



The Daily Star

Implementation of the National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security

A roundtable discussion titled “Implementation of NAP-WPS (2019-2021) and CSO Involvement” was organized by Bangladesh Nari Progati Sangha (BNPS) with the support of UN Women Bangladesh on 8 June, 2022. The Daily Star was the media partner. The virtual meeting was streamed live on the Facebook page of The Daily Star. The meeting was chaired by the Executive Director of BNPS, Rokeya Kabir. Women and human rights organization, academicians, journalist, government officials and representatives from law enforcement agencies attended the event.



Shahnaz Sumi, Deputy Director, BNPS National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security (NAP-WPS) was launched by the Bangladesh Government

in November, 2019. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs is leading the action plan along with 11 other ministries. Bangladesh Nari Progati Sangha (BNPS) and Bangladesh Mohila Parishad are associated with this action plan as CSOs. A monitoring team will be formed involving the feminist network of women organizations in Bangladesh to monitor the implementation process of NAP-WPS.

The time frame for implementing this plan was 2019-2022. We are already into the final year, and there is very little progress in its implementation. Today we want to discuss the following issues: progress of the action plan, how it can be associated with the national budget, how natural disaster, manmade disaster, VAWG, violent extremism can be addressed, how we can move forward jointly with the law enforcement agencies and how we can extend the time frame of NAP-WPS for its effective implementation.



Rokeya Kabir, Executive Director, BNPS The UN Security Council adopted resolution 1325 on women, peace and security on October 31, 2000 following

the demand of global women's movement. The resolution reaffirms the role of women in the prevention and resolution of conflicts, peace negotiations, peace building, peacekeeping, humanitarian response and in post-conflict reconstruction and stresses the importance of their meaningful participation and full involvement in all efforts for the maintenance and promotion of peace and security.

In the context of Bangladesh where intolerance and violence against women are widely prevalent, a National Action Plan was formulated in 2019 under the leadership of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and with the support from UN Women. BNPS supported this process by collecting evidence, opinion, information from different areas of the country. The plan can be an effective tool for advancing women's cause and ensuring their participation in the socio-political and economic development process. Unfortunately, we haven't been able to make much progress in the implementation of this national action plan.

In today's roundtable, we will discuss how we can take this plan to the grassroots level and ensure proper implementation of it as well as how the existing barriers to women empowerment can be removed.



Tania Sharmin, Planning Monitoring and Reporting Analyst, UN Women Bangladesh Bangladesh is pioneer when it comes to

women, peace and security agenda. It played a key role in the adoption of Resolution 1325 which for the first time called for a meaningful participation of women in peacebuilding and resolution of conflicts.

Bangladesh has made commitment to the global normative framework and the implementation of 1325 Resolution by adopting a National Action Plan on Women Peace and Security (NAP-WPS) in 2019. This plan will be extended further to ensure its full and effective implementation.

UN Women, in partnership with BNPS, is supporting grassroots civil society organizations throughout the country to capacitate them on women, peace and security (WPS) issues and to localize the agenda so that the

implementation of the plan can take place with the government and the civil society in tandem.

We must remember that the WPS agenda is not only applicable for conflict situations. We are living in a global pandemic context where the peace and security of women have been severely compromised, as women are disproportionately impacted by the effects of the pandemic. The absence of conflict does not always mean peace. We need to make sure that we take this WPS agenda throughout the nation and enable young women, young men, civil society and all other actors to support the implementation of the WPS agenda.

Gender inequality remains the most stubborn and persistent of all inequalities. UN Secretary-General António Guterres has stated, “Today, women's leadership is a cause, tomorrow, it must be the norm.” So we need strong women leaders both at national and local levels to take the WPS agenda forward.



Shamsuddoza Sajen, Commercial Supplement Editor, The Daily Star Although there is no large-scale conflict or war in Bangladesh, there is a wide prevalence of

violence, particularly against women, in the country. In the Global Peace Index 2021, Bangladesh ranked 91 among 163 countries on gender based violence. Bangladesh is also one of the most vulnerable countries to the effects of climate change, and

RECOMMENDATIONS

- » Extend the implementation period of NAP-WPS.
- » Strong women leadership is needed to take the National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security (NAP-WPS) agenda forward.
- » Allocate funds for CSOs so that they can make meaningful contributions to the implementation of NAP-WPS.
- » Increase budgetary allocation for gender specific projects and make the budgetary process gender-responsive.
- » Recovery efforts in WPS agenda should focus on climate change, Rohingya refugee crisis and Covid-19 pandemic.
- » Activate the consultative platform of NAP-WPS.
- » A parallel report on the progress of NAP-WPS should be prepared by CSOs.
- » A media strategy should be developed for the implementation of the NAP-WPS.
- » Coordination among all the stakeholders needed to implement NAP-WPS.
- » A social movement should be created to end violence against women.

Bangladeshi women are confronting serious negative consequences of it. Therefore, the WPS agenda is very relevant for us.

Media can play a key role in the implementation of the national action plan on WPS agenda. Gender-balanced and gender-sensitive reporting on peace and security issues can contribute significantly to the integration of the gender lens into the male-dominated peace and security paradigm. A media strategy should be developed in this regard.



Nasrin Begum, Coordinator, BNPS Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) have been preparing themselves for quite some time to contribute to the implementation

of this action plan. As part of this process, BNPS has selected 54 women organisations from all over the country through mapping process and developed their capacity on the WPS agenda. These grassroots organisations are now able to play a big role in disaster preparedness, community policing, gender responsive early warning mechanism for preventing violent extremism and prevention of gender-based violence. Hence, the government should immediately start the implementation of the action plan on women peace and security.

In the NAP-WPS there is no provision for providing funds to the CSOs for their initiatives. They have

to raise and spend their funds by themselves that often become very challenging.



Dr Meghna Guhathakurta, Executive Director, RIB The existing national action plan can be extended for a year since the plan couldn't

be implemented properly due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

The NAP-WPS didn't pay adequate attention to the Rohingya refugee crisis. During the formulation of the plan in 2019, it was thought that the problem will not persist for a long period. However, it has now become a protracted crisis for Bangladesh. Hence we should consider this issue while revising the NAP-WPS. Another important issue to be considered seriously is the impact of Covid-19 pandemic.

Recovery is one of the three pillars through which the national action plan will be implemented. We have to strengthen our recovery efforts by putting special emphasis on climate change, the Rohingya refugee crisis and Covid-19 pandemic.

Domestic violence is the most prevalent type of violence in Bangladesh. It has become so pervasive that a single ministry will not be able to prevent it. It requires collective action involving all the relevant stakeholders. It should be given special emphasis in the WPS agenda. We also need to take preventive measures to combat hate speech against women.



Mohammad Golam Sarwar, Assistant Professor, Law Department, Dhaka University Women and girls have been most severely affected

by the impacts of Covid-19. Gender-based violence increased drastically during the pandemic. We should consider this aspect while revising the WPS action plan.

A major barrier to the implementation of NAP-WPS was the lack of orientation among key stakeholders. Many of them are not fully aware of their specific responsibilities. UN Women has been providing assistance to the Foreign Ministry in this regard. The orientation process should be strengthened further to ensure proper implementation of the action plan.

A remarkable aspect of NAP-WPS is the inclusion of CSOs in the consultative platform. This platform should be activated immediately.

There are still many laws in our country that promote and perpetuate gender inequality and gender-based discrimination. We have to identify those laws and policies and reform them. We have to rethink the government's reservation to CEDAW.

We also need to change our institutional outlook. In many cases, a victim of gender-based violence has to go through further ordeal during the investigation process. As a result, many

cases of violence against women go unreported.

Finally, we have to develop the capacity of our institutions to fight against gender-based violence. We often talk about gender budgeting which means preparing budgets or analyzing them from a gender perspective. Unfortunately, it doesn't reflect in our budgeting process.



Dr Fauzia Moslem, President, Bangladesh Mahila Parishad I don't see any gaps in government policies

regarding women empowerment, but the problem lies in the implementation of these policies. As to the implementation of CEDAW, the government often says that our society is not yet ready to accept such modification. But it is the duty of the government to prepare the society for such developments.

Civil society organisations, particularly women organisations, in Bangladesh have been at the forefront of the women's rights movement. However, the space for CSOs is gradually shrinking in our country, and therefore, the women's rights movement is also losing strength.

The National Action Plan has three pillars: 1) prevention, 2) participation, and 3) protection, relief, and recovery. We should evaluate what progress has been made in these three sectors and what are the outputs.

We have to transform the women's rights movement into a social movement to prevent the wide prevalence of gender-based violence.

The galloping growth of madrasa education in Bangladesh is a matter of serious concern. Our constitution quite categorically stresses a common education system for all. The government should work to fulfil this constitutional pledge.



Sheepa Hafiza, Gender specialist

We should focus more on the impacts of the pandemic while revising the national action plan.

Civil society organisations should start preparing a parallel report on the progress of NAP-WPS. It will ensure better implementation of the action plan.

We should conduct a rigorous study to identify the impacts of gender-based violence on the peace situation of our country.

Journalists should be made familiar with the components of NAP-WPS to make the action plan more visible as well as engaging them in the implementation process.



Amena Begum BPM, Deputy Inspector General (DIG), Special Branch, Bangladesh Police We have formulated a strategic plan on what role women

police can play to ensure the security of every woman in Bangladesh. We follow up on the progress of the strategic plan on a regular basis. UN Women is also providing us support in this regard.

Bangladesh women police have been working with exemplary dedication in the peacekeeping missions since 2000. We sent an all-female police contingent to Haiti in 2010. Currently, another all-female police contingent is deployed in DR Congo.

One-stop service desks for women, children, persons with disabilities and elderly persons have been set up at all 659 police stations across the country, marking the birth centenary celebrations of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. This desk is led by a female police officer. Last year, we provided support to 3,44,000 persons through this help desk.

A large number of women faced cyber violence during the pandemic.

We launched police cyber support for women to counter this menace. The programme is run by police women.

Female officers of the Armed Police Battalion are also working in Rohingya support shelters. An all-female contingent can be deployed to run these support shelters.

We have a gender module. We are working on upgrading this module in collaboration with UN Women. We will hold a day-long training programme on gender for the newly recruited constables this month. We will soon upload an online gender module for the male police members who didn't get gender sensitization training. They can complete the module online, and the completion certificate will be added to their service book.

Police women badly need day-care centres. We have the necessary infrastructure but don't have adequate human resources for running these centres. The Ministry of Women and Children Affairs can help us in this regard. There should be day-care facilities in all localities so that more women can participate in the workforce.

Finally, I want to claim that we are trying our best to implement the NAP-WPS. Other government institutions should also come forward. The Ministry of Public Administration should be included in this action plan. They can help coordinate among different ministries.



Farida Yasmin, Deputy Police Commissioner, Professional Standards & Internal Investigation, Dhaka Metropolitan Police, Dhaka

We have been providing support to women, children, persons with disabilities and elderly persons through our one-stop help desks. However, we don't have adequate training to address the trauma faced by these persons. If we get training on counselling skills we will be able to provide better services. We also need to develop the capacity of our rehabilitation centres. Finally, we all need to work together and ensure coordination of our efforts to fight violence against women effectively.

Rokeya Kabir

Women's rights organizations get a minuscule portion of the government's development budget. We should raise our voices for increasing the allocation to the gender fund.

When a woman faces violence, not only she personally gets traumatized, it also affects all other women and their family members. A country can't make progress keeping half of its population behind trapped in the four walls of the households and in the threat of violence inside or outside of the household.

The spirit of our Liberation War is that every citizen is equal irrespective of their religion, ethnicity, gender, or class identity. Everyone has the right to live, to be free, and to feel safe. We must live up to that spirit.

Women made equal contribution to the Liberation War than men but suffered worst sexual violence. However, we only mention them as victims of rape and abuse. Many women actively participated in the war but we do not recognize their role. BNPS has prepared a list of female freedom fighters and shared it with the Liberation War Ministry. More work is needed in this regard. In this respect, BNPS took efforts to train journalists for gender sensitive reporting of rape, to build national narrative such a way where women's heroic role is reflected. Still it needs more work to do.

Bangladesh has made remarkable progress in many sectors. However, we are still lagging behind in terms of ensuring a safe environment for our women. If we fail to do that then all our achievements will be eroding, since the cost of VAWG is very high.

Finally, we all should work together to implement the NAP-WPS. If it is implemented properly it will help remove many barriers for the emancipation of women in Bangladesh.