

## OUTCOME XM-DAC-41146-BGD\_D\_1.1

**By 2026, more people in Bangladesh, particularly the most vulnerable and marginalized from all gender and social groups and those from lagging districts benefit from sustainable livelihood and decent work opportunities resulting from responsible, inclusive, sustainable, green, and equitable economic development**

There has been some progress towards this outcome. In 2023, 2,200 employees (933 women, 1,267 men) from five districts of Bangladesh benefitted from improved workplace practices, including equality in remuneration, parental leave, protection from harassment and abuse and access to safe working environment – all core components of the decent work agenda. This was facilitated through the adoption and implementation of gender-responsive organizational policies, standards, and practices in 17 small and medium enterprises, under the Women’s Empowerment for Inclusive Growth (WING) programme, implemented jointly by UN Women, UNDP and UNCDF. All 17 enterprises have signed Women’s Empowerment Principles (WEPs) demonstrating their commitment to promoting gender-responsive and inclusive workplaces. “Our journey with WING has enabled us to internalize empowerment at multiple levels, not only as individuals but also as entrepreneurs to engage more women and girls in earning opportunities by facilitating gender-friendly work environment,” said Farida Yasmine from Kurigram, Proprietor of Nari Natural Craft, one of the 17 women entrepreneurs supported by the project. Initiated in 2021, UN Women continued to provide technical and accompaniment support to these enterprises in 2023. In total, 13 Human Resource (HR) and Gender Policies (GP) were revised, and four new policies developed. Further in 2023, gender-responsive migration governance was strengthened through the development of two key legal and policy instruments. Firstly, the Overseas Employment and Migrants (amendment) Act, 2023 was passed by Parliament on 14 September 2023 to bring sub-agents of international migration under accountability; and secondly, the National Reintegration Policy for Migrants was re-submitted to the Legislative and Parliamentary Affairs Division. Both instruments (one approved, and the other under review) will have a significant impact on the lives of migrant workers, including women migrant workers in Bangladesh. Women migrant workers constitute on average 14 per cent of the total migrant workers in Bangladesh (2013–2022). UN Women contributed to the drafting of the National Reintegration Policy for Migrants, as a member of the Technical Committee led by the Ministry of Expatriates’ Welfare and Overseas Employment (MoEW&OE), as well as through the agency’s active members in the Labour Migration Technical Work Group, under the UN Network on Migration in Bangladesh. In line with CEDAW General Recommendation 26, key recommendations provided by UN Women with regard to dedicated interventions to address social stigma attached to returnee women migrant workers, criticality of psychosocial support to gender-based violence (GBV) survivors and enhancing access to financial inclusion and social protection, have been included in the final draft of the Policy that is now under review by the Legislative and Parliamentary Affairs Division. The focus on regularizing sub-agents in the Overseas Employment and Migrants (amendment) Act, has been a key demand of women migrant workers and their networks. This is an extremely important legal pronouncement that will promote fair and ethical recruitment at the national level and enhance decent working conditions for vulnerable women and men migrant workers. UN Women has supported these advocacy efforts since 2022. In 2023, in collaboration with Refugee and Migratory Movements Research Unit (RMMRU), UN Women and ILO advocated for the regularization of sub-agents in the field of international labour migration, to address fraud and ensure ethical recruitment practices for migrant workers in Bangladesh. At a national level multi-stakeholder event, Rana Mohammad Sohail, the Member of the National Parliament (MP) said,

“Neither the agency nor the sub-agent takes responsibility when mismanagement occurs. The absence of evidence and the legal identity of sub-agents prevents the legal process. This issue can be solved if we implement registration of sub-agents.” The theory of change for this outcome remains valid. A key lesson learnt is the criticality of peer networking, cross-learning opportunities and accompaniment support to partner enterprises – this serves as a motivator to improve and strengthen their organizational policies and practices. Noting that gender-responsive organizations benefit all employees, regardless of gender, greater efforts are needed to identify opportunities and strategies to increase and facilitate women’s access to decent work, especially in male-dominated sectors, to enhance women’s participation in the labour force. [1] <https://unglobalcompact.org/take-action/action/womens-principles>

#### OUTCOME XM-DAC-41146-BGD\_D\_1.2

**By 2026, ecosystems are healthier, and all people, in particular the most vulnerable and marginalized in both rural and urban settings, benefit from and contribute to, in a gender responsive manner, a cleaner environment, an enriched natural resource base, low carbon development, and are more resilient to climate change, shocks and disasters**

There has been significant progress on this outcome in the reporting period. The updated draft of the Climate Change Gender Action Plan (CCGAP) was approved by the Ministry of Environment Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC) in 2023. Aligned to the Government of Bangladesh’s National Adaptation Plan (NAP) 2023–2050, the CCGAP will serve as a key instrument to enhance the resilience capacity of women and the most vulnerable groups to climate change, shocks and disasters. Recognizing the gender-differentiated impacts of climate change, the CCGAP identifies six priority areas for gender-responsive climate actions. It aims to strengthen women’s equitable access to resources; build their capacity for climate-resilient alternative livelihoods; and promote engagement in agriculture, fisheries, livestock, and other Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) related interventions. Its close alignment with the NAP will also ensure that other key ministries and departments deliver on their gender targets for climate adaptation. The review and update of the CCGAP, which was first developed in 2013, was enabled with UN Women’s technical and financial support to MoEFCC. The process was co-led by the Bangladesh Climate Change Trust (BCCT), a statutory body that funds to undertake climate action. Previously under the Regional Empower Programme, UN Women in collaboration with the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) and the UN Environment Programme (UNEP) developed the State of Gender Equality and Climate Change Report (2022) that served as an important evidence base for the revision of the CCGAP. The extensive process of consultations undertaken to update the CCGAP reflects MoEFCC’s commitment to ensure diverse perspectives inform the design of the Action Plan, including women facing multiple vulnerabilities. This enhanced understanding and sensitivity to gender issues at the institutional level is a result of sustained technical and capacity development support provided by UN Women and its partners. In 2023, UN Women facilitated the participation of key officials from MoEFCC on gender mainstreaming in climate change, at a regional workshop. A high-level field visit to observe women-led local adaptation models in Khulna, resulted in a specific request from the Secretary, MoEFCC to undertake a study in the Southwest coastal districts, to assess the extent to which women have benefitted from climate investments. UN Women also developed a “Gender Guideline” for BCCT. This tool was approved by the BCCT Board in 2023 and will enable BCCT officials to assess the gender responsiveness of projects requested by different government departments, prior to funding them. The theory of change for this outcome remains valid. In 2024, BCO will support MoEFCC a detailed, costed to monitor the implementation of the CCGAP. A key lesson learnt was the importance of creating spaces for direct engagement and self-representation of women leaders, especially at the inter-governmental level and investing in building capacities of women to influence policy makers engaging in inter-governmental processes. UN Women is committed to supporting the next generation of women leaders from diverse groups, fostering networking power, to engage and

influence in more technical forums that remain primarily gender-blind, such as climate change negotiations.

#### OUTCOME XM-DAC-41146-BGD\_D\_1.3

**By 2026, more people, especially the most vulnerable, benefit from more equitable, non-discriminatory, gender-responsive, participatory, accountable governance and justice, in a peaceful and tolerant society governed by the rule of law.**

There was some progress against this outcome in 2023. Bangladesh continues to demonstrate a strong dedication to gender-responsive and participatory governance by prioritizing gender equality and women's empowerment (GEWE), as evident in the national development plans and its commitments to international normative standards. In 2023, the National Statement of Commitment delivered by the Honourable Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina at the SDG Summit reiterated the Government's dedication to GEWE. The statement re-affirmed that the Government has "extended the National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security (NAP WPS) 2019 – 2022 period until 2025" and remained firmly committed "to fulfilling the WPS agenda". UN Women provided input for gender equality to the National Statement of Commitment as part of a coordinated effort by the United Nations Country Team. Further, UN Women offered to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA), Ministry of Women and Children Affairs, and other key stakeholders (members of the Inter-Ministerial Coordination Group for NAP WPS, Bangladesh Armed Forces Division and BIPSOT) on the implementation of the NAP WPS, the National Action Plan on National Women Development Policy (NAP-NWDP), and other global normative standards for gender equality. UN Women leveraged its convening role by bringing together the civil society and government to advance GEWE. Bangladesh Nari Progati Sangha (BNPS), a longstanding civil society partner of UN Women, supported the localization of the NAP-WPS through a series of dialogues and orientations across 17 districts, bringing together local government representatives, government officials and civil society representatives. Further, BNPS showcased the lessons learned from Bangladesh's example of developing a NAP WPS at a regional forum on behalf of the Government. This representation demonstrated the collaborative and inclusive outlook of the government concerning the WPS agenda. BNPS and Bangladesh Mahila Parishad (BMP), as the two civil society representatives in the Inter-Ministerial Coordination Group, also acted as a bridge between local and central levels of the government. They brought forth the voices from the grass roots of not only women leaders but also local government officials and representatives on WPS issues to MoFA as the lead ministry coordinating NAP WPS implementation. The support from UN Women has been acknowledged at various levels, including by the Foreign Secretary Ambassador Masud Bin Momen, and the current and former Directors General (UN), Mr. Emdadul Islam Chowdhury and Mr. Toufiq Islam Shatil, during various dialogues and courtesy visits. The Theory of Change remains valid for this outcome. However, the national and global economic slowdown, coupled with an evolving political situation in the country in the latter half of 2023, emphasised by blockades/strikes by the opposition, meant that planned interventions had to be revised and alternate means taken with limited funding. The diversion of funding by donors towards other crisis areas, such as Afghanistan and Ukraine, meant could not be mobilized for Bangladesh in 2023. Hence, a limited scope of the work for this Outcome was undertaken with a small amount of funding from the UN Women Governance, Peace and Security (GPS) Regional Framework 2023-2027. To mitigate the risks, the Country Office remains focused on streamlined resource mobilization, including exploring potential direct funding against the Strategic Note, for which discussions are ongoing with the Government of Sweden. In terms of lessons learned, the voices from the grassroots women amplified the need for local-level engagement between government and civil society on issues of women, peace and security. Although national policies and action plans are in place to advance the WPS agenda in Bangladesh, without proper dissemination of information from the central to the field, especially to the local government authorities, the implementation of such action plans would not be as effective as planned.

**By 2026, women, girls and gender diverse people benefit from an environment in which they are empowered to exercise their rights, agency and decision-making power over all aspects of their lives and are free from all forms of discrimination, violence and harmful norms and practices**

Progress towards the outcome is on track in 2023. An enabling environment for gender equality was fostered by the increased capacity of duty bearers to design and implement gender-responsive policy frameworks and the enhanced ability of rights holders, especially women and girls, at the community level to challenge harmful norms and practices. In 2023, the Ministry of Women and Children Affairs (MoWCA) finalized the National Action Plan (NAP) 2021-2030 for the National Women Development Policy (2011) (NWDP). The NAP is a critical framework to guide the implementation of NWDP, which constitutes the core policy document of the government on gender equality and women's empowerment (GEWE). The NAP will guide all 54 ministries to mainstream gender issues within their planning and budgeting processes and ensure focused interventions. The NAP NWDP, based on the 12 critical areas of concern in the Beijing Platform for Action and mapped against relevant Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) indicators and the Development Results Framework of the 8th Five-Year Plan (8FYP), addresses key structural barriers to gender equality, including social norms, violence against women and girls, and discriminatory legal frameworks. The NAP calls for the utilization of gender-responsive budgeting (GRB) for effective implementation of actions across ministries. The finalization of NAP NWDP marks a culmination of technical assistance and advocacy provided by UN Women over several years (including technical review, support for inter-ministerial coordination, and consolidation of stakeholder inputs). The Government of Bangladesh reaffirmed its vision for GRB at the 2023 SDG Summit, with a dedicated commitment to increase gender budget allocation to a minimum of 35 per cent of the national budget by 2025. It thereby underlines the need to accelerate financing for GEWE to realize the country's development objectives, including the implementation of the NAP NWDP and the SDGs, through GRB. As part of a UN Country Team-led effort, UN Women provided technical inputs on GRB to inform the National Statement of Commitments. Girls and boys enhanced their ability to influence decision-making and challenge harmful norms and practices, fostering an enabling environment for gender equality in their communities. Girls and boys across five secondary schools in Dhaka improved their ability to identify and address discriminatory gender stereotypes through play-based classroom activities. More than 67 per cent of girls and 85 per cent of boys were able to identify gender stereotypes. Moreover, 61 per cent of girls and 31 per cent of boys self-reported increased ability to respond (know what to do) when witnessing sexual harassment incidents, a significant increase from the baseline of 20 per cent and 21 per cent, respectively. This was facilitated by UN Women and its partner JAAGO, a youth-led organization, under the "Ending Gender Stereotypes in Classrooms" project. The theory of change remains valid for this outcome. At the mid-point of the 8FYP (2022-2025), Bangladesh is at a pivotal juncture as it prepares for the graduation from Least Developed Country status in 2026. In the run-up to the national elections (in January 2024) the country witnessed an overall slowdown. UN Women must re-strategize priorities in 2024 to facilitate the acceleration of GEWE priorities. The forthcoming development of the national 9th Five-Year Plan offers an opportunity to support MoWCA to mainstream gender across the national development plan.

**By 2026 more women and girls are empowered by gender responsive enabling environment, to exercise their agency and decision-making with improved access to protection, education, and socio-economic opportunities.**

There has been significant progress towards this outcome. Women and girls from both the Rohingya and host community demonstrated enhanced agency, decision making and ability to access socio-economic

opportunities. This was even more significant considering the refugee crisis, now protracted, is well in its sixth year, with a deterioration of the security situation in the camps in 2023. This in turn led to an increase in serious protection incidents in the refugee camps and related restrictions on the mobility of women and girls. Income-generation opportunities for the Rohingya refugee community remain limited. Against this backdrop, UN Women and its partners facilitated women and girls' access to essential gender-responsive services, support, and information (gender-based violence [GBV], leadership, livelihoods skills development, education, through the Multi-Purpose Women's Centres (MPWCs) managed by UN Women's partners ActionAid Bangladesh (AAB), BRAC and Oxfam. In 2023, 119,555 women and girls in the refugee camps and host community (Rohingya: 88,434; host community: 31,122) enhanced their knowledge of gender equality and ability to promote women's rights. Of these, 1,864 women (Rohingya: 232; host: 1,632) started income generation activities, with an average monthly income of BDT 3,906 (USD 36) through producing and selling handmade products. They were part of a cohort of 4,721 women (Rohingya: 3,511; host: 1,210), including 20 gender-diverse persons), who participated in livelihoods related trainings. In the refugee camps and host communities of Teknaf, Ukhiya, and Cox's Bazar Sadar, 510 women participated in Second Chance Education (SCE) activities, including literacy, numeracy, and basic computer literacy; of which 72 women successfully graduated from the programme. More than 98,037 Rohingya community members (45,610 women and girls; 52,427 men and boys) increased their awareness of gender equality and women's rights, and services and opportunities available to women and girls. This was facilitated through household visits, group sessions, and outreach activities conducted by UN Women's 56 Gender Volunteers (46% women; 54% men). In 2023, 528 women leaders known as the 'Maitree Apa' (Rohingya: 180; host: 348) demonstrated enhanced leadership to promote social cohesion and mitigate/mediate GBV in their communities. Altogether, Maitree Apas mediated and resolved 85 per cent of the GBV incidents that came to their attention in their communities (681 out of 797), referring the remaining 42 cases to relevant authorities or service providers, with support from UN Women's partner Ain O Salish Kendra. Access to services and opportunities was supported through improved field-level coordination to address service gaps and awareness-raising efforts at various levels, including government and humanitarian actors. Furthermore, accountability of humanitarian actors to mainstream gender across the humanitarian response was ensured through their participation and engagement in the Gender in Humanitarian Action Working Group. As a result, gender equality considerations were integrated across the 2024 Joint Response Plan and its project appeals. UN Women also ensured the inclusion of women's empowerment and gender equality perspectives in the work of the Livelihoods and Skills Development Sector, Protection Sector and the GBV Sub-Sector (GBV-SS) of which UN Women is an active member. In support of the localization agenda, UN Women continued to promote the role of women-led organizations (WLOs) and women's rights organizations (WROs) in the response, training 36 representatives (34 women; 2 men) of WLOs/WROs on leadership skills and on feminist leadership principles in collaboration with the GBV-SS, and training 10 WLOs/WROs on Prevention of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse, results-based management, and programme management principles. The theory of change remains the same for this outcome. Key lessons learnt include the critical and urgent need for integrated programming across the humanitarian-development-peace nexus, according to the humanitarian response thematic evaluation. The Multi-Purpose Women's Centres in Cox's Bazar have emerged as a scalable solution for integrated services across the nexus, acting as service points for strengthened empowerment, resilience, protection, and leadership. UN Women must continue to implement and develop longer-term nexus programming that is adaptable to future risks, addresses the root causes of gender inequalities, and promotes social cohesion. In this regard, investment in local capacities to stay and deliver is a must. Livelihood training empowers the Rohingya women and girls This multi-sector consultation has had a profound impact on every woman entrepreneur in Cox's Bazar Dialogue between Rohingya and host community on social cohesion