

# AIUB's Contributions to Gender Equity and Women Empowerment

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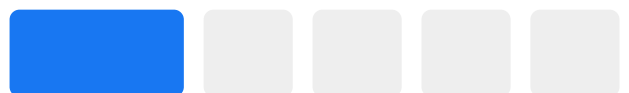
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Bangladesh has appeared as a dazzling global model of Women empowerment, holding positions at every domain of its social and political development, including Prime minister, Parliament Speaker, and Cabinet ministers. As per the World Economic Forum and BSS, Bangladesh presently positions seventh in the world in terms of women's political empowerment with women carrying 50 seats in the country's parliament and 12,000 local political offices. Notwithstanding political empowerment,

Bangladesh is attempting to crack several glassceilings by appointing more skilled women at the top positions in the judiciary, academia, administration, military, and diplomats, while the current Awami League government implemented a gender budget, which really staggering in the world.

The population of employed women in Bangladesh raised from 16.2 million in 2010 to 18.6 million in 2016-17, as a result of the government's attempts to emphasize sharing equally with men and make more competitive job market for women. And in a regional setting, Bangladesh ranked 47th out of 144 countries in 2017 in terms of women empowerment, according to The Global Gender Gap Report. Whereas many South Asian countries like India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka Bhutan and Nepal scored 108, 143, 109, 124 and 111 respectively.

Gender equality in Bangladesh begins with the empowerment of women by some of the country's leading organizations and non-governmental organizations (NGOs). Dr. Rubana Haq is the first female president of the BGMEA in Bangladesh. Ms. Humaira Azam, named as Managing Director of a leading commercial bank, Ms. Rubaba Doula, Country Manager of Oracle, Bangladesh is demonstrating women's leadership in different capacities. Not only in the commercial organization of Bangladesh, but there is a significant participation of women recently observed in the women football teams, cricket teams, shooting teams and so on who are motivated and participating in international events representing Bangladesh, which was not seen a decade ago. Many women are also involved in the print media as journalists, news presenters on various television channels and social media as director, assistant director for various television channels. Women are coming out with confidence to do business on social media platforms also. All of this demonstrates that various industries in Bangladesh are welcoming women as top leaders of organizations.

AIUB Management exemplifies the heart of an unending quest to improve employee competency and organizational performance. This strategy does not exclude female employees. As a result, women have been observed participating in every single operation (both academic and administrative) of AIUB.

AIUB still believes in each individual's skill and consistency, regardless of gender. The Vice Chancellor of AIUB is a female, Prof. Dr. Carmen Z. Lamagna. In 1997, she became the first female Vice-Chancellor of a university in Bangladesh. AIUB appointed a female Vice-Chancellor, not only because she possesses all of the qualifications for the role, but also because AIUB management shares the vision of our father of the nation, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. Sheikh Mujib was elevating women's status by defining equal protection in all spheres of the state and public life as a constitutional requirement under Article 28. The International Alliance of Women (TIAW) awarded Prof. Dr. Carmen Z. Lamagna as one of the top 100 women in the world in the education category in 2012.

Previously, a substantial majority of women in the country were denied access to education for a variety of legal, economic, and cultural reasons. Education for young female was made compulsory until the higher secondary level in the rural area with economic donations. Education for women should be a holistic approach and prioritized in order to ensure their holistic development and empowerment as well as their participation in a sustainable social advancement. Our existing Honorable Prime

Minister, Sheikh Hasina, spearheaded the creation of a National Education Policy, emphasizing the value of women's education as the first step toward economic development.

Also, our current Honorable Prime Minister, Sheikh Hasina, took several steps to ensure women's empowerment, as evidenced by her remark, "A society cannot raise its head high if its women remain underdeveloped." The 7th Five Year Plan (2016-2020) aims to create "a country where men and women have equal opportunities and rights, and women will be recognized as equal contributors to economic, social, and political development."

To achieve the sustainable goal as well as fulfill the Bangladesh government's five-year plan, AIUB Management has always collaborated many strategies empowering women where women have equal opportunities and feel content to work free of any sort of harassment and discrimination. During Bangladesh's 50th anniversary of independence, constructive steps for women's empowerment and gender equality were also observed in AIUB's initiatives. The following are the actions that AIUB initiated and is still carrying out:

AIUB offers 13 Undergraduate programs and 7 Graduate programs spread across four faculty. The university currently has a gross enrollment of 10,027 students, with 24 percent (2,373) of them being females in both undergraduate and graduate programs. It has 404 full time faculties, 157 officers and 360 support staff. AIUB has a total of 404 faculty members, with 284 males and 120 females. This means that nearly a third of all faculty members are female. Female officers make up 13% of the total number of officers. Female support workers make up about 3% of the workforce. These figures illustrate AIUB's promising practices (PP) in women's empowerment and gender equality. The practices AIUB introduced regarding women's equality and empowerment not only fulfill our "Father of the Nation's" vision, but also uphold one of the 17th Sustainable Development Goals.

PP1(Promising Practices):The Dr. Anwarul Abedin Scholarship Grant for Female University Student

The late Dr. Anwarul Abedin, AIUB's Founder and Chairman of the Board of Trustees, had a vision of providing scholarship opportunities for female students in order to reduce the gender gap. By taking advantage of this opportunity, female students gain a competitive advantage that promotes continuing and advanced education from the undergraduate to graduate levels. Every Spring and Fall semester, the Dr. Anwarul Abedin Leadership Grant is giving out with the aim of empowering female leaders. Each semester, a scholarship is given to one female student (mentioned above) for the duration of the program. The program first aired in 2013. The grant only covers the tuition fee (100%) for eligible female students each regular semester.

PP2(Promising Practices): AIUB Women Forum

The AIUB Women Forum was initiated at the AIUB Auditorium on March 8, 2015, to coincide with International Women's Day, by Vice Chancellor Dr. Carmen Z. Lamagna. With education, entrepreneurship, and leadership, the Women's Forum aspires to empower women at all levels of decision-making. This Forum aims to rejuvenate people, provide opportunities for them to develop and instill faith in women. This involves not only women aspiring to the top of the corporate ladder, but also women at

the uppermost of the social ladder. It's also about political recognition and economic empowerment. The Forum brought together women's rights activists, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), women's organizations, and influential female entrepreneurs. Dr. Carmen Z. Lamagna, Vice Chancellor, emphasized the role of women in exploring and resolving barriers to opportunities in education, industry, and political leadership, including women's health, spousal abuse and sexual assault. The AWF foresees a world in which equality for all is more than a slogan, but a fact, and human rights are recognized and secured. All AIUB women, including students, faculty, and administrative staff, are members of this Forum, which organizes various awareness programs on women's rights and empowerment.

#### PP3(Promising Practices): Equitable Access

AIUB Management has always believed in fairness in terms of the program which are carried out to support the higher education in the society. AIUB does not have a gender imbalance. If any academic or non-academic staff member is eligible for promotion. Employees are promoted wholeheartedly without any discrimination in regards whether the applicant is a male or female. And within the hierarchy, all types of employees (academic and non-academic) are paid equally. In terms of holding jobs, many females are in managerial positions, indicating that not only does AIUB not have a gender bias, but is also willing to empower women. It is fortunate that the Vice Chancellor is a woman, her passion and concern for female to get educated with the same opportunity given to male. Ms. Nadia Anwar, the former Chairman of the Board, and Founder and Vice President, Student Affairs is also a woman with a charismatic personality. AIUB's board of trustees has 5 female members out of a total of 9. Women hold leadership roles including Advisor for Department of Law, and BBA Director, as well as Additional Director for Institutional Quality Assurance Cell (IQAC-AIUB), Head, Department of MGMT & HRM for Business School, Head for Department of Physics, convenors, Special Assistant to the OSA, and Junior Executives, among other academic and non-academic positions. The university has never compromised, segregated or favoured one gender over another.

#### PP 4: (Promising Practices): Good Health and Well-Being

Separate clean toilet facilities and medical facilities are provided for female students, faculty members, and staffs. Female students, faculty members, and employees are now enjoying a more pleasant working atmosphere with no Gender inequality. A separate Sexual Harassment Committee exists at AIUB. AIUB also handles complaints from female students and staff members on a first-come, first-served basis. Female faculty, students, and staff have access to their own prayer room and gym time. AIUB also provides maternity leave to female faculty and administrative staff. Female students, like male students, have an equal opportunity to receive a high-quality education, succeed at comparable levels and reap the same educational benefits from AIUB. At AIUB, policies aimed to reduce gender discrimination are more successful as they are a part of a larger package that includes health, justice, happiness and the opportunity to provide feedback.

#### PP 5: (Promising Practices): Part-time jobs on campus are available

Since inception, AIUB has always provided students with on-campus part-time work opportunities with a special emphasis on female students. The justification for this on-

campus work is because the female students may not get permission from their parents to go outside of campus while studying to improve their communication, teamwork and leadership skills. Apart from these, AIUB Management is also involved in offering part-time employment to female students in addition to male students for the following reasons.

- If a student is wise enough to get a job in a field related to their studies, the job experience will improve the quality of their portfolio.
- When students work part-time learn how to handle their time effectively.
- Furthermore, a structured lifestyle prevents adolescents from engaging in harmful behaviors.

PP 6: (Promising Practices): Female students are encouraged to engage in various club events

AIUB stands for alliance of inspiring female students to participate in a wide range of club activities, as shown by the number of female members of various clubs and leadership positions such as President, Vice President, and Chief Marketing Officer. The key goal is to improve the personal development and leadership skills of female students. Joining clubs encourages them to interact with a diverse group of people, broadening their perspectives and ingenuity while also building leadership skills in a peer setting, which can benefit them both professionally and personally. Female students make up over one-quarter of the club's membership and approximately 20% of the clubs' Executive Committees.

Gender equality and women's empowerment development have been observed in several activities by various Bangladeshi organizations as during the country's 50th anniversary of independence. Many organizations promote these in the workplace, but women are still not protected on the road. There are numerous instances of females being assaulted or raped on the road in Bangladesh that go unreported. Domestic evasion must be supervised and protected even inside the home, both in rural and urban areas, by adhering to strict government guidelines.

In the media, there are few moral and social development strategies for children and young people that emphasizes gender equality and women's empowerment. These types of programs assist them in forming and focusing on their beliefs and moral judgement. As we approach to the 50th anniversary of our independence, religious and moral education about gender equality and women's empowerment fosters responsible attitudes toward others by raising awareness and appreciation of the value of each person in this diverse society.

AIUB is leading in the Gender Equity and Women's Empowerment Movement using a variety of strategies to use Bangladesh's more skilled female labor force to accelerate economic and social progress. AIUB is attempting to increase women's confidence and awareness (students, faculty members, and Staffs), as well as to encourage women at all levels to learn skills in order to engage in the country's Development. Our female students have received the Women in Leadership (WIL) award twice. It was organized by WIL, and they won for their voice, vision, and vividness which serve as an inspiration to other Bangladeshi women. The AIUB held workshops and game shows in different girls' schools and colleges to encourage them to continue their education. Female

faculty members are having a welcoming atmosphere to conduct research and participate in a variety of academic and non-academic activities. AIUB encourages them to take the lead in non-academic events as mentors, supervisors and coordinators. High interest has been observed in the faculty exchange program, as well as participation in local and international conferences on a regular basis.

To deliver quality education with Women's engagement in poverty alleviation and socioeconomic growth is the goal of AIUB. The AIUB appeals to policymakers of government, private institutions, labor markets and all other sectors to work together to support Bangladeshi women who contribute to country's attainment of upper-middle-income status.

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