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“Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace
for the twenty-first century”: implementation of strategic
objectives and action in critical areas of concern and
further actions and initiatives**

Statement submitted by the Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.



Statement

Challenges and achievements in the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals for women and girls in Bangladesh

Although Bangladesh has already met several targets of the Millennium Development Goals, such as reducing the poverty gap ratio, attaining gender parity in primary and secondary education and reducing the under-five mortality rate, it still has a long way to go. Despite these achievements, issues relating to the situation of women and girls are still not adequately addressed.

Goal 1. Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger

Achievements

Bangladesh has made commendable progress in respect of eradication of poverty and hunger. Inclusive growth has resulted in impressive poverty reduction, from 56.7 per cent of the population in 1991/92 to 31.5 per cent in 2010. The latest household income expenditure survey (2010) data show that the incidence of poverty declined at an annual rate of 2.47 per cent from 1992 to 2010 against the Millennium Development Goals target of 2.12 per cent. Bangladesh has already surpassed the target of the poverty gap ratio indicator for goal 1 (8.0 per cent), bringing the poverty gap ratio down to 6.5 per cent. The estimated figures suggest that the Millennium Development Goals target of halving the population living below the poverty line (from 56.7 per cent to 29 per cent) was achieved in 2012.

Challenges

Achieving decent work for women is a challenge for Bangladesh. Unemployment, as well as underemployment, is particularly rife among young people between 15 and 24 years of age. This age group comprises nearly 9 per cent of the country's population and 23 per cent of the labour force. Moreover, attaining food security and nutritional well-being, income inequality and the low economic participation of women also remain challenges.

Goal 2. Achieve universal primary education

Achievements

Significant progress has been made in increasing equitable access to education. The total net enrolment ratio is 98.7 per cent, 99.4 per cent for girls and 97.2 per cent for boys. The number of dropouts has been reduced and the number of students completing the education cycle has risen. A number of quality-enhancement measures have been implemented in primary education. Bangladesh has already achieved gender parity in primary and secondary enrolment.

Challenges

The challenges under Millennium Development Goal 2 include attaining the targets of primary education completion rate and the adult literacy rate. The quality of education is also a challenge at the primary and higher levels.

Goal 3. Promote gender equality and empower women

Achievements

Bangladesh has already achieved gender parity in primary and secondary education at the national level. There was a sharp increase in the number of women parliamentarians elected (20 per cent of total seats) in the last national election. A few large private organizations introduced complaint/suggestion boxes and formed committees headed by women to address workplace-based violence against women and sexual harassment. The secondary school curricula, teacher training curricula and textbooks have been fully reviewed, revised and upgraded.

Challenges

Wage employment for women in Bangladesh is still low. Only one woman out of every five is engaged in wage employment in the non-agricultural sector. Presently, Bangladeshi women still do not have equal property rights. The absence of a uniform family code creates discrimination between women and men, which is an obstacle to achieving gender equality and women's empowerment. Civil society, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and networks have been lobbying the Government to withdraw the reservation to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (art. 2) and draft a uniform family code. However, owing to lack of political will and extremism, this has not happened.

Goal 4: Reduce child mortality

Achievements

Bangladesh has already met the target of reducing the under-five mortality rate: against the target of 48 per 1,000 live births in 2015, it had already achieved 44 per 1,000 live births in 2011. It is also on track for reducing the infant mortality rate. The successful programmes for immunization, control of diarrhoeal diseases and vitamin A supplementation are considered to be the most significant contributors to the decline in child and infant deaths, and have the potential to positively affect overall economic and social development. Despite these improvements, challenges remain.

Challenges

While the mortality rates have improved, major inequalities among the population still need to be addressed. Childhood injuries, especially drowning, have emerged as a considerable public health problem responsible for a quarter of the deaths among children 1-4 years of age.

Goal 5. Improve maternal health

Achievements

According to the Bangladesh Maternal Mortality and Health Care Survey, maternal mortality declined from 322 per 100,000 live births in 2001 to 194 in 2010, a 40 per cent decline in nine years. The average rate of decline from the base year has been about 3.3 per cent per year, compared with the average annual rate of reduction of 3.0 per cent required for achieving the Millennium Development Goals in 2015. The surveys for 2001 and 2010 show that overall mortality among women of reproductive age consistently declined during these nine years.

Challenges

There are a range of areas, such as the existence of income poverty and prejudice, lack of awareness, lack of services and weak institutional supports, which remain major challenges to maternal health. The maternal mortality rate is still comparatively high — 194 per 100,000 live births — with only 24 per cent of births attended by skilled health personnel. An estimated 30 per cent of adult women in Bangladesh are malnourished. Bangladesh has the unfortunate distinction of persistent early marriage (the average age is 16.4 years) and early childbearing, which often leads to high infertility and maternal mortality.

Goal 6. Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases*Achievements*

The prevalence of HIV/AIDS in Bangladesh is currently less than 0.1 per cent and below an epidemic level. Major interventions for malaria control include expanding quality diagnosis and effective treatment of 90 per cent of malaria cases; promoting use of long-lasting impregnated nets and insecticide-treated nets in 100 per cent of households in the three hill districts; and intensive information, education and communication campaigns for increasing mass awareness of prevention and control of malaria. Bangladesh has already achieved the Millennium Development Goals targets of tuberculosis case detection and cure rates.

Challenges

Although the prevalence of HIV/AIDS is low, the threat remains. There is a tendency to ignore the issue and a stigma associated with it. The lack of information and political commitment and trafficking of women and girls compound the situation.

Goal 7. Ensure environmental sustainability*Achievements*

Since 1991, there has been a steady increase in carbon dioxide emission in Bangladesh. In 2007, the emission was 0.3 ton per capita. At present, the proportion of terrestrial and marine areas protected is 2.3 per cent, which is much lower than the target of 5 per cent. About 98.2 per cent of the population of Bangladesh used improved drinking water sources and 63.6 per cent used improved sanitation in 2011.

Challenges

Critical issues concerning equity, discrimination, sustainability, politics and local knowledge continue to be neglected. There are no gender-disaggregated data to measure progress. Access to safe water for all is a challenge; arsenic and salinity intrusion, as a consequence of climate change, hinders the availability of safe water, especially for the poor.

Goal 8. Develop a global partnership for development*Achievements*

Between 1990/91 and 2010/11, the disbursed official development assistance (ODA) as a proportion of Bangladesh's gross domestic product (GDP) declined from 5.6 per cent to 1.6 per cent. During this period, per capita ODA disbursement fell from \$15.75 to \$12.01. During the periods 1990/91 and 1996/97, the share of grants and loans in total ODA was about the same. After these periods, the share of grants consistently declined, while that of loans rose. However, in 2010/11, the share of grants increased to 48 per cent of total ODA. Out of 34 member States of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), only nine countries provided \$363,990,000 in ODA to Bangladesh in 2010/11; the amount was only 20.5 per cent of total ODA received by Bangladesh in the year. Of the nine OECD countries, only three — the Netherlands, Sweden and Norway — complied with their commitment to provide 0.7 per cent of their gross national income as ODA to the developing countries. Total ODA disbursement in Millennium Development Goal sectors like education, health, social welfare, labour, public administration and social infrastructure have been receiving greater attention. These sectors, together with agriculture and rural development, received about 51 per cent of total ODA disbursement in 2011. All ODA received from bilateral OECD/Development Assistance Committee donors was fully untied in 2011 against 82 per cent in 2005 and 94 per cent in 2007.

Challenges

Global partnership is still a challenge for Bangladesh. Most of the developed countries did not demonstrate a positive attitude on this goal.
