for innovative approaches has been replaced by a more business-like approach<sup>64</sup>.

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<sup>63</sup> KII with Rita Das Roy, Naripokkho

<sup>64</sup> Pathways to Women’s Empowerment (2011)

## Relationship Between the Three Key Players

The relationship between donors, government and non-state actors (NGOs) in the country is marked with intense collaborations as well as tense relationships. Even as non-state actors: NGOs, women's rights organisations, networks and groups, are intensely involved in the promotion of women's human rights work in the country and collaborate with the government on several programmes, the relationship between the government and NGOs is not without tensions. A significant reason why NGOs and governments work together is aid architecture and donor requirement.

Direct external funding to NGOs has progressively been replaced by funding through government. The NGO share of ODA has shown an increase from 10.5% in 1990/91 to 27.8% in 2004/05. A sizeable proportion of ODA funding to NGOs is channelled through the government<sup>65</sup>. From latest available data, only 2% of the ODA is directly disbursed to civil society<sup>66</sup>.

The OECD data<sup>67</sup> indicates that ODA to civil society in Bangladesh amounted to about \$55.6 million in 2010. Netherlands alone accounted for about 68% of this, followed by Norway at 18%. Belgium, Ireland, Denmark and Sweden accounted for about 2-4 % each). Given that total ODA to Bangladesh is indeed \$2.7 billion for the year 2010, only 2% of it is directly available for civil society. Most of what civil society receives from ODA is via government (total ODA to civil society via government and direct is no more than 10%).

Non-state actors, as a strategy and principle, work with the governments in their programmes, to ensure support and encourage government ownership. Such partnerships between governments and non-state actors are encouraged and required by donors as well. Governments are required to partner with non-state actors in implementation of programmes financed by donors and non-state actors are required to collaborate with government to ensure ownership and sustainability.

In the area of women's rights in particular, the government launched a Multi-Sectoral Programme for Violence Against Women (MSPVAW)<sup>68</sup>, under the aegis of the Ministry

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<sup>65</sup> Pathways of Women's Empowerment Pathways of Women's Empowerment and BRAC Development Institute 2011

<sup>66</sup> Creditor Reporting System: Data extracted on 19 Nov 2012 02:56 UTC (GMT) from OECD.Stat

<sup>67</sup> All statistics pertaining OECD obtained from online Creditor Reporting System: Data extracted on 19 Nov 2012 02:56 UTC (GMT) from OECD.Stat

<sup>68</sup> <http://www.mspvaw.org.bd/about.php>

of Women and Children Affairs and with the financial support of DANIDA (since 2000). Various line Ministries are participating in this project and many non-state actors are participating in its implementation. The programme is now in its 3rd phase, which will continue until June 2016. Small grants are made to women's organisations and other NGOs for the implementation of its activities. The Bangladesh National Women Lawyer's Association, a membership based NGO of women lawyers has been one of the main recipients of grants under this government led multi-sectoral project.

As described elsewhere all social/ non state organisations working in the area of development are required to be registered with the Government (Social Welfare Ministry) and those receiving foreign aid must be registered also with the NGO Affairs Bureau. If an organisation is also serving as an MFI, they need to be registered with the MicroFinance Regulatory Authority. In accordance with government regulations, all organisations are required to report their activities to the government on a monthly basis, usually to the district administration.

Even as the proportion of ODA directly transferred to non-state actors is miniscule in comparison with direct transfers to the government, the GoB has expressed its 'concerns' over ODA being disbursed to NGOs directly. In their Annual Report on Aid Management in the country, the Ministry of Finance states:

*"In spite of gradual improvements in aid coordination in recent years, the Government is concerned about the fact that a significant portion of ODA still bypasses the national budget process because of direct funding by many development partners to project implementers or by channelling funds through non-governmental organisations (NGOs)"<sup>69</sup>.*

The report goes on to list the reasons why direct disbursements to NGOs is a matter of concern including that it results in inadequate government ownership of many projects, sectoral priorities overriding national priorities and formation of donor supported management units<sup>70</sup>.

Through this report, the government's perspectives on civil society and its autonomy become clear. The government would rather that NGOs 'partner' with them, receive funds (ODA) through governments and the government 'control' the NGO sector.

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<sup>69</sup> Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh (2011): Aid Management in Bangladesh -A Review of Policies and Procedures. Aid Effectiveness Unit. Economic Relations Division, Ministry of Finance.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid.

These kinds of concerns do not bode well for the development of effective and independent voice for civil society in the country. The government seems to be looking at NGOs simply in terms of ‘projects’ that they implement and not as representative of the civil society.

While the government is concerned about too much aid flowing directly to the non-state actors, NGOs and women’s organisations lament the fact that lesser and lesser aid is now available for them to work independently as civil society. According to one study<sup>71</sup>, the trend of reduction in direct financing to civil society on part of donors, coupled with the governments demand for reduced direct transfers to non-state actors is directly affecting the ability of women’s organisations in carrying out their missions. The study also indicates how not only is the funding pattern becoming more unfavourable for non-state actors in general and women’s organisations in particular, civil society and in particular gender issues, are being systematically left out of dialogues and collaboration on development priorities in the country. The Joint Cooperation Strategy signed by the government and 19 donors in 2010 “does not mention gender inequalities or women’s rights and development. The Development Results Framework does not seem to have any indicators of women’s advancement or inequalities”<sup>72</sup>.

The government and donors (development partners) have established a consultative mechanism called the Local Consultative Groups: LGC Bangladesh that serves as a forum for development dialogue and donor coordination. The LGC is composed of 32 Bangladesh-based representatives of bilateral and multilateral donors. Given that this is forum is a formal space for discussing development priorities in the country, it is surprising that civil society representatives from Bangladeshi organisations have no voice in this. One of the sub groups under the LGC is the Local Consultative Group (LCG) Sub-Group on Women’s Advancement and Gender Equality (WAGE), which coordinates donor efforts in strengthening the implementation of the mandate of the Ministry of Women and Children Affairs to mainstream gender throughout government. Priority areas for WAGE include gender and poverty reduction strategy processes, gender and governance, women’s rights and combating violence against women, gender and education, and gender and health<sup>73</sup>. Again, NGOs and women’s

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<sup>71</sup> Pathways for Women’s Empowerment (2011)

<sup>72</sup> Ibid.

<sup>73</sup> <http://www.lcgbangladesh.org/lcg/subGroup.php?q=1&s=2>

organisations are not part of these forums and in an interview for another study, a donor reported that although they wanted to include gender in a forum for WAGE, it did not happen<sup>74</sup>. Not only do forums specifically created for the promotion of women's human rights not have representatives of women's organisations, gender does not seem to figure in their proceedings.

The only exception to this is the Bangladesh Development Forum, 2010, chaired by the Government of Bangladesh, where civil society did participate. However, among civil society, there was no representation from women's organisations and only large NGOs and INGOs participated. Gender or women's rights did not appear on any of the sessions although there was cursory mention of gender equality in one of the background papers (mostly in terms of mainstreaming gender)<sup>75</sup>.

The trend is for development priorities and budget allocations being set at the level of government and donor with little space for engagement with human rights based organisations, including women's groups.

The relationship between donors and recipient civil society organisations has also witnessed a sea change, from a previous relationship of solidarity, it is increasingly becoming a relationship akin to business. While previously, donors were indeed largely responsible for the establishments and organisational; capacity development of women's rights organisations, the latter are now scrambling for funding within an increasingly harmonised, hegemonised, pre-structured and impermeable aid mechanism. Donors that previously supported women's rights organisations are no longer doing so or as much. For example, while the Gender Fund of CIDA, DANIDA and NORAD were key sources in the 1990s for supporting women's rights work, today, NORAD no longer operates in Bangladesh, instead the Norwegian embassy has now a small development programme. Similarly CIDA has undergone several changes, most relevant to the current study, CIDA's small fund on gender, specifically for projects on women's rights and women's participation in decision-making came to an end in November 2010. And DANIDA is constantly reducing its funding to human rights based organisations (described in an earlier section).

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<sup>74</sup> Pathways to Women's Empowerment (2011)

<sup>75</sup> Based on information available on website of BDF: <http://www.erd.gov.bd/BDF-2010>

## CHAPTER IV-RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

What are the available resources for women's rights work and for women's groups and organisations?

Findings from this study indicate that government is the largest source of funding available for women's rights work, especially for women's groups and organisations (NGOs) even if the primary source of that fund is external development aid. With the Paris declaration, donors have moved away from funding civil society organisations directly to financing them via governments. Government-NGO partnerships are necessary conditions for foreign aid in the area of development in general and women's rights in particular.

ODA to civil society via government and directly via donors is no more than 10% of ODA to NGOs. Even as donors have moved away from direct funding to civil society organisations, some amount albeit very small proportion of their total aid, is still directly available for civil society organisations. Even though proportion of ODA available to civil society is a fraction of total ODA, and the proportion directly available to donors is even smaller, the government of Bangladesh has been critical of direct donor funding to NGOs, arguing that it results in inadequate government ownership of projects. Funding pattern is increasingly becoming unfavourable for civil society in general, including for women's organisations.

In addition to finances made available to civil society via the government, and smaller direct funding available directly for NGOs, donors have also set up specific trust funds managed by separate management agencies for funding civil society organisations. Large grant sizes, highly technical proposal-writing requirements and competitive bidding characterize these findings.

In both cases, direct funding from donors and funding via trust funds, there seems to be a preference for larger NGOs and INGOs who then route funding to smaller organisations. For small and rural based women's organisations, larger NGOs and INGOs also serve as source of funding.

Donors and activists contacted for this study confirmed that funding for work related to women's rights is currently available mostly through larger management agencies (e.g. Maxwell, Chemonics) or larger NGOs and International NGOs, and that this trend is likely to continue.

What are the obstacles and challenges faced by women's groups and organisations in accessing resources for undertaking their activism and work to ensure human rights of women?

Most of the obstacles and challenges faced by women's organisations and groups in accessing resources for their work relate to the aid architecture.

- Reduction in direct funding available to women's organisations compromises their 'autonomous' nature, reducing space available for organisations to play the watchdog role. Government's negative attitude towards donors directly funding civil society is likely to affect whatever fraction of ODA that is made available for civil society.
- Move away from long term, programme based funding has been replaced by short-term project based funding, affecting ability of organisations to sustain interventions beyond project period.
- Space for grassroots and needs driven interventions has been affected due to prefixed donor priorities. This has in particular affected funding available for the thematic area of Violence Against Women. While donors have prioritized violence against women as a thematic area, women's organisations share that funding under this thematic area is available only for specific donor preferred interventions (such as community based arbitration) rather than interventions that women's organisations find crucial and missing (such as direct support to survivors of violence, police and judicial reforms, etc.)
- Increased corporatisation of the funding mechanism: competitive bidding, requirement for sophisticated proposals, preferences for larger organisation with greater capacity to absorb larger grants have marginalized smaller organisations that now increasingly depend on INGOs and large NGOs or management agencies for accessing funds. As a result the previous partnership and solidarity based relationships between NGOs and donors are increasingly becoming contractual arrangements between grant making agencies (management agencies, donors, INGOs, big NGOs) and smaller organisations.
- Space for civil society including for women's organisations to engage in policy dialogues on aid agenda and priorities have also shrunk with the change in aid architecture. Forums for deliberating on these policy matters exclude participation of civil society organisations and in the absence of representation of women's organisations and activists in such forums, gender issues have been

marginalized in both discussions on situation analysis as well as in aid priorities.

What are the areas for capacity building and support required by women's groups to enhance and strengthen their outreach and access to required resources?

Findings from this study indicate that women's organisations need support in the area of advocacy with donors, to create more spaces for themselves and to determine aid priorities. In the absence of a match between real situation of women that women's organisations are attempting to address and the kind of support donors are willing to offer, it is absolutely crucial for better dialogue between the two stakeholders and the government.

In terms of capacities, women's organisations report the need for training and support in meeting requirements under the changed aid architecture, for instance, in writing better proposals, bidding more effectively and meeting donor requirements for reporting, etc.

## Recommendations

### For Women's Organisations

- There is a need for women's organisations to collectively challenge the existing aid paradigm and make donors and aid accountable to the goals of gender justice. WROs need to challenge the way in which resources are being allocated by donors and governments.
- There is need to assess government budgets on gender responsiveness as well as assess government aid to NGOs for focus on gender justice.
- Larger NGOs and INGOs who route funds to smaller organisations need to reflect upon and revise their 'partnership' models with smaller organisations to make space for solidarity based networking and collaborations. Women leaders need to address inequities and biases within the women's movement.
- Women's networks need to review their membership to ensure that women's organisations led by the marginalized and excluded are included and participate equally in the networks.

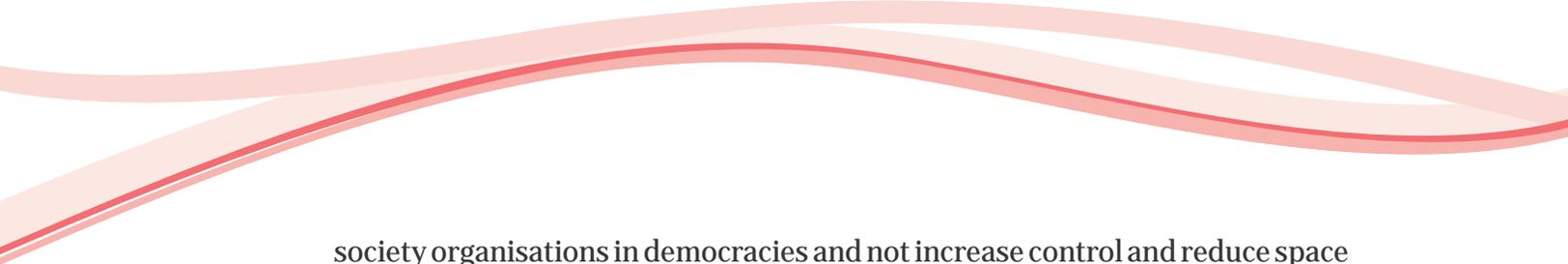
- Women's organisations need to mobilize support and access resource persons for supporting them in developing effective management systems and capabilities. Women's organisations can serve as resource and support organisations to each other, rather than allow aid architecture to turn them into competitors.

#### For Donors

- Donors need to open up the discourse on aid architecture to the voice of women's organisations pursuing goals of gender justice. Current aid structure and priorities need to be rigorously reviewed for their responsiveness to gender inequities and in particular to addressing root causes in a systematic and integrated manner, providing space for innovative strategies. The one hat fits all approach and management imperatives need to be replaced by justice imperatives. Predefined thematic areas and pre-defined donor driven strategies (community based arbitration) need to be reviewed in partnership with women's organisations and target groups.
- Paris Declaration need not be translated to marginalisation of the space for civil society in policy discourses and their participation in reaching out to the most vulnerable and excluded. Civil society should not be seen as mere appendages for expanding government's work but as autonomous institutions that have legitimate space in democratic societies for holding governments (and donors) accountable.
- While systems for rigorous monitoring, reporting and judicious and efficient use of donor resources are an extremely crucial requirement for ensuring aid accountability, they should not become factors that exclude smaller organisations. Donors need to review their mechanisms for working with smaller organisations and invest in building capacities so that the work funded by donors on gender justice is not hegemonised by larger, elite and urban based NGOs or management agencies or INGOs.

#### For the States

- There is a need for the government to review their perception of the role of civil society organisations in general and women's rights organisations in particular. Just as donors, governments need to acknowledge the legitimate role of civil



society organisations in democracies and not increase control and reduce space for their engagement in policy discourse and social mobilisation.

- There is a need to check the lack of accountability and corruption in government offices responsible for registering and monitoring NGOs. Effective grievance redress mechanisms need to be put in place to ensure that NGOs, especially those led by and representing women and marginalized communities are not harassed.

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## Annex I: Summary Activities of Major Donors in Gender and Governance<sup>76</sup>

Under its Policy on Gender and Development, ADB makes a commitment to design and supports a larger number of projects that address gender equality and improvements in the economic and social status of women. Since the adoption of the Policy, many ADB projects across a range of sectors have been developed to provide direct benefits to women. Some projects are designed to specifically target women and correct gender imbalances in education, health, or microfinance. Others have followed the path of mainstreaming gender by ensuring that design features promote and facilitate women's access to, and benefits from the project. For this purpose, a project is classified according to the gender categories.

Based on its Policy on Gender and Development, ADB addresses gender concerns through its loans and grants by (i) mainstreaming gender analysis and gender-responsive approaches in all ADB-financed projects and programs, and (ii) increasing the number of loans that directly address gender disparities. For example, the three phases of Public Expenditure Support Facility Program and Countercyclical Support Facility Support Program - PESF include three thematic issues: Social Development, Private Sector Development and Gender Equity.

As mentioned earlier, the EC focal areas in CAS 2007 - 2013 are: (i) social sectors with focus on education (ii) good governance and human rights and (iii) Economic and Trade Related Technical Assistance. EC's commitment to gender and the environment remains unchanged and will be woven into the design of programmes in all three categories. Non-focal area is environment and disaster management. It must be mentioned that Good governance and Human Rights includes combating trafficking as a major component.

UN System: Enhancing Gender Equity in Bangladesh - The U.N. Population Fund has earmarked US\$7 million to support gender equity in Bangladesh as part of the country program for 2006-2010; (*Status: Current; Opportunity Type: Consulting, Goods, Works*)

CIDA addresses gender issues as crosscutting themes incorporated in its programs, for example in education, CIDA will focus on:

- Improving the quality and delivery of education
- Increasing access and retention rates in primary schools
- *Reducing gaps between girls and boys*

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<sup>76</sup> From Diakonia 2010

In health, CIDA will focus on:

- Ensuring that healthcare and medicines are delivered efficiently
- *Improving maternal and child health delivery systems*
- Providing essential drugs and medicines

Since 2008, EKN Dhaka is implementing its multi-annual strategic plan. Governance and gender remain important crosscutting themes which need further strengthening, both within the three sectors of health, education and water, as well as independent themes in themselves. EKN support to this sector is crucial because Bangladesh, after achieving a certain level of success in the social sectors, needs to further improve its governance to sustain those achievements.

Under strategic goal 1 improved human rights and human security, EKN is monitoring closely and keeping up active and critical/constructive dialogue with the government and other development partners on general human rights issues. EKN is supporting community policing, birth registration and NGO initiatives to promote gender equality, prevent violence against women and making people aware about women's rights.

Current EKN Activities:

1. Institutionalising the Department of Women's Studies at the University of Dhaka Objectives
2. Support to Acid Survivors Foundation
4. Legal Education and Gender Awareness Leadership (LEGAL II)
5. Gender responsive community based policing

In Bangladesh the activities of the GTZ focus on the following three priority areas:

- Health care (including family planning, HIV/AIDS)
- Human rights, democracy, participation and good governance
- Energy, in particular renewable energy and energy efficiency

Programmes and Projects in Bangladesh:

*Basic Health, Family Planning, HIV/AIDS*

Health, Nutrition and Population Sector Programme

Multidisciplinary HIV/AIDS Programme in Chittagong, Rajshahi, Khulna and Sylhet

*Governance, Local Development*

Promotion of Legal and Social Empowerment of Women

Good Governance in Urban Areas

Promotion of Private Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs) Following

Expiry of the Multi-Fibre Arrangement  
Rural roads and markets in the Khulna and Barisal regions (Rural Infrastructure  
Improvement Project / RIIP)

GTZ works with government agencies and relevant Ministries, usually at the policy making level and the following bilateral and multilateral organisations:

- Asian Development Bank (ADB)
- Food and Agricultural Organisation (FAO)
- South Asian Enterprise Development Facility (SEDF)
- Swiss Inter-cooperation
- Department for International Development (DFID)
- United Nations Development Programme

Main thematic priority areas for NORAD funded projects in 2009 were: environment, including climate change, and gender and equality with a special emphasis on women's rights, sexual and reproductive health.

Gender is one of the two crosscutting themes being continued in Bangladesh and built into all SDC cooperation projects; analysis of the inequalities that exist between women and men. The specific roles of both sexes in society are analysed, as are the differences as regards access to and control of resources

The main areas of Swedish co-operation (SIDA), as set out in its policy for global development, should serve as a reference for all activities:

- Human rights
- Democracy and good governance
- Gender equality
- Sustainable use of natural resources
- Economic growth
- Social development and welfare, including HIV/AIDS prevention
- Conflict management and security
- Global public goods

There is a multi-year, USAID-funded Human Rights program in Bangladesh. The program will increase access to justice for survivors of domestic violence and other related human rights abuses; increase awareness and capacity of communities to reduce domestic violence; and ensure that the Government of Bangladesh enforces comprehensive women's rights and domestic violence policies. The deadline for proposals was May 17, 2010.

## Annex II: Definitions of Rights Based Approach

In order to ensure parity and consistency in analysis of qualitative data, common definitions and sets of parameters were developed - for instance while analysing the approaches being undertaken by the groups, the following definitions were referred to by all the researchers:

*Category 1: Explicitly Rights Based (with principles of equality including gender equality):* it brings together gender, participation, and empowerment into a coherent framework, which is rooted, in the norms and principles of international human rights standards and values. Focuses on, (i) Participation - inclusive, people-centred; (ii) Empowerment - leading to social transformation, for the marginalised and oppressed communities; (iii) Accountability: Identification of claim-holders and corresponding duty-holders (state and non-state); (iv) Equality and Non-discrimination- as defined by international human rights law; and (v) Justice - based on universal standards and norms; just distribution of resources and power, ensuring claims of violations.

*Category 2: Explicitly Rights Based (with feminist principles):* Along with elements of category 1, clear articulation of feminist principles - critiquing unequal power relations, analysing gender inequality and protecting and promoting women's rights and issues

*Category 3: Strongly Rights Based:* Groups that reflect a rights based approach in their praxis- which means their activities, demonstrate adoption of a rights based approach even while the articulation may be missing (responses on objectives, strategies, activities and changes in women lives include elements of RBA - participation, empowerment etc. but not seen within the framework on quality and non-discrimination. No direct reference to human rights standards, inclusion or social transformation)

*Category 4: Some Elements of Rights Based:* Groups that refer to rights based approach, and there is some level of understanding within the organisations, however, the activities or strategies do not reflect the same.

*Category 5: RBA not Clearly Articulated/Welfarist:* Focusing on the needs and not on rights of the communities; addressing immediate causes of problems. Programmes are entirely around the needs of the community, and there is little or no linkage between one programme line and another, as no attempt has been made to synchronise programme plan or strategic understanding. No reference to elements of RBA.



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