



Women at the Forefront: Shaping Climate Action in Bangladesh

A roundtable titled “Advancing Gender-Responsive Climate Action: Road to COP30” was held on September 1, 2025, at The Daily Star Centre, Dhaka. Jointly organised under the EmPower Project—led by UN Women and UNEP with support from the Governments of Sweden and New Zealand—and hosted by The Daily Star, the dialogue brought together government officials, development partners, civil society, and academics. Participants highlighted Bangladesh’s climate vulnerabilities and the disproportionate risks faced by women and girls, while emphasising their critical role in resilience and innovation. Discussions focused on shaping Bangladesh’s COP30 position, strengthening the national Climate Change and Gender Action Plan (ccGAP), and ensuring women’s voices and leadership guide climate action.



Navanita Sinha
Deputy Representative, UN Women



This year marks a pivotal moment for gender equality, coinciding with the 100th anniversary of the Beijing Platform for Action, the most comprehensive framework on women’s rights. While progress has been made over three decades, gaps remain significant. The Gender Snapshot report by UNDESA and UN Women highlights stark inequalities: eradicating extreme poverty among women could take 137 years, and 48 million more women face food insecurity than men. Women spend 250 million hours daily collecting water, and climate change could push up to 158 million women into extreme poverty by 2050. COP30 must strengthen climate finance, gender-responsive adaptation, and feminist climate justice.

Dilruba Haider
Programme Specialist, UN Women (Keynote presenter)



Over the past decade, the UNFCCC has made significant strides in integrating gender into its processes. Starting with the Lima Work Programme on Gender in 2014, followed by the adoption of the Gender Action Plan (GAP) at COP25 and subsequent reviews at COP26-28, progress has been evident, though gaps remain. With COP30 in Brazil approaching, the final review of the enhanced Lima Work Programme and GAP offers a crucial opportunity to assess achievements, address shortcomings, and set clear priorities for the years ahead.

The GAP focuses on five core areas. Capacity building, knowledge, and communication aims to harmonise gender terminology, promote gender-disaggregated data, and tailor outreach to marginalised groups. Women’s leadership and participation prioritises representation, mentorship, grassroots funding, and protection for women human rights defenders. Coherence emphasises integrating gender across UNFCCC bodies and coordinating with institutions like the IPCC and CBD, although linkages with frameworks such as the Rio Conventions and Sendai Framework remain weak. Means of implementation highlights gender-responsive budgeting, financing for grassroots women and smallholder farmers,

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Strong COP30 Position:

Prepare a clear, actionable position paper to represent Bangladesh’s gender-responsive priorities.

2. Gender in Policy:

Embed gender-responsiveness in national climate documents, including NDCs and adaptation plans.

3. Data & Evidence:

Collect and use gender-disaggregated data to guide policies and monitor progress.

4. Women’s Leadership:

Ensure meaningful participation of women, especially from grassroots and marginalised communities.

5. Gender-Focused Finance:

Secure dedicated funding for gender-integrated climate projects.

6. Global Alliances:

Form coalitions with like-minded countries to push feminist, accountable climate policies.

7. Inclusive Approaches:

Address needs of women with disabilities, gender-diverse, and marginalised groups, engaging men as allies.

access to technologies, and data collection. Monitoring and reporting ensures transparency in gender composition, systematic reporting, and development of gender indicators to strengthen accountability.

Bangladesh’s Climate Change Gender Action Plan (CCGAP), developed prior to the GAP, outlines six priority areas: natural resources, livelihoods, infrastructure and settlements, women’s leadership, means of implementation, and capacity building. While aligned with the GAP, it initially lacked coherence and monitoring provisions, though frameworks are now being developed.

Challenges remain. Negotiation texts are heavily bracketed, with care work, gender-based violence, and climate finance often diluted. Reliance on voluntary reporting weakens accountability, and political sensitivities around gender constrain inclusivity. Yet opportunities exist. Bangladesh can prepare negotiators with clear priorities, form alliances with like-minded states, and push for feminist climate justice. As Dilruba Haider emphasises, there can be no climate justice without gender justice.

Dr. Ainun Nishat
Advisor, C3ER - BRAC University



Recommendations on gender-responsive climate action are only meaningful if effectively implemented. Resolutions alone are insufficient unless integrated

into national policies with dedicated funding for gender-responsive projects. A landmark development on June 24, 2025, saw the International Court of Justice recognise disabilities within gender-responsiveness, broadening inclusivity and highlighting the need to address

diverse identities in climate policy. Understanding the global political context is equally critical—Bangladesh must identify supportive and non-consenting countries to ensure its COP30 delegation is fully prepared, aligned, and capable of negotiating effectively. While most ministries have developed Gender Action Plans, these risk remaining symbolic unless implementation is prioritised. Gender-responsiveness must be country-driven, embedded across all sectors, and treated as integral to development planning rather than an afterthought.

Dr. Shamima Nasrin
Planning and Statistics, Ministry of Women and Children’s Affairs



The Ministry of Women and Children’s Affairs must be an integral part of the Gender Action Plan under discussion. While priorities have already been identified,

the key challenge lies in translating these commitments into concrete delivery, particularly in the context of gender and climate change. Gender considerations should not be viewed as a separate agenda but mainstreamed across all sectors, embedded at the heart of national planning and implementation.

Mohammad Faruk Hossain
Deputy Secretary, Ministry of Disaster Management and Relief



The increasing frequency of climate-induced disasters in Bangladesh affects communities unevenly, with women, girls,

persons with disabilities, and marginalised groups being the most vulnerable. Women face heavier unpaid care burdens, limited access to resources, and greater risks of gender-based violence. Gender-responsive measures have helped reduce disaster mortality disparities: from a 1:14 death ratio in 1970, to 1:5 in 1991, and now 1:1. The ministry promotes gender equality through targeted employment programmes, reserving at least 30 percent of beneficiary positions for women, often exceeding 40 percent. The cyclone preparedness programme, with 80,000 volunteers—half women—earned a UN Public Service Award in 2021. Early warning and evacuation systems prioritise women and girls, supported by a Disaster Risk Financing Strategy. Strengthening women’s leadership and ensuring accountability remain central to gender-responsive disaster management.

Farah Kabir
Country Director, ActionAid



Despite some progress, major gaps persist in advancing gender-responsive climate finance. Many countries still lack comprehensive policies, while

the Gender Action Plan (GAP) faces weak accountability and inadequate funding. Similarly, the proposed \$1.3 trillion in climate finance, including \$300 billion annually lacks clear delivery mechanisms. Also, no pledges have been made for the minimum annual need of \$400 billion for the Loss and Damage. A lack of political will continues to be a major obstacle. Women’s participation in climate negotiations is often symbolic, with most holding junior roles while decision-making power rests with men. Bangladesh must therefore advocate for emission caps, predictable climate finance, and gender justice on the global stage. Nationally, a transformative, rights-based Gender Action Plan is needed supported by cross-ministerial collaboration, gender- and age-disaggregated data, capacity building, and the amplification of grassroots women’s voices—to ensure that policies are rooted in lived realities.

Shaheen Anam
Executive Director, Manusher Jonno Foundation



Global and national frameworks are important for securing commitments, but unless they are translated into concrete

policies and actions, they risk becoming meaningless. The realities of marginalised women—those who struggle daily for food, shelter, and security—often remain far removed from high-level discussions. Thirty years ago, Bangladesh returned from Beijing with renewed hope and a national action plan, but momentum was lost due to weak accountability, leaving implementation incomplete. At this critical juncture, we cannot afford to waste more time. Achieving gender justice requires first believing in gender equality as a principle.

It is also vital to recognise that women are not a homogenous group. Intersectionality must shape our strategies, particularly in addressing the needs of climate-vulnerable women. Their practical needs—such as food, accommodation, sanitation, and basic rights—must be met alongside their strategic needs, including equal access to resources and opportunities. Continuity within the bureaucracy is equally crucial so that commitments are sustained and transformed into action on the ground.

Jesmin Nahar
Deputy Secretary, Ministry of Environment, Forest, and Climate Change



Our gender action plans must align closely with both national and international priorities while addressing the root causes of gender inequality. These plans should

not be developed in isolation; they must actively engage all stakeholders—including government institutions, development partners, and civil society organisations—to ensure the process is inclusive and representative. Above all, accountability is crucial. Strong gender indicators and robust monitoring frameworks must guide the implementation process so that commitments do not remain on paper but are effectively translated into action.

Md. Shamsodoha
Chief Executive, Centre for Participatory Research and Development



A key gap in gender equity discussions is the inclusion of gender-diverse populations, indigenous communities, and persons with disabilities, yet some countries resist incorporating this perspective at international platforms. Implementation remains critical: beyond commitments