



# Gender Equality and Media Regulation Study

BANGLADESH

# Gender Equality and Media Regulation Study

B A N G L A D E S H

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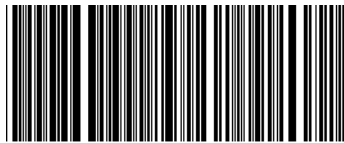
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# Foreword

Fojo Media Institute of the Linnaeus University, Sweden, initiated the global study on Gender Equality and Media Regulation in collaboration with the Gothenburg University's Department of Journalism, Media & Communication (JMG) to understand how gender equality and women's freedom of expression are integrated in media regulation, self-regulation and within media inhouse policies.

MRDI conducted the Bangladesh part of the global study. This study aims to understand how gender-equality concerns are integrated into the media-related regulations, policies and self-regulatory frameworks in Bangladesh.

The study is the result of hard work of a dedicated team. MRDI is thankful to Qurratul-Ain-Tahmina, journalist and trainer, for leading the country study as the principal investigator. We also thank other members of the team. The selected media houses extended all cooperation by participating in the questionnaire survey which has been an important methodological tool for the study. They deserve special thanks. We interviewed the leaders of self-regulatory bodies in a semi-structured format, which include Bangladesh Press Council, Editors' Council, Newspaper Owners' Association of Bangladesh, Bangladesh Nari Sangbadik Kendra, Dhaka Union of Journalists, Dhaka Reporters' Unity and The Sub-editors' Council. We express our gratitude to them for their kind cooperation.

The study identified and analysed existing major laws and policies related to media and gender issues. Mr. Fowzul Azim Senior District Judge, Bangladesh Judicial service and former Chief Research Officer, Bangladesh Law Commission critically reviewed the report and suggested accurate application of some legal terms, interpretations and citations. MRDI extends sincerest thanks to Mr. Fowzul Azim. The changes following his review have been extremely helpful to the study.

MRDI thanks the Fojo Media Institute for involving us in the study. The writers of the global report Sarah Macharia (gender and media expert, coordinator of the Global Media Monitoring Project) and Joan Barata Mir (international media law expert, fellow at the Stanford Cyber Policy Center), and Agneta Söderberg Jacobson, gender advisor of Fojo extended all support and cooperation to the Bangladesh study team. We are grateful to them.

MRDI hopes, findings and recommendations of the study will help policy-makers, regulators and media houses formulate norms and implementational measures, which will create an enabling environment in the media industry, free from all kinds of discrimination.

# Preamble

The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action for the Advancement of women (BPfA) adopted at the Fourth UN World Conference on Women (1995) called on governments and other actors to “increase the participation and access of women to expression and decision making in and through the media and new technologies of communication”, (Strategic objective J.1.) and “promote a balanced and non-stereotyped portrayal of women in the media” (Strategic objective J.2.). Similar to provisions in other policy instruments prior to and following the BPfA’s adoption, area J intimated at possible tensions between guaranteeing (women’s) freedom of expression on the one hand and media independence on the other hand. Freedom of expression and media freedom however, are not mutually exclusive. Both are necessary for democracy and protected in international standards. Only in a society where there is a plurality of voices that participate in an accessible and dynamic public sphere, is there room for the development and improvement of democracy.

This study initiated by Fojo Media Institute in collaboration with Gothenburg University’s Department of Journalism, Media & Communication (JMG) and other partners is one in a set of country case studies conducted to understand how gender equality and women’s freedom of expression are integrated in media regulation, self-regulation and within media inhouse policies. The case studies were implemented in countries in which Fojo is active, namely Armenia, Bangladesh, Rwanda, Somalia, Sweden and Zimbabwe. The case studies accompany a broader global study of gender in media law and policy at international, regional and country levels spanning more than 100 nations.

***Key findings in the global study include the following:***

- ❖ Transnational policies with gender and media provisions tend to remain at the level of generalities, focusing commonly on gender-based discrimination, gender stereotypes, the role of stereotypes in socialization of children, and violence against women.
- ❖ There are inconsistencies between commitment to gender equality in national policies, and to gender equality in media policies and legislation. Widespread interest in general gender equality at national levels does not appear to filter into State media regulation to the same extent.

- ❖ In the five in ten national media policies with provisions related to gender equality sampled, it is the right to non-discrimination on the basis of a list of identities, including sex or gender that is protected, making this the single most common issue at which State regulators draw the line on media freedom.
- ❖ In industry self- and co-regulation, the few instruments with gender-related provisions address a handful of issues, including non-discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation, gender identity, and most prevalent, treatment of sexual assault survivors. Some provide for content monitoring and mandate the respective authorities to investigate complaints, however the extent to which complaints mechanisms function as intended, is limited.
- ❖ Only a fraction of media organisations have in place gender equality, equal opportunities or gender-diversity policies.
- ❖ The global study considers the scope and obligations derived from the protection of gender equality and freedom of expression as human rights by international and regional systems. It assesses how such supranational principles inspire national legal systems regulating media, underlining that:
- ❖ The role of freedom of expression within the context of democratic societies would deem certain provisions aimed at restricting or limiting the dissemination of opinions and ideas contrary to the notion and principles of gender equality excessive and disproportionate, and therefore unacceptable within the context of a free, open and pluralistic public sphere.
- ❖ An alternative method to promote gender equality in media would be to establish proper and efficient self or co-regulatory mechanisms, which can also be promoted through appropriate media policies and legislation.
- ❖ Effective promotion of gender justice needs to be connected to the adoption of specific policies rather than to the mere enforcement of legal and regulatory provisions.
- ❖ It is important for civil society and academia to pay particular attention and increase research and advocacy regarding gender equality on social media platforms. It would also be necessary to promote and/or regulate increased transparency of platforms with regards to the impact of their content-moderation policies on gender-justice.
- ❖ Where legal restrictions are not acceptable, alternative positive policy measures to address possible societal risks could be applied. These include: Establishment of reinforcement of codes of ethics for journalists, specifically covering gender treatment issues; promoting media pluralism and reinforcing the role and mission of public service media; training of journalists and media professionals on freedom of expression and the right to equality and non-discrimination.

The global study offers a set of recommendations and a pathway to catalyse the effectiveness of policy and legislation in addressing gender equality issues and enabling women's freedom of expression in and through the media.

Ultimately, the global research and the detailed country studies seek to guide media development bodies and other stakeholders in their work to promote gender equality in and through the media with full respect for other human rights involved, particularly the right to freedom of expression and freedom of information.

***Sarah Macharia***  
Consultant and Writer  
Global Report

***Joan Barata Mir***  
Consultant and Writer  
Global Report



# Country Study: Bangladesh

# Executive Summary

This study seeks to provide new knowledge and analysis about gender-equality related provisions in regulations, self-regulatory frameworks and policies concerning media in Bangladesh. It also explores their implementation and monitoring aspects.

It seeks to provide clear recommendations and cite best practices that can assist stakeholders including law and policy-makers to promote gender equality in and through the media without compromising professional independence. For clarifying the contextual situations and ground realities, it also seeks to provide qualitative reflections accumulated through the research process.

March through mid-October 2021, the study explored:

- to what extent and how have gender-equality, gender-sensitivity or gender-awareness issues been integrated into the regulation and self-regulation concerning both media structure and content.
- whether such integration and efforts could contribute to the overarching goal of increasing the freedom of expression for women and girls, for people of non-binary gender, for people belonging to sexual minorities, and also for men and boys in situations similarly relevant.
- if any such effort could lead to compromising or curtailing media freedom and independence.

For these explorations, the study used mixed methodology, both quantitative and qualitative. A total of 43 Acts and Rules including the Constitution and 12 national-level media policies were selected for mapping and analysis. A questionnaire survey of 18 media houses were conducted, while seven regulators and self-regulators were interviewed.

The study finds that provisions for gender equality and sensitivity in media regulations and national policies have two distinct features. The earlier provisions were concerned more about decency, obscenity and other such issues mainly from a moralistic perspective. The main concerns seemed to have been protecting the morality of society from effects of such contents, rather than protecting the rights of women.

Then over the last couple of decades, gender-related provisions in media regulation and policies have been markedly influenced by development concerns. Media advocacy for women development along with other development goals started occupying a central space in regulatory and policy frameworks.

This era might have introduced a rights perspective but gender-equality in the media organisations has not been the dominant primary approach. Provisions on ‘gender-sensitivity’ were more frequent. The laws and regulations lack a requirement for equal coverage of women or other gender minorities in media content as well. The policies may have some requirements of this from the perspective of development in various sectors.

The laws varyingly provide eligibility criteria for ownership, which are basic, general and more or less common in nature, not specifying anything on gender-equality commitment. Such mentions would be more appropriate and necessary in policies. All policies, with the exception of one, are silent about gender-equality or gender-sensitivity commitments of owners. No law or policy, however, have any bar to a woman being an owner of a media outlet.

Sector-wide self-regulatory frameworks are very rare, so are individual house-level ones. Written in-house policies on gender equality or sensitivity are very few.

Regulatory and supervisory authority of all the media rests primarily with one central ministry, while gender-related supervision is the responsibility of another ministry. No implementation or monitoring mechanism could be located. Scarcity of data in this field is another major problem. Implementation and monitoring are generally weak in media organisations too.

The study recommends more stress on having policies, especially within media organisations. While regulations are important, law alone cannot do much. Policy is more important, at the state level of course, but especially the self-regulatory ones. In the absence of an industry-level press commission, unions and professional organisations need to formulate codes of conducts. Monitoring should be strengthened both at regulatory and self-regulatory levels. Getting the editors and owners on board is important.

The study particularly recommends, building on whatever gains have been made so far—building on the awareness amongst the media leaders about what is politically and ethically correct. Alongside looking for what gaps are there, one needs to examine how much and what have been achieved, and what factors made the changes happen. A crucially important task is liaising with the women’s rights and gender rights movements and gain their support for attaining gender-equality and sensitivity in the media.

# Section-1. Introduction

## 1.1 STUDY OBJECTIVES

This study aims to understand how gender-equality concerns are integrated into the media-related regulations, policies and self-regulatory frameworks in Bangladesh. The study also tries to figure out if such efforts can help increase freedom of expression for the people experiencing inequality because of their gender status, without compromising media freedom and independence.

Nearly half the population in number, women continue to constitute the largest gender minority in Bangladesh. A non-binary gender minority community has gained recognition by the state in the last decade, who are yet to be enumerated. Inequality is the common factor that bridge both the groups. This inequality is also manifested in their representation within media organisations and in media contents.

The Constitution of the country guarantees the right of every citizen to freedom of speech and expression, and freedom of the press, subject to any reasonable restrictions imposed by law. The country's media sector is diverse, large, and historically prominent, but suffering from ill health—financially, organisationally and professionally, degenerated by all the crises that prolonged and growing deprivation of freedom of expression and widespread politicisation usher in.

Laws and regulations of Bangladesh, including those concerning media, are rooted in the common British colonial heritage of the Indian sub-continent. They were adopted and continued to evolve when the country was a part of Pakistan and then through its half-a-century old independence.

Regulating the media, then newspapers and periodicals, with various muzzling Acts dates back to 1799, during the British period. The legacy continued throughout the Pakistan era, 1947 to 1971, as the majority of the newspapers continued to play adversarial political roles.<sup>i</sup> In the 50 years of Bangladesh, similar regulatory and extra-regulatory attitudes and actions persisted and continue to do so in diverse forms.<sup>ii</sup>

On the other hand, predominant policies of the media organisations had centred on politics, broad social reformatory issues and power. Over the last few decades, the majority ownership of media houses, which proliferated in correspondence with the rise of a crony capitalist economy, brought along their own agendas and interests—not all of them journalistic.<sup>iii</sup>

This being the dominant general context, gender equality in the media structure and gender awareness in media contents did not feature even as a distinct concern in regulations and policies up until the 1990s.

The country's more than six-decades old women's movement for gender equality and gender mainstreaming has received nourishments from two international initiatives, i.e. the 1979 UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and the UN-led World Conferences on Women (WCW), particularly the 1995 Beijing Conference.<sup>iv</sup>

The State had adopted both CEDAW and the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (BPfA). It was the latter that particularly provided a strong basis for drawing attention to gender-equality issues concerning the media and initiated policy and regulatory measures,<sup>v</sup> albeit sporadically and tottering though. Institutional self-regulation too has been rare,<sup>vi</sup> informal, scattered and not focused on issues of gender equality.

Lastly, the news media, especially newspapers, play an uneven role in furthering demands of equality and ending gender-based violence as providers and conveyers of information.<sup>vii</sup> But the internal structure and contents of majority of the individual media organisations and the industry at large do reflect the mindset and influences of gender inequalities persistent in a traditional society where patriarchy is deep-rooted.<sup>viii</sup>

Media does not exist or operate in a vacuum. On another front, legal or policy reforms for gender equality have not resolved a fundamental glitch concerning personal laws, which is different for each religion and the source of an inherently weak status for women in all spheres.<sup>ix</sup>

The study navigates these deep and troubling crosscurrents. This is part of a global study on gender and media regulation (GMR), incorporating five other countries—Armenia, Rwanda, Somalia, Sweden and Zimbabwe. The research has been conducted by Fojo Media Institute of Lennæus University and Gothenburg University, Sweden, and partner organisations of Fojo in these six countries. The Bangladesh study is an initiative of the project titled Improving 'Qualitative Journalism in Bangladesh', jointly run by Fojo and Management and Resources Development Initiative (MRDI).

## 1.2 MEDIA LANDSCAPE

Bangladesh has a vibrant media scene with 30 private television channels in operation (along with four more run by the state),<sup>x</sup> 22 FM and 18 community radio stations, 1,323 daily newspapers,<sup>xi</sup> and 177 online news portals.<sup>xii</sup>

Given the absence of definitive studies on the value of Bangladesh's media industry, one can only cite projections. One projection from 2017 puts the media industry being worth Tk 27 billion with more than 10 per cent growth per year. An insider from a leading mobile telecommunication operator estimated that the media industry was growing at 10-12 per cent per year.<sup>xiii</sup> An MRDI study suggests that advertisement spending in Bangladesh would be around Tk 20-30 billion, although normal trend (following India, Indonesia and Malaysia) would put it around Tk 850 billion with television accounting for three-fourths of that market.<sup>xiv</sup> The COVID-19 pandemic has had a grave impact on the media, with many newspapers trying to recover even now. In 2020, significant job losses were reported too.

Most major media outlets in Bangladesh are owned by large conglomerates, which in turn have interests in banks and financial institutions, insurance, energy and the real estate sector. There are often conflicts of interests with the news operations. Another notable feature is family ownership of several media

outlets as part of the same corporate family. More often than not, the owners are connected with political parties directly or indirectly. This situation persists because the entrepreneur's relationship with the government becomes a determining factor for the media outlet to obtain a licence. Sometimes politicians themselves become owners or lobby for a certain outlet. Five of the private TV channels are owned by ruling party MPs, while an advisor to the Prime Minister holds major share of another. Media ownership often changes hands to people who are in favour of the incumbent regime.<sup>xv</sup>

One view is that most owners use media to gain access, protect existing resources and status which provides prestige that helps develop networks with the ruling cluster. Media is sharply divided along political lines too.<sup>xvi</sup>

With the proliferation of all types of media, it is very difficult to get a count for the total number of journalists, let alone any for women journalists. The Dhaka Union of Journalists has been on the scene since 1972. The union is divided into two factions along the lines of the two major political parties, i.e. Bangladesh Awami League (BAL) and Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP). Adding up both of their updated voter lists, the total number of members stands at 5354. Of them 508, i.e. 9 per cent could be women, judging by their names. Not all journalists are union members though, and the DUJ covers only Dhaka.

Bangladesh Mahila Parishad (BMP), the oldest women's rights organisation of the country, is making a list of women journalists in order to find out how many of them lost or left jobs during the COVID-19 period. They have so far (14.09.2021) located some 134 women, who work from outside Dhaka. Some of them work as district correspondents of national newspapers, TV channels, online portals or radio channels—two are bureau chiefs. Some work in local papers, a few being publishers and editors.<sup>xvii</sup>

In all probability, the total number of women journalists in the country could be around 1000 or a little more. Their proportion cannot be estimated as we do not have any similar count for men. From another perspective, Dhaka Reporters' Unity has 150 women members—7 per cent of their total members. Dhaka-based Sub-editors' Council has 147 women members—13 per cent of their total members.

Some 549 daily newspapers are published from Dhaka. Of the prominent ones, two are edited by women, who also happen to be wives of the previous editors. One of them, Tahmima Hossain, has been editing and publishing a prestigious women's fortnightly magazine since 1988. The publisher of the daily she edits now is also a woman, who happens to be her daughter. The other woman editor, Mahbuba Chowdhury, is a TV news presenter, programme anchor and writes literary books for children. She is the publisher of her daily as well, while her husband remains the editor-in-chief.

The family connections are mentioned here not for judging the capabilities of the existing women editors. All-in-the-family is a trend, which goes for men as well.

In the private sector television channels, currently there are two women at top positions— one executive editor and one chief news editor. A few news editors are also there. In interviews and group discussions, women journalists have said, while mid-ranking women managers in television are slowly rising, a glass ceiling is very much there. One could conclude, the mediascape of Bangladesh is still predominantly male-dominated.

## 1.3 COUNTRY PROFILE

Born out of the undivided Indian sub-continent in two steps, Bangladesh emerged as a unitary, independent sovereign people's republic in 1971. The fundamental principles of state policy are nationalism, socialism, democracy and secularism, as detailed and set out in Part II of the Constitution of the republic.<sup>xviii</sup>

Following the last census in 2011, the estimated population of the country is 168.22 million now. About 148,000 square kilometres in size, it is one of the most densely populated countries in the world.<sup>xix</sup>

**Of Ethnic Minorities:** According to the 2011 population census, almost 99 per cent of the people are of Bengali ethnicity, with the rest being made up by other ethnic peoples.<sup>xx</sup> This and the previous census did not give any breakdown by name or number of the ethnic peoples. The 1991 census had counted the number of ethnic communities to be 29, which had some overlaps. Besides, there are other small communities, who claim to be ethnic peoples.<sup>xxi</sup>

In March 2019, the Ministry of Cultural Affairs enlisted 50 ethnic communities.<sup>xxii</sup> The list does not accommodate some smaller groups including the workers in tea estates and the Biharis.<sup>xxiii</sup> About 300,000 Urdu-speaking minority in Bangladesh, mainly concentrated in Dhaka and Rangpur, are commonly referred to as Biharis. Census reports show that there are some ethnic people in all the 64 districts of the country, with traditional spatial concentrations.<sup>xxiv</sup> Two of the ethnic communities, the Garo and the Khasi peoples are matrilineal.

**Religion and Diversity:** The Constitution of the country declares Islam to be the state religion of the republic, but tells the state to ensure equal status and right in the practice of all other religions. The Constitution also says that the state shall not discriminate against any citizen on grounds only of religion, race, caste, sex or place of birth.<sup>xxv</sup>

Fractionally over 90 per cent of the country's population are Muslims by religion. The Hindu population, showing a decreasing trend over the last censuses, comprise 8.5 per cent. The shares of the Buddhist and the Christian populations have remained constant, 0.6 per cent and 0.3 per cent respectively. A very small fraction, the rest of the population, belongs to other faiths. This land's religious diversity has been shrinking noticeably since 1911.<sup>xxvi</sup> The reasons are partly historical and political, along with a role played by rising trends of social intolerance.

**Gender, Old and New:** In Bangladesh, men outnumber women by 0.16 million.<sup>xxvii</sup> Since 2014 'Hijra', a community of intersex and transgender people has gained State's recognition. The recognition first came in November 2013 by a Cabinet decision, which specified the Hijra as a third sex. On January 26 next year, the Ministry of Social Welfare issued a gazette notification briefly stating that the government identifies the Hijra community of Bangladesh as the Hijra Sex and gives recognition to it.<sup>xxviii</sup> The government estimates their number to be around 11,000. The term coined in Bangla in the gazette notification was *hijra lingo*, and *lingo* literally means sex. No Bangla word synonymous to gender exists, but *lingo* is often used to connote gender.

The Rules (2012) for The Voter List Act 2009 was amended in 2019, adding 'Hijra' to the existing 'sex' options (male and female). The updated application forms appended to the National Identity Registration Rules 2014 provides an option as 'hijra' for 'sex'. The updated Birth and Death registration

forms, as per its Rules (2018), added an option for the 'Third Sex', while the latest passport form accommodated them as 'Others' for *lingo* or gender.<sup>xxxix</sup>

These forms may create a confusion that Bangladesh has given recognition to broader non-binary gender identities. Strictly speaking, the government has recognised a community of non-binary gender or at best, the issue is ambivalent. The 'others' in the passport form could not imply recognition of any other gender or sexual minority, which has not gained specific government recognition. Even the Hijra people may still be denied various rights (inheritance included). People of 'non-traditional' sexual orientation can still be penalised for their sexual practices.<sup>xxx</sup>

Meanwhile, there is a debate whether 'Hijra' can be termed as a gender, or if this only refers to an intersex and transgender community, marked by its own lifestyle.<sup>xxxii</sup> A prominent leader of the Hijra community told this researcher that she would prefer a broader 'third gender' identity.

**Of Democracy and Free speech:** The Constitution of the country, adopted in 1972 and amended 17 times so far, guarantees freedom of thought and conscience unconditionally. The right of every citizen to freedom of speech and expression, and the freedom of the press are also guaranteed, but these are subject to any reasonable restrictions imposed by law. Such legal restrictions could be for protecting the security of the State, friendly relations with foreign states, public order, decency or morality, or in relation to contempt of court, defamation or incitement to an offence.<sup>xxxiii</sup> But these might leave scope for censoring interpretation.

As per the Constitution, the country is a parliamentary democracy, but its fifty years of life is interspersed with several military and military-backed coups and rules, killings and turmoil. The first coup came as early as 1975. That coup and subsequent ones spawned mixed rules. Democracy was restored in 1991. Since 2009, Bangladesh Awami League (BAL) is in reign.

The last two elections have been controversial, with accusations of widespread rigging and boycotting by the major political opposition. National and international rights and research groups have been raising concerns about the country's state of democracy. Political violence has also been on the rise. The present government is variously being termed as 'electoral autocracy', 'one-party state', 'autocratic' and 'hybrid regime'.<sup>xxxiiii</sup> This has boded ill for the freedom of expression and the media, as our brief discussion of its history will show.

**Of paradox and inequality:** The economic achievements of Bangladesh in the last few decades have been much acclaimed. Women have made much progress. The COVID-19 impacts are yet to be fully assessed though. A recent government report published by the Bureau of Statistics (BBS) estimates per capita Gross National Income (GNI) for 2020-21 to be a little over USD 2,000.<sup>xxxv</sup>

These gross performances gloss over the realities of inequality and disparity, overall and especially for the gender and other minorities. The UNDP's Human Development Report, 2020 (HDR 2020) put Bangladesh in the medium human development group. Nearly one-fourth of the human development achievements of Bangladesh were shown to be lost due to inequality in 2019.

The Gender Development Index (GDI) of HDR 2020 showed GNI per capita for men to be nearly 2.5 times more than that for women.<sup>xxxvi</sup> In its Gender Inequality Index (GII), Bangladesh ranked 133<sup>rd</sup> out of 162 countries in 2019. The rate of reaching at least secondary education was nearly 40 per cent for women, and 48 per cent for men. Women were less than half as active as men in the labour force with



36.3 per cent of women participating as opposed to 81.4 per cent of men in 2019.<sup>xxxvi</sup> Women's share in unpaid care work was almost 3.5 times more than that of men, which could only have increased during the COVID-19 pandemic<sup>xxxvii</sup>.

**Women in a classic patriarchy:** Bangladeshi society is patriarchal; in fact, it is a classic patriarchy. Here traditionally men have complete control over women, including her sexuality and movement. *Purdah* or female segregation is followed. Family is considered to be the first priority of a woman.<sup>xxxviii</sup>

The Constitution guarantees women equality of opportunities, participation and rights, even provides for positive discrimination in the form of different quotas. But all that are limited within the public or the national spheres.<sup>xxxix</sup> Laws ruling a woman's personal life i.e., her marriage, divorce, custody of children and inheritance—the personal laws—are based on religious norms and customs. These laws are different for each religion and they all are generally discriminatory against women. 1990s onwards religiosity and extremism surged up. The influence of *purdah*, mainly amongst the Muslims, has increased. Gender-based violence is also rising steadily.<sup>xl</sup>

Amidst all this, women have achieved much. In addition to the quotas in public jobs, the government enacted many laws and formulated policies conducive to women's education, work and protection from violence. Microcredit in the NGO sector and garment industry jobs in the private sector helped much. But the development has been uneven and much more remain to be done.<sup>xli</sup>

**Violence against Women:** Nearly three-fourths of the women, who have ever been married, reported experiencing one or another kind of violence by their partners at least once in a lifetime. This came out in a government survey in 2015. The most common form of violence was controlling behaviour, as reported by more than half of these women. For nearly half, this violence had been either physical or sexual. More than one-fourth of the ever-married women experienced violence by non-partners. Of the women, who had never been married, more than one-third reported experiencing physical or sexual violence by non-partners.<sup>xlii</sup>

Human rights organisation Ain o Salish Kendra reported that during the first eight months of 2021, 165 women were murdered by their husbands. And 975 were raped, five of them allegedly by the police.<sup>xliii</sup>

**Corruption and Weak institutions:** In the Transparency International's Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI) 2020, Bangladesh scored 26 out of 100 and ranked 146th out of 180 countries.<sup>xliv</sup> In the Rule of Law Index 2021 of the World Justice Project, Bangladesh scored 0.40 on a scale of 0-1, where zero marks the worst situation. It ranked 124 out of 149 countries. This index indicators include the extent to which governments are bound by law; the absence of corruption in the government; the openness of the government (sharing information to the people); protection of fundamental rights, that are firmly established under the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights; order and security, regulatory enforcement and civil justice.<sup>xlv</sup>

## 1.4 HISTORY

**Democracy and political players:** Bangladesh Awami League (BAL), the party which led the country's liberation struggle, formed the first government. Then with a major amendment to the Constitution in January 1975, it introduced a one-party system and the presidential form of government.

In August came the first coup. It killed the entire family of the then President Sheikh Mujibur Rahman,<sup>xlvi</sup> the father figure of independence, save his two daughters—the incumbent Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and her sister Sheikh Rehana. That coup and subsequent ones killed other top leaders and spawned mixed rules.

The military ruler following the first coups, a 1971 war hero, Major General Ziaur Rahman formed Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) in 1978. This is the main anti-AL political party. The second major coup killed Zia in 1981.<sup>xlvii</sup> The following military ruler Lt. General H.M. Ershad and his quasi-democracy lasted through 1990, when popular and political uprisings forced him to step down. He had floated his own political party—Jatiya Party (JP)—in 1986.<sup>xlviii</sup>

Democracy and the parliamentary form of government was restored in 1991. Until 2006, electoral victories kept shifting between two major parties, the BNP and BAL. Then, following a military-backed caretaker government's two-year regime (2007-2008)<sup>xlix</sup>, BAL came to power and has remained there till date. Other power-brokers include factions of Ershad's Jatiya Party, Islamist political parties or groups and a few leftist parties. Jamaat-e-Islami Bangladesh, the Islamist party opposing the liberation of Bangladesh, had been back in politics by 1979.<sup>1</sup>

**Women in Politics:** Women have had voting rights since 1947<sup>li</sup>. The post-1991 elected governments have been headed by women only. Awami League's Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina is now on her third consecutive term, with another term served during 1996-2001. The present Leader of the Opposition at the National Parliament Raushon Ershad (Jatiyo Party—JaPa) and the Speaker Shirin Sharmin Chaudhury are also women. BNP leader Begum Khaleda Zia had served two terms as Prime Minister, then was gradually pushed out of parliamentary politics. Except for the Speaker, family legacy has been an important factor for the political career of the other three.

The Parliament—*Jatyo Sangsad*—has 300 general seats and 50 reserved seats for women. General members including women are directly elected. They nominate and elect the reserved seat members. These seats and the electorates are divided on the basis of general seats secured by a political party or alliance. In effect the women members are handpicked by respective parties, ensuring a potentially dependency situation. Reserved seats are provided for all tiers of local government. There the elections are mostly direct.<sup>lii</sup>

Presently women hold just over one-fifth of the seats in the national parliament, and close to one-fourth seats in local governments.<sup>liii</sup> The present gain is largely due to gender quotas. Besides, the presence of women at national level in leadership positions in major political parties are limited. Attitudinal, cultural and structural barriers are there, although their (local government women representatives) role seems to be gaining acceptance in dealing with disputes concerning family matters.<sup>liv</sup>

**Freedom of Expression, of Women and of other Minority Communities:** The social reforms movements of the 19<sup>th</sup> century undivided Bengal also aspired for reforms in women's education and

abolition of social practices detrimental to women's equality. These were spearheaded by the Hindu reformist social leaders. But these debates also infiltrated the realms of Muslim social thinkers. The modernists amongst them were for women's education as this would make them good mothers and wives. They were also for relaxation of extreme 'purdah'—segregation of women—and supported their coming out of homes for welfare and social work.<sup>lv</sup>

Women from the modernist urban educated middle-class and upper-class families wrote on these issues in magazines, literary journals and pamphlets generally in line with the mainstream modernist thinking. A distinct original thinker, writer and social worker was Rokeya Shakhawat Hossain (1880-1932). Her writings challenged women's subordination, purdah norms, and patriarchal norms of Islam and advocated women's education, autonomy, economic independence and mobility.<sup>lvi</sup>

Researchers and subsequent writers also underscore the fact that neither the modernists, nor the traditionalists appreciated Rokeya's no-nonsense stance against patriarchy and the religious norms facilitating it.<sup>lvii</sup> Rokeya's education had been at home, in a village of northern Bangladesh, by her elder brother. Her education and writing continued at the encouragement of her husband. She founded the third school for Muslim girls in Kolkata with eight students in March 1911.<sup>lviii</sup>

As has been noted before, this historical basis was formed within the middle-class and upper-class urban spheres. For the masses, women especially, illiteracy remained a curse until the recent couple of decades. Article 17 of the Constitution pledges that the State shall adopt effective measures for establishing a uniform, mass-oriented and universal system of education; compulsory education to all children; removing illiteracy.<sup>lix</sup> An Act in 1990 made primary education compulsory. Another in 2014 facilitated non-formal education. And the government declared a National Education Policy in 2010, the first one to be implemented ever.<sup>lx</sup>

The country has achieved gender parity in primary education. A donor-assisted secondary school stipend and assistance and programme for girls began in 1982 and now reaches all rural sub-districts. This has been successful in lifting women's enrolment.<sup>lxi</sup> There are however concerns about the general learning competencies and high dropout rates for girls.<sup>lxii</sup> And women fall behind in tertiary education.<sup>lxiii</sup> Nearly three-fourths of adult women were literate, close to the rate among men, in 2017.<sup>lxiv</sup>

Access to education is tougher for marginalised people. The 2011 census shows the literacy rate of the people belonging to ethnic minorities to be very low as compared to the national average. And the rate is higher among men.<sup>lxv</sup>

**Presence and participation in media:** Presence in media is a matter of social recognition, status and power.<sup>lxvi</sup> This is also an often-neglected issue in discussions on media ethics in Bangladesh. Whatever ethical discourses are there, they focus on sins of commission. Sins of omission, leaving out vast segments of the population from news or contents agenda, are usually overlooked. Laws and policies have similar oversights.<sup>lxvii</sup>

Scrutinising gender-equality and gender-sensitivity issues in the major news of one day on selected media has been systematically conducted in Bangladesh since 2005, as part of the Global Media Monitoring Project (GMMP). The report of its fourth round is yet to be published. Bangladesh's third round of monitoring, conducted in 2015 on the globally selected day, found the presence of women, as subjects or interviewees, in 18 per cent of the news reports of 23 news media (newspaper, television and

radio).<sup>lxviii</sup> Women were least present in stories on politics and governance issues. Representation in economy-related stories were also significantly low. Women appeared most in stories covering crime and violence, which is a sad reflection of existing social realities also. Largest proportions of women featured in news stories as narrators of personal experience and as eyewitnesses. Women as knowers had a very low representation. Gender stereotyping and undermining in representation was common. The total set of media which were monitored, included two online news portals.

The sixth global report of the GMMP, published in 2021, incorporates the data generated by the one-day monitoring in Bangladesh.<sup>lxix</sup> While the overall presence of women as subjects and sources have decreased by two percentage points, a few significant changes can be marked in 2020 in the above-mentioned trends. These include a marked rise in the presence of women in stories related to politics and governance, and to economy. The shares however are still less than 25 per cent. On the other hand, the proportion of women’s presence in crime stories shows a significant drop. One must bear in mind that this was a COVID year.

The 2015 and 2020 GMMP exercises in Bangladesh find a disproportionately high presence of women as presenters in television and radio. Compared to this, small proportions of women are found as byline reporters. The proportion is really marginal in newspapers.

**Access to means of communication:** The Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey, conducted by the BBS and the UNICEF country office monitors indicators such as, once-a-week media exposure, ownership and use of mobile phone and use of internet for women aged 15-49. MICS 2019 found only 5 per cent had such media exposure. Mobile usage in the last three months was high—98 per cent, while internet usage fell to 13 per cent and computer usage to 2 per cent only.<sup>lxx</sup>

The Kantar Research (Bangladesh) has recently released its National Media Survey (NMS) 2021. This market research survey has been conducted every two years since 2002. The following table shows the 2021 data on media usage.

*Table 1. Media Exposure at Least Once a Week (Number in thousands)*

	<b>Male</b>	<b>Female</b>	<b>All</b>
Exposed to TV	47,930	48,578	96,508
Exposed to Press	15,798	5,357	21,155
Usage of Mobile Phone	55,305	56,920	112,225
Using Internet	31,324	22,907	54,231

National Media Survey (NMS) 2021, Kantar Research (Bangladesh) Pvt. Ltd

Access to any social opportunities including education is extremely difficult for the ‘Hijra’ people or for extreme minorities like sex-workers. On another front, Recognition could open up new vistas. Two hijra candidates contested in municipality elections in 2020. One had got a job with the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC). Another joined a television channel as a news presenter. She and another transwoman got scholarships to join a higher study programme in a private university.

**Media freedom:** Attempts to control the press and the tendency to challenge have been such a part and parcel of the subcontinent’s history that it is almost genetic. The requirement of government sanctions to publish a newspaper first came in 1799. A major gagging act came in 1823. By then the first Bangla newspapers were being published. The Newspapers (Incitement to Offences) Act in 1908 led to the closure of several newspapers for allegedly being sympathetic to terrorist activities. The Indian Press (Emergency Power) Act of 1931 allowed local governments to forfeit the security of the press. However, the popular movement of 1945 and 1946 emboldened the press to become more vocal and freer.

Following the partition of India, in the then East Pakistan, the daily *Sangbad* started coming out in the early 1950’s as did the *Ittefaq* and *Insaf*. The newspapers took an anti-central government stance during the movement over state language. Suppression continued through the 1950s and 1960s especially as the military government of Pakistan (1958-1969) was befittingly intolerant of criticism and dissent. The press became increasingly vibrant and defiant leading up to the Liberation War of Bangladesh. It had become more of a vehicle for political activism rather than dispassionate journalism.

The first controlling law came within two years of independence—the Printing Presses and Publications Act<sup>lxxi</sup> (A legacy to the 1799 and 1835 Acts). Then came the Special Powers Act.<sup>lxxii</sup> In 1975, the Fourth Amendment to the Constitution, which had ushered in a one-party system, also closed all but four state-owned newspapers.

There was little chance of a media resurgence given that the next 15 years saw military governments of different shades and stripes till the elections of 1991. Just before that, an amendment to the Special Powers Act of 1974 provided opportunities for media plurality by striking out certain restrictive provisions. The 1990s were perhaps the most vibrant era for the media. With a spate of new media outlets, this was also a time when journalism grew out of its yoke of outright political activism and began showing signs of matured professionalism. This trend of a reasonably free press came to a halt in 2007 with the coming of a military controlled government. The following two-year state of emergency was notorious for the government trying to control the press and curbing its freedom. The elections at the end of 2008 saw an immediate resurgence of a vibrant media which continued for a few years before they began to wane.

Private television stations were launched in the 1990s as well, competing with the state-owned *BTV*, which had heretofore, enjoyed a monopoly. The 2000s saw another development with the proliferation of internet. This is when the media started facing the impacts of globalisation. *bdnews24.com* was the first news outlet to be entirely web-based, spawning another shift in the media market of Bangladesh with many more to follow. Private FM radio stations started coming up full-scale in the mid-2000s.<sup>lxxiii</sup> The community radio stations followed soon afterwards with a mandate to address social issues like poverty and social exclusion at the community level by providing increasing access to information to the rural populace.

Meanwhile, The Information and Communication Technology (ICT) Act 2006 (amended 2013), came for regulating digital communication. It was strengthened in 2013 with jail terms increasing from 10 years to 14. This was followed by an even more restrictive Digital Security Act (DSA) before the general elections of 2018. This law allows police to arrest people without warrant, on the basis of suspicion. Jail sentences can go up to 14 years for anyone trying to secretly record information inside government buildings. Vaguely worded, this law turns out to be the ultimate weapon for getting journalists to censor themselves.<sup>lxxiv</sup>

Shahidul Alam, an internationally acclaimed photographer, a jury member of the World Press Photo, had been arrested under the notorious section 57 of the ICT Act in 2018. Soon after he criticised the role of the government in an interview with Al-Jazeera, plainclothesmen stormed into his house and took him away. He was granted bail after spending 107 days in prison. The ruling government has charged many other journalists under the DSA.

Rozina Islam, a senior reporter of Prothom Alo was arrested on 17 May 2021 from inside the government's secretariat on charges of unlawfully gathering public documents. The case filed against her was under the Official Secrets Act—a law which has almost become obsolete. She was kept in prison till 23 May, when the Court granted her bail. The case is still alive. Rozina's arrest succeeded in bringing together journalists in protests across the political divide.

Bangladesh ranks 152 out of 180 countries in the World Freedom Index published by Reporters Sans Frontier, whose website is currently blocked in Bangladesh for displeasing the government. According to the Centre for Protection of Journalists (CPJ), 11 journalists were murdered in Bangladesh over the last 10 years, not counting writer Mushtaq Ahmed's death in custody who had been arrested under DSA for a Facebook comment.<sup>lxxv</sup> According to the CPJ, 23 journalists have been killed in Bangladesh since 1992. The gradual decline in media freedom coincides with people's increasing lack of trust in media.

During a 2017 survey, only 53 per cent of the people thought the media had integrity, a quarter was neutral and 16 per cent said the media had either low or very low integrity<sup>lxxvi</sup>. But compared to the times before the military-controlled interim government, people thought their freedom had significantly decreased. Perceptions about freedom to express political opinions remained lower than in 2006. A strong majority (70%) felt free to express their political opinions, but just over a quarter (27%) still felt that speech was inhibited.<sup>lxxvii</sup>

**Women in Media:** There is a need to briefly trace the path of women in journalism and media separately. Women entered this world through literary and opinion magazines. The first woman-edited fortnightly, *Bangamahila* (Women of Bengal) came out in 1870. The second one was a monthly, *Anathini* (1875), published and edited by a woman. The first weekly edited by women was *Bangabasini* (Women in Bengal); which came out in 1883. Kolkata had been the centre until the separation of Bengal by the creation of Pakistan in 1947. Magazines edited by women had been published from districts of Bangladesh as well. Monthly *Bharat Mahila*, edited by Sarajubala Dutta, came out from Dhaka as early as in 1906. Monthly *Annesa*, edited by Sofia Khatun came out in 1921 from Chittagong.<sup>lxxviii</sup> She was the first Muslim woman to edit a periodical.

Women writers shared the socio-political reformatory urge of the time with their male comrades. They carried an added responsibility of making a space for women's rights, especially the Muslim women, who joined a bit later. Rokeya, the pioneer, started writing in the beginning of the last century.

Sufia Kamal (2011-1999), came to the world of writing as a poet. She had come close to and been deeply influenced by Rokeya at the age of 18.<sup>lxxix</sup> Sufia remained a poet and socio-political activist, deeply committed to women's human rights and forever vocal for the cause of justice till her last days. She had been a pioneer of the women's rights movement in Bangladesh.

Mohammad Nasiruddin, journalist and Muslim liberal reformist, brought out *Saugat*, a literary magazine in 1918. *Saugat* had a women's section called *Jenana Mahfil* (Women's Congregation). He started *Begum*, an illustrated women's weekly in 1947 from Kolkata. Sufia Kamal was the editor. Later Nasiruddin's family and *Begum* moved to Dhaka in 1950. His daughter Nurjahan Begum (1925-2016) took over the editorship. *Begum* and Nurjahan created many women writers, some of whom later joined mainstream newspapers as journalists.

During the early years, women were bringing out the women's pages of different daily newspapers. But a small number of women were also working at the news desk and as reporters. They worked in magazines too. In 1987, among the women journalists, there were three who had been working for more than 20 years. One of them was a reporter. But women journalists were less than 4 per cent of the journalists working from Dhaka.<sup>lxxx</sup>

Nasimun Ara Huq, presently the president of Bangladesh Nari Sangbadik Kendra (Center for Women Journalists, Bangladesh) had joined the desk of Daily *Sangbad* in 1979. In an interview with this researcher, she recounted the number of women journalists in Dhaka not exceeding 15 then. Nasimun Nahar Nini preceded her in *Sangbad*, who had worked as a shift-in-charge. The number of women in journalism took a plunge when the private TV channels came in the 1990s.

Women-focused magazines still continue. *Begum* we have mentioned, and there is *Ananya*, published and edited by Tasmima Hossain, one of the two women editors of daily newspapers. *Ananya* has its own webpage. Blogs exclusively focusing on women's issues include *Thotkata* and *Women Chapter*.

**Access to information, communication and knowledge. Affordability, reach over time:** Bangladesh passed a Right to Information (RTI) Act in 2009 and a corresponding whistle-blower protection act—Information Disclosure in Public-Interest (Protection) Act—in 2011. The RTI is not specifically meant for journalists or media. But investigative journalists can make use of this Act for getting information, often difficult to obtain, from public and other authorities covered under this law. This could be especially useful considering the prevalence of laws promoting non-disclosure, over which RTI has a superseding power. The process could be lengthy though, dragging over months, even years. But the result can help make brilliant reports.<sup>lxxxii</sup>

As for women, gender minorities and marginalised groups, the RTI could open up a whole new vista for getting hold of information facilitating their life and helping right wrongs. But barriers such as lack of education and social mobility hinder this process. A study in 2019 found that the rate of awareness of the Act among the male respondents was double than that among the female respondents. The higher the education level, the more the respondent's awareness. Application for information was generally poor. Those who made the requests were overwhelmingly male, relatively young, more educated, students and journalists by occupation and residents of urban areas. The study also found that urban women requesters had to wait a few days more even than the rural male requesters.<sup>lxxxii</sup> Community leaders questioned in another study felt women did not access information as easily or as frequently as did men.

The reasons they assumed included illiteracy, not knowing where to go for seeking information and non-cooperation of any family member. Time and travel issues were also factors.<sup>lxxxiii</sup>

**Gender and media policy:** Gender-equality concerns regarding media and media policies were outlined in the National Women Development Policy, first formulated in 1997 during a regime of Awami League, in line with the Beijing Platform for Action commitments. The 1997 policy however was not put into operation. This had a clause pledging equal rights in inheritance and property to women. This clause and a few other basic equality pledges were struck out in its 2004 version by the then BNP-led government. The next AI-led government adopted the National Women Development Policy 2011 and its national action plan in 2013. Both stress gender-equality and sensitivity concerns for media policies. Sporadic and lopsided concerns have started entering national media policies roughly over the last couple of decades or so.

On another front, the draft 2011 policy too had reportedly announced equal inheritance rights, news of which caused extreme protests among the religious groups. The finally revised policy has no such pledge and ends on this footnote: 'Notwithstanding anything contained in this policy, during enactment of the law, anything contrary to the Holy Quran and Sunnah shall be void.'<sup>lxxxiv</sup>



## Section-2. Methods

The study aimed to provide new knowledge and analysis about gender equality-related provisions in legislation and policies concerning media (regulation, policy requirements and self-regulation on internal structures and contents); and about their implementation and monitoring.

It sought to provide clear recommendations and cite best practices that could assist stakeholders including law and policy makers to promote gender equality in and through the media without compromising independence. It also sought to provide qualitative reflections accumulated through the research process.

From March to mid-October 2021, the study explored the following issues:

Firstly, to what extent and how have gender-equality, gender-sensitivity or gender-awareness issues been integrated into the regulation and self-regulation concerning both media structure and content. This search covered: laws and rules for registration or licensing and for content regulation; relevant High Court decisions; media-related policies issued by the state authorities; industry-level self-regulatory codes of conduct and constitutions of associations of journalists, owners and editors; and ethical codes, guidelines or policies of individual media organisations.

Secondly, whether such integration and efforts could contribute to the overarching goal of increasing the freedom of expression for women and girls, for people of non-binary gender, for people belonging to sexual minorities, and also for men and boys in situations similarly relevant.

Thirdly, if any such effort could lead to compromising or curtailing media freedom and independence, especially in a context, where media regulations have historically been slanted towards or been used by the governments as means of exerting undue control.

For these explorations, the study used mixed methodology, both quantitative and qualitative:

- ❖ We reviewed relevant literature—studies, reviews, documents—to get a grip on the issues concerning integration of gender-equality or gender-sensitivity perspectives into media-related laws and policies.
- ❖ We analysed and mapped the contents of media-related or media-impacting provisions in laws and policies (both regulatory and self-regulatory) through a gender-equality lens.

- ❖ A total of 43 Acts and rules including the Constitution were selected for mapping. The Ministry of Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs maintains a database containing all the updated Acts, arranged year-wise.<sup>lxxxv</sup> A thorough search of it, after checking available literature and consultation with legal experts, helped selection. The selected documents comprised acts both non-specific and specific to different genres of media.
- ❖ The criteria guiding our selection was whether the laws contained any provision, which had significance for gender equality and gender-sensitivity in the internal structure of media and in media content. We gathered the available corresponding rules from official websites of relevant ministries and their departments.
- ❖ We also looked for media-related policies issued by the state. We selected 12 policies after checking existing literature and searching the websites of relevant ministries and departments. We reviewed, mapped and analysed these policies to look for integration of gender-equality and sensitivity or awareness issues.
- ❖ We checked with Bangladesh Press Council and umbrella unions or associations of editors, owners and journalists for industry-wide self-regulatory frameworks through desk-research and informal inquiries. We found a Code of Conduct issued by the Press Council (which happens to be enlisted as an agency of the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting), and a set of guidelines within the constitution of the Dhaka-based union of journalists (which has been replicated later by some of the regional unions). We mapped these two documents and interviewed their representatives.
- ❖ We could not find any such industry-wide code issued by other umbrella associations or unions of editors, owners and journalists. So we additionally interviewed representatives of five such major bodies as representative self-regulators and scrutinised their constitutions or memorandums of associations. Thus, we interviewed representatives of seven self-regulatory bodies in total.
- ❖ No formal self-regulatory policies or codes could be located on the websites of the major media outlets. So, we conducted a questionnaire survey of selected media organisations. We scrutinised ethical codes, editorial and other policies (as available) and gender-specific reporting guidelines of the 18 media organisations, who responded.
- ❖ The interviews with self-regulators and the questionnaire survey of the media organisations sought information about integration of gender equality and sensitivity in their existing structural policies and provisions; in their existing self-regulatory frameworks concerning content and conduct—written policies and also unwritten guidelines; implementation and monitoring mechanisms; gender equality in their internal structures; and examples of best practices. A distinct query concerned their awareness of and compliance to a 2009 judgement of the High Court.<sup>lxxxvi</sup> The judgement had provided guidelines for ensuring safeguards against abuse and harassment of women in workplaces and made following them and formation of a complaint redress committee mandatory for all institutions in general.

The interviews with the representatives of the self-regulatory bodies were semi-structured, based on a common set of queries. They were interviewed between 21 August and 1 September 2021. The bodies are: Bangladesh Press Council, Editors' Council (EC), Newspaper Owners' Association of Bangladesh (NOAB), Bangladesh Nari Sangbadik Kendra (BNSK) or Bangladesh Centre for Women Journalists, Dhaka Union of Journalists (DUJ), Dhaka Reporters' Unity (DRU), and The Sub-editors' Council (SC).

Structured questionnaires combining open-ended qualitative questions were developed for the media organisations. These were sent out to 33 media organisations (See Annexe 1), selected on the basis of their audience reach, geographical location, linguistic diversity and type of contents. The selection also tried to accommodate diversity of ownership and policy.

In total 18 of them responded within the deadline. They comprise state-run Bangladesh Television (BTV)<sup>lxxxvii</sup> and 17 mass-circulated private commercial media organisations. Six of them are national dailies—*Prothom Alo*, *Dainik Ittefaq*, *Kaler Kantha*, *Dainik Samakal*, *The New Age* (English) and *Dhaka Tribune* (English). Two are regional dailies—*Dainik Purbakone*, one of the leading newspapers published from the south-eastern city of Chittagong, and *Gramer Kagaj*, one of the largest circulated dailies of the northern region.

Among the seven television outlets, *BTV* is mainly a programme-oriented channel. Two are news-only—*Independent TV* and *ATN News*. Three are news-mainly—*Ekattor Television*, *News24* and *Channel24*. The last one is a good mix—*Maasranga Television*. The medium of broadcast is Bangla for all, with only *BTV* putting out one English bulletin daily. *BTV* is also the only terrestrial channel. That broadcast facility has been reserved only for it by a law in 2009. All the other TV channels are satellite broadcasters.

Two of the respondent media are national privately-owned FM radio channels, both programme-oriented—*Radio ABC* and *Dhaka FM*. The medium of broadcast is Bangla for both. Only one is an online news portal—*Bangla Tribune* (National, Bangla).

The questionnaires reached the media houses between 11 and 15 July 2021. Because of intermittent COVID-19 lockdowns, in-person in-depth interviews could be conducted with representatives of only three of the houses. The other outlets filled in their own questionnaires. The study team provided assistance as required over telephone. On receiving the completed questionnaires, the study team contacted designated and other persons in each institution, over telephone, to clarify and gather supplementary information. Finally, the data was put into an excel base, rechecked and analysed.

We did desk-research for locating national indicators to monitor the situation and progress of gender-equality and sensitivity in the media, maintained by the State on its own or to fulfil any regional or international commitment.

We spoke, consulted or interviewed 37 people comprising legal experts, academicians and researchers, government officials, stakeholders, editors, journalist leaders and key informant journalists, and checked with at least 20 more people for supplementary information, verification and clarification. This was also necessary for probing further the issues of good practices and monitoring mechanisms. They provided crucial information and insight, which enriched our study. (See list Annexe 2)

Throughout the explorations, one guiding principle has been to acknowledge the need for proper and consistent protection of both gender-related mandates for media, and the freedom and independence of media.

**Limitations of the study:** We needed to interview regulators. The umbrella regulator for the media is the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting (MOI). Efforts for over a month failed to get any response from the designated person. He took the semi-structured questionnaire but did not return it and no one was available for an interview.

Verification of information that the self-regulators and media organisations provided was not within the purview of this research. In majority of the cases, the respondents did not provide relevant supporting documents. Where there was confusion, the team tried to recheck but validation was not really possible. So, we took the information in good faith, while remaining aware of the risks of misreporting or erroneous reporting.

We did not explore community radio and alternative media by women, historically marginalised and socially excluded groups, even for contextual information, as that would extend the work beyond our means. We also did not cover the national news agencies and Dhaka outfits of international agencies or news organisations.

## Section 3. Findings

### Highlights

Our study of 43 regulations and 12 national policies finds that provisions for gender-equality and sensitivity in media regulations and different national policies of Bangladesh have two distinct features. The earlier provisions were concerned more about decency, obscenity and other such issues mainly from a moralistic perspective. The main concerns seemed to have been protecting the morality of society from effects of such contents, rather than protecting the rights of women.

The Constitution of the country ensures women equal rights and opportunities in the public and national spheres. The regulations impacting media however have been slow to integrate that. Then over the last couple of decades, gender-related provisions in media regulation and policies have been markedly influenced by development concerns. Media advocacy for women development along with other development goals started occupying a central space in regulatory and policy frameworks. Violence against women claimed a lot of attention. This era might have introduced a rights perspective but gender-equality in the media organisations has not been the dominant primary approach. Provisions on gender-sensitivity (positive or questionable), yes. But gender-equality? Rarely. Another thing the laws and regulations lack in is a requirement for equal coverage of women (or other non-binary gender). The policies may have some requirements of this from the perspective of development in various sectors.

The laws varyingly provide eligibility criteria for ownership, basic and general in nature, not specifying anything on gender-equality commitment. (Gender equality and sensitivity commitments as eligibility of ownership would be more appropriate and effective as matters underscored in policies. The policies, except for one, are rather silent about this.) Regulations or policies do not bar a woman being an owner though.

On the other hand, moralistic concerns continued. So did the controlling approach. And a comprehensive policy for ensuring gender-equality and sensitivity in the media is yet to come.

Sector-wide self-regulatory frameworks, starting with one issued by the Dhaka Union of Journalists in 1972 and followed by the Press Council's Code of Conduct 1993, amended in 2002, reflected the regulatory trends. Self-regulatory codes or guidelines of individual media organisations came even later and are yet in a fledgling state, as our survey of 18 media organisations finds. Things are changing though, even if slowly, and at least an awareness of the issues is there.

Regulatory and supervisory authority of all the media rests primarily with one central ministry, while gender-related supervision is the responsibility of another ministry. Implementation and monitoring of the gender-related provisions seem uncertain. No such monitoring mechanism could be located. Scarcity of data in this field is another major problem. Implementation and monitoring are generally weak within media organisations too.

**What existing studies say:** Studies have been done separately on gender-related and media-related laws and policies in Bangladesh. But we could find very few studies looking into integration of gender-sensitivity issues in media-related regulatory or policy frameworks. Studies examining regulations and policies which cover gender-equality in media structures or in contents are fewer. In fact, studies on media-related regulations or policy centre more on press freedom issues.

Bangladesh country research report in *Report on the Status of Women in Media in South Asia*<sup>lxxxviii</sup> has explored legal and policy frameworks in Bangladesh through a gender-sensitivity lens. The study, published in 2020, marked that there is no comprehensive gender-related policy for newspapers in Bangladesh. While the broadcast policy and the online media policy of Bangladesh mentioned gender-related issues, these were not being implemented.

The discussion on Bangladesh said, individual media organisations in general did not have gender-related policies for internal structures. They had unofficial policies and facilities at varying degrees. Even a basic requirement, maternity leave provisions, also varied, with allegations of personal preferences by the authorities. There were allegations of discrimination in pay and benefits against some broadcast houses.

The study found that the national policies on broadcast and films particularly, had some provisions concerning representation of women but not on their participation issues. The advertising industry did not have any guidelines or code of conduct, which is also confirmed by our explorations.

Carolyn M. Byerly's 2011 global study on the status of women in the news media<sup>lxxxix</sup> covered 11 news companies of Bangladesh. The study found that in 2010, about three-fourths of these had maternity leave policies in place. None had any policy on women getting the same job back, paternity leave, child-care assistance or on gender equality and sexual harassment. Our study explored similar issues 11 years later. The Byerly study was on internal policies of the company and explored other issues at length.

Kajalie Shehreen Islam working with the same data in 2013 wrote on the nexus between gender-inequality and policy inequity.<sup>xc</sup> One of her conclusions was that the under-representation and skewed portrayal of women in the news media are linked to women's low level of participation in the media profession. She identified lack of enabling measures in the internal policy to be a major problem.

## 3.1 THE STATE

*Table 2. Central authorities regulating gender equality*

Authorities in charge (Responsible for gender equality in general)	Authorities responsible for regulating media on gender-equality issues
Ministry of Women and Children Affairs	Ministry of Information and Broadcasting
	The District Magistrates of 64 administrative districts
	Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulatory Authority
	Ministry of Labour and Employment
	Ministry of Women and Children Affairs
	Criminal justice system

For all things concerning gender-equality, the Ministry of Women and Children Affairs (MOWCA) is the lead ministry. The ministry is headed by the prime minister herself. This ministry is to coordinate and monitor all Women in Development (WID) activities of different ministries through their designated WID focal points. The Ministry is in charge of supervising and ensuring implementation of the National Women Development Policy (NWDP) 2011 and its Action Plan (NAP) 2013. Each of these has four clauses dedicated to gender-equality and gender-sensitivity concerns in media and media contents.<sup>xcii</sup> The NAP has designated responsibilities of activities to different government authorities, as well as to civic bodies and women’s rights organisations. The coordination is the task of MOWCA. As for regulating gender-equality issues in media, MOWCA have some responsibilities, if not the authority.

On the other hand, the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting (MOI), along with its 12 departments or agencies, is the keeper of all laws and policies concerning all types of media. These laws and policies have clauses mandating gender-sensitivity in contents, as well as gender-equality in a limited few internal operation of the media. This ministry is the licensing and registration authority for all broadcast channels and online platforms, and for certification of films. The MOI has supervisory and monitoring responsibilities for all state-owned and private mass media including the print ones. The departments under this ministry carry out different responsibilities for different types of media.<sup>xciii</sup> The BTV, one of its departments, grants licenses to cable television networks. The Press Information Department (PID) issues accreditation to journalists. Although a statutory and quasi-judicial body, the Bangladesh Press Council is shown as one of its agencies on the MOI website. Meanwhile, the government’s allocation of business for the MOI seems to highlight its publicity roles more.<sup>xciii</sup>

Once MOI grants the licenses, Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulatory Authority (BTRC) of the Ministry of Posts, Telecommunication and Information Technology (MoPT) assigns frequency to all electronic media.<sup>xciv</sup>

The District Magistrate, who usually also heads the administration of a district as the Deputy Commissioner, is responsible for granting licenses (declaration and registration) to newspapers, periodicals and news sheets. This same office grants licenses to news agencies. There are 64 administrative districts in the country.

The Printing Presses and Publications (Declaration and Registration) Act, 1973 has a section (20A) which says, if any book or paper appears to the government to contain any indecent, obscene or scurrilous element, all its copies will be forfeited and confiscated. The Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulation Act, 2001 has a section highly penalising transmission of obscene, threatening or seriously offensive messages or contents. Therefore, along with the MOI, the District Magistrates and the BTRC should have some regulatory role.

The Ministry of Labour is the custodian of the Labour Act of 2006, which applies to the media. The labour law is significant because of its provisions about internal structures and operations. The Wage Board for newspapers and news agencies, which is supervised by the MOI, has been made possible by a provision of the Labour Act.

Several criminal laws including those concerning violence against women and children have regulatory provisions for the media. The criminal justice system therefore becomes a regulator by default.

### 3.1.1 Legislation

**Laws and Rules:** There is a good number of laws and rules with gender or media-related provisions. We mapped 43 laws and rules, grouped into two broad categories—a) general regulations, which have provisions with implications for gender-equality or gender-sensitivity issues in media, and b) media-specific regulations, which have similar provisions. Then we divided them into 10 sub-groups. Following is a classified list, with the numbers of regulations mentioned in brackets:

1. Constitution: human dignity, gender equality (1)
2. General Laws: Gender equality (6)
3. General laws: Gender-based Violence (7)
4. General Laws: Anti Discrimination (1)
5. Other General Laws: Some provisions of which have relevance to media, freedom of expression or gender-sensitivity (7)
6. Laws specific to media, mainly Print (4)
7. Laws specific to broadcast and digital media, including the state-run ones (6)
8. Laws related to employment, benefits and rights in media institutions (7)
9. Laws specific to films (2)
10. Others: for improving conditions of journalists and journalism (2).

We checked these laws and rules against a list of 12 provisions to see how they fared in terms of accommodating these. The following table shows our findings:



*Table 3. Type of legislation adopted for the promotion of gender equality in the media*

<b>Indicator</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>% of 'yes'</b>
<b>1</b> Protection of human dignity	24	19	43	56
<b>2</b> Protection of HR	25	18	43	58
<b>3</b> Gender equality	14	29	43	33
<b>4</b> Gender representation in electoral processes (coverage)	3	40	43	7
<b>5</b> Discrimination on the basis of sex/gender*	23	20	43	53
<b>6</b> Violence against women	12	31	43	28
<b>7</b> Hatred on the basis of sex/gender	11	32	43	26
<b>8</b> Stereotypes/sexism	11	32	43	26
<b>9</b> Gender equality in internal structures	14	29	43	33
<b>10</b> Sexist language	11	32	43	26
<b>11</b> Equal representation/treatment of women, men and recognized gender minorities	4	39	43	9
<b>12</b> Diversity	7	36	43	16

\* Note: Either specifically mentioning in gender disaggregated terms, definitions and provisions, or non-discriminatory in mentioning gender-inclusive ones.

The most commonly covered provisions concern human dignity, human rights and certain gender-based discrimination issues. Provisions specifically addressing gender-equality concerns are relatively few. Fewer is the provision of equal representation or treatment of women, men and recognized gender minorities. The Hijra gender minority has been recognised in 2014. But it is yet to be integrated into the legal and policy frameworks, which have implications for the media. Some laws, those on sexual abuse and harassment included, need to extend coverage to men, boys and Hijras as well. Two Acts and the constitutional provisions for political participation of women refer to all candidates getting the right to use the state-run broadcasters in times of national elections.

Issues of non-discrimination are either coined in gender-disaggregated terms or, mostly, in gender-inclusive terms or connotations. The pronoun for third person singular number in English is gendered, i.e. 'he' or 'she'. In the British and Pakistani periods, laws were drafted in English. In these laws, 'he' is

used by default to refer to a person. The use of the word ‘man’ for referring to people or citizens was also common. Even the English version of the Constitution of Bangladesh is afflicted with these terms by default. The General Clauses Act, 1897 provides for an inclusive connotation (Section 13). It says, in all Acts of Parliament and Regulations, unless there is anything repugnant in the subject or context, ‘words importing masculine gender shall be taken to include females.’ Nonetheless, one could say, this gave legal sanction to ‘he’ engulfing other genders.

No pronoun in Bangla is gendered. In Bangla, the terms *manush* (people) and *byakti* (person) are not gendered either. The Constitution in Bangla thus is free of these linguistic afflictions. So are the laws drafted after the independence of the country, as nearly all are in Bangla. More recent times see introduction of gender-disaggregated inclusivity in laws and policies, but not always and not by default. Terms need to explicitly spell out genders or at the least be clearly gender-neutral or inclusive for effectively providing for equality.

An analysis of the 43 Acts and rules by the presence of the 12 provisions on our checklist shows that the Constitution covers all except for gender equality in private life, more specifically, in certain rights concerning personal and family matters. Part II of the Constitution sets the fundamental Principles of State Policy. Article 19 (3) in that part guarantees that the State shall endeavour to ensure equality of opportunity and participation of women in all spheres of national life. [Clause (3) was added by the Constitution (Fifteenth Amendment) Act, 2011 (Act XIV of 2011), section 13.]

On the other hand, Article 28 (2) in Part III on Fundamental Rights grants women equal rights with men in all spheres of the State and of public life. In these spheres, the Constitution also provides for positive discrimination in favour of women and other disadvantaged sections of the population. The provisions, however, disregard equal rights of women in private life (mainly inheritance, marriage and custody of children), which is ruled by personal laws based on each religion separately and are unequal in many different ways. Advocates of women’s rights and gender equality say, this public and private life dichotomy is at the root of women having a basically weakened status and unequal rights in all spheres.<sup>xcv</sup>

The provisions for gender-sensitivity in media in quite a few regulations concern decency or obscenity in portrayal, not really from a rights perspective but from a moralistic approach. So, provisions become a litany of ‘don’ts’, while missing the core purposes of securing rights and justice. This goes for all laws concerning the media. The older laws are conservative in different perspectives and in some cases, they might go against the essence of gender-equality concerns. They could be subversive in other ways as well, having the potential to curb independence, freedom of expression and various rights.

The laws on violence against women and children often stipulate identity protection of victims and provide for camera trial. Penalising disclosure of identity clearly underscores the importance of issues of privacy, safety, re-victimisation risks and dignity of victims/survivors. Provisions of camera trial has similar significance. Provisions address gender-equality in a number of laws by mandating different enabling work-related measures including maternity leave and child-care facilities. However, any explicit reference to ensuring gender-equality in media structures is very rare or none.

While there is no bar to a woman being an owner, the licensing laws provide criteria for ownership varyingly, which are basic, general and more or less common in nature. For example, the law regarding printing and publication of newspapers and registration of books says, the printer and publisher (male or

female) must be an adult, a citizen, have financial resources, not convicted of any offence involving moral turpitude within the last five years and not found to be of a ‘lunatic’ or of unsound mind by any court. Commitment to gender-equality or diversity is not mentioned as an eligibility criterion for being an owner. The editor is required to have reasonable educational qualifications or adequate training or experience in journalism. The forms issued by the Press Information Department of the MOI for registration of online news portals, online radio and, online and Internet Protocol Television mention similar but fewer criteria. Desk research could not locate any such form or rules for starting a new satellite television channel.

Another thing overlooked by the laws and regulations, is a requirement for equitable coverage of women in contents. The same goes for coverage of the hijra community or gender diversity.

(See annexe 3. Table 3 for the status of the laws by provisions detailed out.)

**Self-regulation:** For sector-wide self-regulatory frameworks, we mapped the code of conduct prescribed by the Bangladesh Press Council and the guidelines provided in the constitution of the Dhaka Union of Journalists (DUJ), which a few other regional unions have also adopted. The Press Council code, first issued in 1993 and amended in 2002, applies to newspapers, news agencies and print media journalists. The DUJ constitution, first adopted in 1972 and last amended in 2003, applies to its members. The following tables 4 and 5 give a picture of the presence of selected provisions by frequency and by the codes:

*Table 4. Presence of provisions in industry-wide self-regulatory ethical codes (By frequency)*

No.	Provision	Yes	No
1	Protection of human dignity	2	0
2	Protection of HR	2	0
3	Gender equality	0	2
4	Gender representation in electoral processes (Coverage)	0	2
5	Discrimination on the basis of sex/gender	0	2
6	Violence against women	1	1
7	Hatred on the basis of sex/gender	0	2
8	Stereotypes/sexism	0	2
9	Gender equality in internal structures	0	2
10	Sexist language	0	2
11	Equal representation/treatment of women, men and recognized gender minorities	1	1
12	Diversity	1	1

*Table 5. Presence of provisions in industry-wide self-regulatory ethical codes (by the codes)*

No	Document title	Provisions YES	Provisions NO
1	Code of Conduct for the Newspapers, News Agencies	1, 2, 12	3-11
2	Dhaka Union of Journalists (DUJ) Guidelines	1, 2, 6, 11	3-5, 7-10, 12

1= Protection of human dignity / 2= Protection of HR / 3= Gender equality / 4= Gender representation in electoral processes (coverage) / 5= Discrimination on the basis of sex/gender / 6= Violence against women / 7= Hatred on the basis of sex/gender / 8= Stereotypes/sexism / 9= Gender equality in internal structures / 10= Sexist language / 11= Equal representation/treatment of women, men and recognized gender minorities / 12= Diversity

The Press Council Code has four relevant clauses. One concerns gender-sensitivity issues in a traditional manner, and three concern public interest and people’s rights issues, thereby incorporating gender perspectives indirectly. The DUJ guidelines have two relevant clauses, which are not gender-specific but they are inclusive of all genders.

### 3.1.2 Policies for the promotion of gender equality in the media

**National Policies:** The self-regulatory policies of individual media organisations will be discussed separately. Here we present the analysis of 12 national policies which have gender-equality or gender-sensitivity issues in media or content-related provisions. Ten of these policies are specific to media, while two are the umbrella women development policy and its action plan, reference to which have been made before on a number of occasions.

We mapped and analysed the policies on a scale of four types of provisions. Table 6 shows coverage of these provisions by the number of policies:

*Table 6. Presence of provisions in different policies (by frequency)*

No.	Indicator	Yes	No	Total	% of policies covering the indicator
1	Media Content	11	1	12	91.67
2	Media Employment	2	10	12	16.67
3	Media ownership	1	11	12	8.33
4	Others	8	4	12	66.67

Note: One policy could cover more than one provision

A few common requirements in almost each policy include the following directives: not to violate social, cultural, historical, political values and spirits; not to go against the spirit of the War of Liberation, and history of independence; pay tribute to freedom fighters; and not to go against the State’s fundamental principles.

As the table shows, 11 policies had content-related gender-sensitivity provisions, while media employment featured in only two. Only one had a clear say on media owners’ responsibility or commitment to gender sensitivity. Ownership is referred to in gender-inclusive terms though. The policies, however, do have provisions discussing more coverage of women or related issues, primarily from a development advocacy perspective. The ‘other’ criteria mostly refer to these. For example, the policy for private FM radios says that native culture, tradition and ideologies of minor ethnic groups have to be reflected for the sake of their advancement. A policy for private television stations was drafted in 1998, which desk research could not locate. This policy has not been finalised.<sup>xcvi</sup>

Table 7 provides a breakdown of coverage of provisions by policies:

*Table 7. Presence of different types of provisions in different policies (by policies)*

<b>No.</b>	<b>Document Title</b>	<b>Indicator YES</b>	<b>Indicator NO</b>
<b>1</b>	National Women Development Policy 2011	1, 2, 4	3
<b>2</b>	The National Action Plan, 2013 on National Women Development Policy	1, 2, 3, 4	N/A
<b>3</b>	The National Broadcast Policy, 2014	1, 4	2, 3
<b>4</b>	The National Online Mass Media Policy, 2017	1, 4	2, 3
<b>5</b>	The Community Radio Installation Broadcast and Operation Policy, 2017	1, 4	2, 3
<b>6</b>	The Private Radio Station (FM) Installation and Operation Policy, 2010	4	1, 2, 3
<b>7</b>	The National Telecommunication Policy 2018	1	2, 3, 4
<b>8</b>	The National Film Policy, 2017	1, 4	2, 3
<b>9</b>	Policy for Government grants to Full-length films 2020	1	2, 3, 4
<b>10</b>	Policy for Government grants to Short-films, 2020	1	2, 3, 4
<b>11</b>	The Code for Censorship of Films in Bangladesh, 1985	1, 4	2, 3
<b>12</b>	The Advertising and Supplement Policy 2008, with Amendments, 2010	1	2, 3, 4

1 = Media Content / 2 = Media Employment / 3 = Media Ownership / 4 = others

Both the National Women Development Policy 2011 and the corresponding National Action Plan of 2013 cover media content, media employment, and ‘other’ provisions. The NAP (40.4) additionally covers media ownership issues. It calls for formulating a comprehensive national gender-sensitive policy for the mass media as a short-term activity. It further says, in long-term, the MOI should incorporate gender-sensitivity as a condition for granting broadcast licenses and for transmission of programmes.

Both the policy and its action plan are about overall development of women. The policy sets 22 main goals and details out specific objectives or targets on 25 related topics. Media constitute the 19th goal (To reflect gender perspective in the mass media including positive image of women and girl children). As a related topic, 'Women and Mass Media' details out four objectives or targets.

The other issues highlighted by these two documents include: training as a facilitating factor, gender training for the MOI staff and gender orientation for journalism students in universities, raising women’s political participation, and establishment of a monitoring cell. Both put particular stress on formulating an overarching comprehensive gender-sensitive policy for the media.

The National Broadcast policy has detailed guidelines on advertisement and addresses issues of gender stereotyping and hate speech (gender-inclusive). The policy is pretty thorough and detailed-out on media content. The Film policy has some specific guidelines such as not showing rape scenes. This policy also says, all laws and rules must mention the standards to follow on professional ethics and responsibility in producing, distributing and screening films.

While the moralist tone is present on occasions, the policies issued over the last decade have many positive aspects. Some of them specifically use terms like gender-sensitivity, stigma and stereotyping. The development advocacy agenda is almost omnipresent in these policies. Some recurrent themes include violence against women, women’s development, women’s empowerment, and just and positive portrayal of women. (See Annex 4, Table 4 for the relevant provisions and clauses for each policy.)

### 3.1.3 Gender equality indicators

**Indicators for progress of gender equality in the media:** The National Action Plan (2013) formulated for the National Women Development Policy 2011 had some targets which could pass as indicators. This process was a direct outcome of the Beijing Platform for Action (BPfA), which had identified 12 critical areas of concern. Its Section J had two broad indicators for media and gender equality: 1. Increased participation and access of women to decision-making and expression in and through the media and new technologies of communication 2. promote a balanced and non-stereotypical portrayal of women in the media. The NWDP and NAP had these broken down into four clauses. The term for the ongoing NAP ends in 2023.

The NAP 2013 developed a matrix for the NWDP objectives, mentioning the relevant laws and policies; present activities and status; long, medium and short-term targets and activities. Responsibilities were assigned. While Its term expires soon, not much follow-up or monitoring can be noticed. A new action plan was drafted a couple of years ago, but has not been finalised yet.

Currently, the State monitors the indicators for the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG). The Eighth Five-year Plan of the Government set its indicators as aligned with the SDGs. We could not find any other indicator provided by the government for monitoring the progress of gender equality in media. The indicators to monitor SDGs include those on Goal 16, which has media components. The goal 5 targets for gender equality also have some relevant indicators.

(See Annex 5 and Table 5 for country indicators on gender equality in the news media)

The SDG Tracker<sup>xcvii</sup>, an initiative by the government, is a web-based data repository for tracking Bangladesh's progress towards attaining SDGs and other national development goals. The tracker marks progress with available data, specifying sources for each along with the reporting periods. Not all Goals or targets have enough or disaggregated data. The latest SDG monitoring and evaluation report by the government (2018), mentioned scarcity of data to be a major problem. Data gap is a major challenge for tracking indicators on Goal 16 as a whole.<sup>xcviii</sup> The government has prioritised a set of 39 indicators (directly selected and also after country-specific modifications) for Bangladesh. None directly concerns gender-issues related to media.

Bangladesh is a founding member of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC). The member countries adopted the SAARC Convention on Preventing and Combating Trafficking in Women and Children for Prostitution in 2002.<sup>xcix</sup> Bangladesh passed The Prevention and Suppression of Human Trafficking Act, in 2012. This Act repealed the Suppression of Immoral Traffic Act, 1933 and also the sections 5 and 6 of The Prevention of Repression of Women and Children Act, 2000, which contained provisions against trafficking. The Act, as has been discussed earlier, stipulates identity protection of victims and their family members. Publication or broadcast or disclosure of identities and identifying information about the victims or their family members is penalised unless the tribunal grants permission to such disclosure.

### 3.2 MEDIA REGULATORY AUTHORITIES

As we have earlier noted, the umbrella regulator for all types of media is the Ministry of Information (MOI). The study team approached the Public Relation Officer (PRO) of the MOI, and he said he would fill in the survey questionnaire. We could not get his response till 16.09.2021—the ultimate deadline we could afford.

On another front, the Press Council of Bangladesh (a statutory quasi-judicial body), is an agency of the Ministry of Information (MOI). It is funded mainly by the government. The Council chair is appointed by the government. The council has representation of the editors and journalists. It seemed prudent to consider this institution as an extension of the regulator. Its mandate is to uphold press freedom and to ensure practice of ethical journalism by newspapers and news agencies—the print media.

The Press Council receives and adjudicates complaints from the public against ethical lapses in media contents. Complaints are filed as cases. If, however, any case is pending with the law courts, the Council cannot receive complaints on that. With the power of a civil court, the Council's decision is final in the cases it adjudicates.

After hearing out both the parties and scrutinising evidences, if a complaint is found to be true, the Press Council has the power to issue verbal warning, reprimand, admonish and ask newspapers to publish its judgment. It cannot give any effective punishment. The council is often referred to as a ‘toothless tiger’ in different discourses. The body has mandates to conduct research amongst its other functions defined by the Act.

The Council also Issues a code of conduct for journalists, the content of which we have already analysed. The council, however, does not monitor contents on its own. It responds and takes action only when a complaint is placed before them. It does not have any specific mandate or provision for reviewing gender-related complaints. Nor do such complaints come.

In fact, complaints in general are pathetically few. The Council’s last annual report (2017-18) shows, eight complaints were registered as cases in 2017; it adjudicated seven cases that year, including the ones pending from previous years. The number of cases rose to seven next year, and it adjudicated a total of 13 cases. Similar few cases reached the Appellate Board. The interviewee said, newspaper houses should recruit women to make up at least 10 per cent of the employees and their safety and security should be ensured following the Constitution and existing laws.

### 3.2.1 Gender equality in the decision-making of media regulators

**Media content monitoring by regulators:** The main regulator, the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting (MOI), we could not reach. But desk research did not show any monitoring mechanism for media content to be in place. We have seen, laws and policies do sanction hate speech and discrimination, if not always specifically based on sex/gender or sexism. Clauses of various laws do prohibit specific types of contents. The don’ts are mainly on a moralistic tone, but that is a different issue.

The licensing laws have prohibitions concerning ‘gender-sensitivity’ in the contents, and penalize violations. Some of the criminal laws on violence against women and children have specific instructions for the media to ensure absolute protection of the victims or survivors. Heavy penalties are in place for any violation. No source could be located, which track if Identity disclosure of victims has ever been punished.

Labour laws have provisions making maternity leave and some enabling conditions mandatory. The umbrella labour law also stipulates decent treatment of women colleagues (not hurting their dignity and propriety). The High Court directives (2009) for prevention and redress of sexual abuse and workplaces is there. The study found a few media institutions have in fact formed complaint redress committees as directed. But none of these issues are being monitored by the regulator. At least no such initiative or mechanism could be located. The Press Council representative whom we interviewed, said that they cannot do any monitoring due to lack of human resources, and can take action only if complaints come.



### 3.2.2 Gender balance in regulator’s internal structures

The sitting Bangladesh Press Council has 11 men and three women members, excluding the chairman. Since its creation in 1979, the commission has never had a woman chairperson. It does not have any gender policy, nor has it formed a complaint redress committee mandatory by the 2009 High Court judgment. There is a general redress committee, which never received any gender-related complaints.

## 3.3 SELF-REGULATORY BODIES

The table below lists the self-regulatory bodies who responded to our interview requests.

*Table 8. List of self-regulatory bodies reached by the study*

Name of self-regulatory body	Description
Newspaper Owners’ Association of Bangladesh (NOAB). Established 2005.	An association of the owners of newspapers. Represents the interests of the print media industry in Bangladesh.
Editors' Council Formed 2013.	An association of the mainstream prominent group of editors. Not Registered, but proposes to be so with the Registrar of Joint Stock Company (RJSC).
Dhaka Union of Journalists (DUJ). Established 1972.	A trade union of journalists working in Dhaka City. Divided in two factions along political lines.
Dhaka Reporters’ Unity (DRU). Established 1995.	An association of full-time reporters working in Dhaka for national, regional and international news organisations (newspapers, news agencies, electronic media). Has permanent and non-permanent members.
Bangladesh Nari Sangbadik Kendra (BNSK)—The Centre for Women Journalists of Bangladesh. Established 2001.	A civil society organisation of women journalists, for women journalists and run by women journalists.
Dhaka Sub-editors’ Council. Formed 2000.	Association of Dhaka-based sub-editors working in dailies, periodicals and in news agencies. Not registered.

We tried to find out about the gender-equality measures taken by the self-regulatory bodies. Table 9 lists our findings.

Table 9. Self-regulatory measures on gender equality

Name	Type (Governance, Staffing, Handling Complaints)	Illustration
<b>Newspaper Owners' Association of Bangladesh (NOAB)</b>	Governance Handling Complaints	Even though not written down anywhere, it ensures minimum one woman in its own executive committee. The present board has 25 men and two women members. Complaints against individual newspapers reach NOAB. Some concern grievances of journalists. Press Council send complaints. The executive committee conveys it to the concerned owner or house. No gender-related case was mentioned.
<b>Editors' Council</b>	Editorial Guidelines for good journalism	The Constitution mandates one, but has not formulated it as yet. A move is on for issuing a code of ethics/conduct for the industry.
<b>Dhaka Union of Journalists (DUJ)</b>	Handling Complaints Editorial Guidelines for good journalism	Protects the interests of the members, including resolution of issues such as wage and job-related ones; provides help to the members during job-related conflicts. Helps journalists when they face problems during professional duty.  Upholds the freedom of the press and journalists. The Constitution has a code of ethics or ethical guidelines at the end. Clauses 12 and 13 talk about not causing harm or hurting the dignity of the common, bereaved or suffering people, and people facing tragedies, while gathering information or taking photos. The clauses also stress gathering documents or photographs by honest means and not to commit defamation, contempt of courts, and copyright violations. They underscore principles of impartiality and fairness to all involved parties. These could broadly cover gender concerns in a roundabout way. DUJ is considering an amendment to its constitution, which might clearly outline gender-related provisions.
<b>Dhaka Reporters' Unity</b>	Governance	The elected executive committee has 21-members, comprising 14 secretaries (including a women affairs secretary) and seven executive members. The secretarial post for women affairs is reserved for women members,

Name	Type (Governance, Staffing, Handling Complaints)	Illustration
		<p>who, alongside other responsibilities, is mandated to exclusively deal with issues related to women members, and women at large. She should propose programmes for their welfare and execute those securing approval of the executive committee.</p> <p>The women affairs secretary is to be a member of the selection committee for evaluating and granting new membership.</p>
<b>Bangladesh Nari Sangbadik Kendra (BNSK)</b>	Governance, Staffing, Handling Complaints, Advocacy.	<p>Works for gender mainstreaming in the media. It provides support to women journalists, such as for capacity building, advocacy and lobbying the policymakers for creating an enabling working environment for them, for gender integration in media, policies and for gender-sensitivity in the contents. Works for encouraging women to engage in journalism. It also works for raising the voices of women journalists.</p> <p>BNSK has been advocating regulatory provisions for reserving 30 per cent jobs for women journalists and handed a memorandum to the information minister (the document was not available during the interview).</p> <p>They also demand an enabling workplace environment for women journalists and to form committees in all media against sexual harassment in workplace.</p>
<b>Dhaka Sub-editors' Council</b>	---	<p>Objectives: Skills development of members, promoting objective and responsible journalism, moving for the welfare of members, networking among individuals working in different houses. But nothing on gender-equality or sensitivity.</p>

No self-regulatory organisations participating in the study have formed any complaint redress committee for sexual abuse or harassment as per the 2009 High Court judgement, nor have they taken any complaints on gender-based issues as yet.

### 3.4 MEDIA ORGANISATIONS

In total 18 media organisations responded to our questionnaire. We aimed to review their written organisational guidelines or policies for newsroom and also the editorial guidelines for contents, if they have any. We also asked them if they had any unwritten customary guidelines especially for reporting. Then we analysed the data for measures on organisation and functioning of newsrooms and on content.

Table 10 gives a brief summary. (see Annex 6, Table 6 for contextual comments on each organisation)

*Table 10. Gender-equality measures in media organisations*

<b>Name of Media organisation</b>	<b>Circulation</b>	<b>Newsroom organisation Yes=X</b>	<b>Content Yes=X</b>
<i>Prothom Alo</i>	501,800	X	X
<i>Daily Ittefaq</i>	290,200	X	
<i>Kaler Kantho</i>	290,200	X	
<i>Daily Samakal</i>	271,000	X	
<i>Dhaka Tribune</i>	40,600	X	X
<i>New Age</i>	40,100	X	X
<i>Gramer Kagoj</i>	25,000		X
<i>Purbokone</i>	55,000	X	
<i>BTV</i>	N/A	X	X
<i>ATN News</i>	N/A	X	X
<i>Maasranga TV</i>	N/A	X	X
<i>News 24</i>	N/A	X	X
<i>Channel 24</i>	N/A	X	
<i>Ekattor TV</i>	N/A	X	
<i>Independent TV</i>	N/A	X	
<i>ABC Radio</i>	N/A		
<i>Dhaka FM</i>	N/A		X
<i>Bangla Tribune</i>	N/A	X	X

**Note:** The circulation figures are taken from the government’s relevant department’s website.<sup>c</sup> The public advertisements are rated and given on the basis of these figures. These figures are to be taken with a pinch of salt. These were recently updated, but remains the same as before the COVID-19 days, during which all newspapers reported significant loss of circulation.<sup>ci</sup>

As the table shows, 15 of the media houses reported measures to be in place for gender equality in newsroom organisation. This does not necessarily refer to a gender balance among the employees. The

media houses provided disaggregated data on their employees and journalists unevenly (See tables in Annex 7). As not all 18 organisations completed this data, we offer them only for giving an idea.

A most common measure is maternity leave provisions, which is mandatory by the law. Only one of the sampled organisations, a northern regional newspaper, did not provide it. Another did not answer this question. Six organisations including the online portal, reported providing paternity leave as well. This provision underscores the recognition of gender-equality in care work. The BTV provides a 180-day maternity leave as per the government's rules for state-run organisations, so do *Prothom Alo*, Independent Television and Ekattor TV.

The questionnaire did not ask for information on the duration of the maternity leave, so there could be others doing the same. However, a member of the research team Informally interviewed 20 women journalists, who participated in a Fojo-MRDI training on safety and security in August 2021. According to the women, one TV channel covered our survey provides less than the 16 weeks mandated by the Labour Act. Four organisations outside our survey provide the enhanced 180-day maternity leave. Seems like, a good number of Dhaka-based prominent organisations have positive policies regarding maternity leaves.

One overwhelmingly common measure mentioned by our survey participants is providing drop-off services for women employees late evening onwards. An all-prevailing measure is provision of separate toilets for women at the office. Lack of separate toilets, which is deemed essential for privacy, had been a crucial problem for women journalists even in the 1990s. Even now there are complaints about the number of toilets being inadequate. Inclusive toilets are rare these days, which would be required when non-binary people gain access to media jobs. Meanwhile, one provision none of the 18 organisations had is a childcare facility at work.

*The Daily Ittefaq*, one of the pioneering newspapers of the country, daily *Kaler Kantha* and radio *Dhaka FM* reported that their women journalists do not work nightshifts. One TV channel did not provide any answer. All the others said, women were doing the nightshift. One related question was, whether gender was a consideration when assigning management responsibilities, news beats and assignments. *Ittefaq* said while they had no problem with assigning management responsibilities (the editor herself is a woman), they did not send women reporters to cover religious, especially Islamist gatherings and on any assignment at night. Safety and security were a common concern, but the overwhelming majority did say, they had a policy of non-discrimination in either assigning management responsibilities or news assignments. The female executive editor of a news-only TV channel said, their policy was to send women to non-stereotypical assignments.

The group of women journalists we interviewed at the Fojo-MRDI training session, talked about various types of gender-based harassments in newsrooms. Our questionnaire had asked media organisations, if they were aware of the 2009 guidelines for ending abuses and harassment of women at workplaces. All except a regional daily from the south-east said they were aware of it. The next question was, had they formed the mandatory complaint redress committee. Two newspapers, two TV channels including the state-run BTV and a radio outlet reported forming the committee and provided disaggregated numbers of committee members. One interesting point is, except for five organisations, all said they had not received any formal complaint of this nature in the last five years. Three senior managers including a key informant said, women are not comfortable with registering such complaints formally.

On another front, only 10 of the news organisations reported having measures on content. Although more said they had policies for ensuring gender equality and sensitivity in contents, supporting documents were available only for five. The BTV and Prothom Alo each had a number of published guidelines for contents, with gender-related provisions. Prothom Alo has a set of separate guidelines on issues concerning women. Dhaka FM radio provided one smart code of ethics, which had gender-related provisions. We got copies of style guides for New Age and Dhaka Tribune. Both set a few gender-equality or sensitivity-related standards, mainly covering usage of words and writing styles. Besides, on query, five respondents mentioned gender-focused specific reporting guidelines, which are not codified but exist in practice.

The most common norm mentioned was, identity protection of victims or survivors of sexual offences. The BTV respondent said they did not usually cover rape cases, which however is rather problematic. Gender-balance in general coverage or coverage of women's issues were mentioned by a smaller number of outlets. The verbal guidelines cover diverse and important aspects of gender-sensitivity. But the real problem seems to be gaps in training and monitoring activities. For the most, monitoring was an informal and irregular practice which comes as part of the day's work. Some mentioned discussions at daily and weekly meetings. *Prothom Alo* has a system of daily post mortem and thorough pre-consultation on sensitive cases along with gender-related ones. This newspaper and the BTV have regular training activities, which cover gender-related issues as well.

The BTV has formal guidelines, training and other enabling provisions. A key informant, an insider, thought that the BTV is more gender-sensitive regarding contents compared to other TV channels (but they do not usually cover rape cases). Women are neither glamorized nor degraded on BTV, he said, no room for using slangs or offensive language either. It broadcasts programmes on women and children regularly, also as part of the development advocacy agenda of the government. As regards news coverage, the BTV is commonly regarded as the mouthpiece of the government. One insider, on condition of anonymity, said they did 'protocol' news mainly. Another one said, self-censorship and inertia was a major problem. The case of the BTV presents a question, whether strong and relevant journalism on any issue is possible without independence and freedom of the media.

A small note on the ABC Radio is due here. A sister concern of Prothom Alo, this outlet had high listenership not too long ago. It is now in a survival mode, under the management of its sister. No measure for gender-equality in newsroom structure or in content was discernible from its half-hearted response to the questionnaire. While the reasons for its downfall could be a topic for another research, it is pertinent to mention here that the last blow has been the COVID-crunch. In total 24 men and five women had lost or left jobs since COVID-19 crisis hit the industry.

### 3.5 GOOD PRACTICES

Two judgments of the High Court regarding sexual abuse and harassment of women and girls are exemplary for a number of reasons. They also underscore the role of human and women's rights activists moving the court for securing gender-justice. Newspaper articles, and legal and civil body discourses on many occasions have termed the first one to be a landmark decision. *Prothom Alo*, which

has three ethical codes in written form, including one on gender, has a system of regular thorough pre-briefing and post mortem content monitoring practice. This has proven to be effective. We cite these two findings as good practices in Table 11.

*Table 11. Examples of good practices*

<b>Example</b>	<b>Comment/Observation</b>
<p><b>High Court Judgments and directives/guidelines of 2009<sup>cii</sup> and 2011<sup>ciii</sup> on sexual harassment and abuse of women and girls in workplaces and in public spheres.</b></p>	<p>Bangladesh has no law to address the problem of workplace sexual abuse and harassments. A legal aid and human rights organisation, Bangladesh Women Lawyers’ Association (BNWLA) had filed a writ petition at the High Court Division of the Supreme Court of Bangladesh. The Court delivered its judgment on 14 May, 2009, and provided detailed directives in the form of guidelines to be followed by every workplace in Bangladesh in order to ensure safeguards against sexual abuse and harassment of their women employees.</p> <p>The Court said, these directives will be like a law, until the Parliament enacts such a law. The directives were mandated to fulfil the legal vacuum until any legislation on this was enacted by the Parliament. The High Court Division of the Supreme Court could do this as per the Articles 102 and 111 of the Constitution, which provides for binding effects of Supreme Court directives and judgements. Any law is yet to be enacted.</p> <p>The judgement defined sexual harassment in detail, and mentioned sexual abuse. It mandated all workplaces (which include the media) to have its institutional complaints committee and ensure appropriate disciplinary actions. There is no monitoring though and the implementation is very slow.</p> <p>BNWLA filed another writ petition in 2010 following a rise in incidents of stalking and sexual harassment of young girls. A few cases of suicide had also taken place. The petitioner again mentioned that the government had failed to protect girls and women from this crime.</p> <p>The judgement was given on 25 January, 2011. The Court defined sexual harassment and asked the police and other authorities to take effective steps immediately. The Court also strictly asked all to stop using the term ‘eve-teasing’. It said, ‘sexual harassment’ is the appropriate term. While the 2009 judgement covered workplaces, this judgement covered public places as well. The judgment built upon the 2009 High Court guidelines to also address sexual harassment in public places.<sup>civ</sup></p>

<b>Example</b>	<b>Comment/Observation</b>
	<p>The term ‘eve teasing’ continues to appear, so does the offence. Generally speaking, the term sexual harassment is not being used by the media. Nor is it getting into the parlance of regulations (where the offence is coined generally as sexual torment and violation of modesty). Some such offences, i.e. stalking, leering, whistling, catcalls, even showing of genital organs, are often looked upon as minor mischiefs in ordinary informal personal-level discussions.</p> <p>Two shortcomings of these directives are that they do not give coverage to the Hijras, whose recognition came later. Besides, men should be covered too. Young boys are also victimised.</p> <p>A particularly positive aspect of these two cases is that they highlight civil society’s role as well and show that together with the judiciary, such public interest litigations could initiate important steps.</p>
<p><b><i>Prothom Alo;</i></b>  <b>Established 1998.</b>  <b>Codified guidelines,</b>  <b>initiated policies and</b>  <b>regular monitoring</b></p>	<p>The Bangla daily newspaper has three written guidelines for news gathering and content: one general (issued in 2010; updated in 2013 and 2019), one exclusively on gender, and one on children. The last two have been issued in 2019.</p> <p>The policies cover general ethical norms of journalism. They also cover gender-equality and gender sensitivity issues including absolute protection of identity of victims and survivors in stories on sexual abuse and other sensitive cases; diversity issues; hate speech; and best interests of the vulnerable people. The directions are thorough and in detail. Some indicate lessons learnt from experiences.</p> <p>Implementation of the guidelines are monitored regularly and steps are taken accordingly. Employees are introduced to the policies at orientation sessions upon joining. These are refreshed during professional in-house training, which takes place more or less regularly. There is a system for daily monitoring of all contents (post mortem), including those covering gender issues.</p> <p>The monitoring mechanism works well. When major sensitive issues, particularly on women, come up, the news managers meet and decide on coverage norms. Reporters and copy editors are briefed. When issues come late, they have a system of consulting inhouse and outside experts including legal ones. Senior managers keep an eye on the content. Since 2012, a daily post mortem, which results in a written and circulated review report, is in practice more or less regularly. Responsibilities of any oversight is noted and conveyed to the person responsible.</p>



<b>Example</b>	<b>Comment/Observation</b>
	<p>The newspaper does not have any organisational gender policy though. But the practice is non-discriminatory, with a thrust on positive enabling measures. Salary is as per the Wage Board but the paper is going for contractual employment gradually, especially for the senior staff. Gender is not considered when designating management responsibilities or when assigning work or beats. One of their senior crime reporters and one investigative reporter (Rozina Islam) covering government ministries are women. Security for the female staff members is ensured. Six months of maternity leave and enough separate toilets are provided. No inclusive toilet though, nor any non-binary journalist.</p> <p>Another shortcoming is that though aware of the High Court's 2009 guidelines, it has not formed the mandatory complaint redress committee yet. A high-level general redress committee co-opts senior female employees for addressing complaints on gender-based issues.</p>

## 4. DISCUSSION

At the levels of media houses, the awareness of what is fair is there. But accepting them could be a problem. You need to have conviction in the justness of gender-equality in media. While issues of sensitivity gain support, equality faces resistance—both for recruitment and for women’s share in coverage.

Why is it so? One senior woman journalist said, you need change in the head. How do you change heads? One core inequality exists in Bangladesh regarding women’s rights in personal life. One’s status in personal life is a core determinant of one’s overall status—how society perceives women, stems from there. Consider the language of the country’s main women development policy. The detailed introduction to the policy provides background and other pertinent issues. Certain terms and the patronising tone used in the introductory sections are disturbing: paying tribute to ‘our women’, ‘mothers’, ‘sisters’ (Why daughters and other generations are ignored, one wonders!) They indicate a patriarchal mindset.

The policy has faced controversies spanning four governments. Traditional forces within society, and rising religiosity have not allowed the policy-makers to include pledges for equal inheritance rights in the National Women Development Policy. Even the Constitution chose to keep that sphere unchallenged.

You cannot progress far if your feet are weak and the ground is wobbly. Quest for gender-equality in media must keep this inherent contextual drawback in mind. One way to work for that change is to build up collaboration with the women’s rights or feminist movements and non-binary rights groups. Positions of women and other gender minorities must be strengthened. So, alliance with the rights groups or movements is a must. This is a core demand. Women’s movements have been crucial for other regulatory and policy changes.<sup>cv</sup> Their support and involvement would be crucial for similar changes in the media sector too. And they also need and want the media’s support.

The regulations and policies that we scrutinised, have very few things to say about the eligibility criteria of the owners. Media ownership along with most other institutions of the society are very politicised. Owners of the media are also owners of big businesses. This is an environment, where regulators want to control the media and the media owners want to be in favourable terms with the regulators. Even if more women join and rise high in the management of the media, they may not question the inherent structural constraints. The structure is not conducive to diversity or gender-equality.

One major concern of many media houses is now survival, especially in the COVID-19 times. Pay is irregular and job loss is a frequent threat. All sorts of fears, management's conflicts of interest coupled with repressive use of certain laws by the state authorities, have strengthened self-censorship of the journalists.

This researcher's personal experience as a journalist, teacher, trainer and mentor of journalists, and discussions with senior women news managers across the industry, indicate that young people are not finding the profession attractive. Scopes of other jobs with better pay have been expanded and capable young people prefer going for those. Journalism is a taxing profession, demanding more and intense working hours. And doing journalism is becoming more difficult. The reasons comprise various controls by the state agencies and other sources, self-censorship of the houses, and conflicts of interests of the owners, but are not limited to these. Job satisfaction is decreasing. Women in journalism have the added obstacles of unfriendly work environments and demands of traditional gender roles, which prioritise their care work and family responsibilities more.

Our study finds, one newspaper does not send women to cover religious gatherings. Nadia Sharmeen, a senior reporter in a private TV channel had gone to cover a gathering of an Islamist group in 2013. The participants questioned her presence amidst a congregation of men. When she protested, at one stage a group of participants physically assaulted her. A few colleagues eventually rescued her. But the experience could not make Nadia quit such journalism.

Rozina Islam was harassed inside the Secretariat, which should not be a risky place at all. Risk is relative. For women, obstacles are twofold. They go through the same hassles as their male comrades do in the context of lack of media freedom. On top of that, theirs remain the gender-based limitations imposed by society. One member of the Hijra community has joined a television channel as a presenter. For this person, the obstacles could be threefold.

For women or other minority genders to gain importance, the work should perhaps start from recognising the value of human life from the perspectives of journalism. Perhaps, the quest for gender-equality in the media and in media content is also a quest for saving journalism. Adding worth to the profession of journalism is essential.

A free and responsible press is the goal. Freedom carries responsibility. And responsibility needs freedom. One needs to go back to the core ethics of journalism, encompassing truth and context, impartiality, fairness, inclusivity, diversity, sensitivity and not causing unwarranted harm, and keeping well-being of people at the centre. And one needs to uphold the conviction that Journalism is not just about selling news.

## 5. RECOMMENDATIONS

- i. Formulate an overarching anti-discrimination law and an umbrella gender-equality law encompassing public and personal spheres. These could work better for achieving gender-equality and gender-sensitivity in internal structures of the media, and in media contents.
- ii. Formulate an overarching and overriding freedom of expression Law. Ensure media freedom.
- iii. Liaise with the rights movements for strengthening the position and status of the gender minorities in society at large, and for safeguarding their freedom of expression.
- iv. Getting the owners on board is crucially important. Along with them, the news managers, particularly the editors, have to own the gender-equality and gender-sensitive goals and efforts. More work is needed with them—to get them on board. News organisations are by default hierarchical organisations, little democracy may be found there. The owner's and editor's call is essential for any progress there.
- v. There are demands for job quotas ensured by the law. This might not work. Given the political culture and intolerance to dissent, regulations can be used to curtail press freedom, i.e. propping them up as excuses for sanctioning any media outlet that displeases the government for reasons other than gender-equality concerns. Such provisions should best be emphasised as goals in policies.
- vi. One of our interviewees recommended that the regulatory bodies have a system to examine the aspirant people and their intentions for getting licences to start a media outlet. Their understanding of gender-sensitivity also needs to be scrutinised. The recommendation was that the licensing system initiate such obligatory provisions. The NAP 2013 had a similar recommendation. While the concern is valid, the way may not be. More appropriately, policies should incorporate and underscore this issue involving owners elaborately and specifically.
- vii. While regulations are important, law alone cannot do much. Besides, stringent media registration and such laws could be abused to suppress dissent. Policies are more important for media, especially self-regulatory ones. The demand for a comprehensive single gender-integration national policy for the media has been on for long, from diverse platforms of women

journalists, rights activists, development planners and academicians. Appropriate state policies, and corresponding in-house policies are essential.

- viii. Approach the issue as an essential requirement for quality journalism and public trust, which is linked to media survival issues. One needs to go back to the core ethics of journalism, keeping well-being of people at the centre.
- ix. Written down in-house policies of recruitment, promotion, enabling benefits for women, and safety and security are essential. Regulations can fix pay scales, but it cannot deal with glass ceilings. Even fixation of pay can earn resistance from the industry, which are private businesses. Emphasis on national policies, and then on similar in-house policies for gender equality in internal structures would be more effective.
- x. Safety and security of journalists, including their cyber dimensions, need legal protection and effective mechanism at the national level for ensuring that. The media houses need to have safety and security mechanisms in place, especially for women journalists and journalists belonging to other gender minorities.
- xi. Lobby media companies for formation of a sexual abuse and harassment prevention policy and a complaint redress system as per the 2009 guidelines of the high court.
- xii. Licensing laws should stress editorial independence and standards. Professional associations and policies must uphold editorial independence and standards and seek to strengthen the editorial institution.
- xiii. In the absence of a truly industry-level press council or commission and standards, unions and professional organisations need to formulate codes of conducts or ethics. The Editors' Council, which has such a mandate, should formulate one soonest. These bodies should come up with a system of monitoring the enforcement of the codes, encouraging complaints and adjudication in a fair and transparent manner. They should also stress adoption and implementation of similar ethical codes in individual media houses. All such codes should stress gender-equality and sensitivity in media contents.
- xiv. Without monitoring, efficacy of laws and policies is little, as has been discussed in the report. Mechanisms for regular monitoring of contents is essential. By regulators by all means, but also by each media organisation and by the professional bodies. The government regulators and the Press Council could do with their shares of monitoring responsibilities, but measures from the industry or professional associations would be more effective.
- xv. Ensure in-house and other training and orientation programmes on gender and diversity; gender-equality and gender-sensitivity in and through the media. Simultaneously provide regular training on improving the quality of journalism, with a focus on editorial standards and ethics.
- xvi. Content reviewing systems and publishing spaces for such reviews needs to be developed. Simultaneously, there is a need for developing critical news and media literacy. A space for

regular media reviews by the audience should be created. The role of the consumer, the citizens, cannot be overstressed.

- xvii. In the last few decades, media advocacy has gained much currency with the governments. While media's role in development is valid and just, provisions need to be strengthened from purely freedom of expression and rights perspectives.
- xviii. Existing regulations (barring licensing conditions) and policies need to be reformulated incorporating clear and specific provisions for gender-equality and gender-sensitivity in internal structures and in contents. Regulations and policies must pay special attention to the facilitating and enabling provisions. They also need revision in their texts, which are often insensitive, at times raw, reflecting gender-insensitive mindsets and stereotypes. These need to be rewritten in a gender-sensitive and gender-inclusive manner.
- xix. A central ministry as a regulator will always retain control risks. The media regulatory body needs to be independent. To be effective, it must involve ownership and active participation of the industry members—owners, editors and journalist representatives.
- xx. A free and responsible press is the goal. Freedom carries responsibility. Self-regulation needs to be stressed more. (Even there, the legacy of political culture can leave its traces as manifested in the existing code of conduct issued by the Press Council. This code does not stress media independence and rather encourages subservience to the political power.)
- xxi. Build on whatever gains have been made. Build on the awareness amongst the media leaders about what is politically and ethically correct. Alongside looking for gaps, one needs to focus on how much and what have been achieved—what factors made the changes happen. New research is needed.

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<sup>xvi</sup> Chowdhury, A. (2003). *Media in Times of Crisis / National and International Issues*, (pp 79-139). Dhaka: Shraban Prokashoni.

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<sup>xvii</sup> Note: The BMP list, as work on it is going on, was shared with the research team confidentially. Hence we cannot provide link to the list.

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<sup>xxiii</sup> Note: The process determining the number had representation of leaders of the ethnic communities. The next census to be held this year is supposed to have codes of the 50 communities and an option for 'other'. Sanjeeb Drong, the general secretary of Bangladesh Indigenous Peoples' Forum, provided this information and the supporting documents to this researcher. In an interview over telephone on 4 October 2021, he mentioned that considerable lobbying with sympathetic people in the ministry and the BBS helped this process materialise.

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<sup>xcviii</sup> GOB. (2020). Sustainable Development Goals: Bangladesh Progress Report 2020. (p.245). Dhaka, Bangladesh: General Economics Division (Government SDGs Focal Point) Bangladesh Planning Commission. Retrieved from [https://info.undp.org/docs/pdc/Documents/BGD/SDGs-Bangladesh\\_Progress\\_Report%202020.pdf](https://info.undp.org/docs/pdc/Documents/BGD/SDGs-Bangladesh_Progress_Report%202020.pdf) on 25.09.2021

<sup>xcix</sup> SAARC. (2002). Convention on Preventing and Combating Trafficking in Women and Children for Prostitution. Retrieved from <https://evaw-global-database.unwomen.org/-/media/files/un%20women/vaw/full%20text/asia/south%20asian%20association%20for%20regional%20cooperation/saarc%20convention%20on%20preventing%20and%20combating%20trafficking%20in%20women%20and%20children%20for%20prostitution.pdf?vs=3229> on 10.10.2021

<sup>c</sup> DFP. (2021, August 11). Circulation of Newspapers published officially. Retrieved from [http://www.dfp.gov.bd/site/legislative\\_information/d91eef66-0de8-44df-9828-5ee582ef71fa/](http://www.dfp.gov.bd/site/legislative_information/d91eef66-0de8-44df-9828-5ee582ef71fa/) on 25.10.2021

<sup>ci</sup> Islam, A. (2021, March 25). *Bangladesh turns 50 as fears grow over deteriorating democracy*. Deutsche Welle. Retrieved from <https://www.dw.com/en/bangladesh-democracy-human-rights/a-56988366> on 27.09.2021.

<sup>cii</sup> Supreme Court of Bangladesh, High Court Division, Bangladesh National Women Lawyers' Association (BNWLA) v. Government of Bangladesh and others, 14 BLC 694, 2009. (Writ Petition No. 5916 of 2008). See [http://www.supremecourt.gov.bd/resources/documents/276907\\_Writ\\_Petition\\_5916\\_08.pdf](http://www.supremecourt.gov.bd/resources/documents/276907_Writ_Petition_5916_08.pdf) (Directives in the form of Guidelines: pp. 23-31). Accessed on 25.10.2021.

<sup>ciii</sup> Supreme Court of Bangladesh, High Court Division, Bangladesh National Women Lawyers' Association (BNWLA) vs. Government of Bangladesh and Others, 31 BLD 324, 2011. (Prevention of Sexual Harassment in the streets, public places, shops, markets etc. Writ Petition No. 8769 of 2010).). See <https://www.blast.org.bd/content/judgement/BNWLA-VS-Bangladesh2.pdf> or [http://supremecourt.gov.bd/web/?page=judgments.php&menu=00&div\\_id=2&start=700](http://supremecourt.gov.bd/web/?page=judgments.php&menu=00&div_id=2&start=700) (See #713). Accessed on 25.10.2021

<sup>civ</sup> ILO. (2020). Study conducted by Taslima Yasmin, Department of Law, University of Dhaka. *Overview of laws, policies and practices on gender-based violence and harassment in the world of work in Bangladesh*. (PP. 12, 90-108) Retrieved from [https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---asia/---ro-bangkok/---ilo-dhaka/documents/publication/wcms\\_757149.pdf](https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---asia/---ro-bangkok/---ilo-dhaka/documents/publication/wcms_757149.pdf) on 01.10.2021

<sup>cv</sup> Nazneen, S. (2017). *The Women's Movement in Bangladesh: A short History and Current Debates*. Country Study. Friedrich Ebert Stiftung. Dhaka: FES Bangladesh Office. Retrieved from <https://library.fes.de/pdf-files/bueros/bangladesch/13671.pdf> on 01.10.2021



# ANNEXES

## A-1

### Media organisations who responded to the survey: 18

Daily Newspaper (8)	Television (7)	Radio (2)	Online Portal (1)
<i>Prothom Alo</i> (National, Bangla)	<i>Bangladesh Television</i> (National, Bangla)	<i>Radio ABC</i> (National, Bangla)	<i>Bangla Tribune</i> (National, Bangla)
<i>Dainik Ittefaq</i> (National, Bangla)	<i>Independent Television</i> (National, Bangla)	<i>Dhaka FM</i> (National, Bangla)	
<i>Kaler Kantha</i> (National, Bangla)	<i>ATN News</i> (National, Bangla)		
<i>Samakal</i> (National, Bangla)	<i>Ekattor TV</i> (National, Bangla)		
<i>New Age</i> (National, English)	<i>Maasranga TV</i> (National, Bangla)		
<i>Dhaka Tribune</i> (National, English)	<i>News 24</i> (National, Bangla)		
<i>Dainik Purbokone</i> (Regional, South-east, Bangla)	<i>Channel 24</i> (National, Bangla)		
<i>Gramer Kagaj</i> (Regional, North, Bangla)			

### Media organisations who did not respond to the survey: 15

Daily Newspaper (7)	Television (3)	Radio (2)	Online Portal (3)
<i>Bangladesh Pratidin</i> (National, Bangla)	<i>Jamuna Television</i> (National, Bangla)	<i>Bangladesh Betar</i> (National, Bangla)	<i>Bdnews.24</i> (National, Bangla)
<i>Naya Diganta</i> (National, Bangla)	<i>Somoy TV</i> (National, Bangla)	<i>Radio Today</i> (National, Bangla)	<i>Jagonews.24</i> (National, Bangla)
<i>Manabzamin</i> (National, Bangla)	<i>NTV</i> (National, Bangla)		<i>Sarabangla</i> (National, Bangla)
<i>The Daily Star</i> (National, English)			
<i>Sylheter Dak</i> (Regional, North-east, Bangla)			
<i>Dainik Purbanchal</i> (Regional, South-west Bangla)			
<i>Sonali Sangbad</i> (Regional, North)			

## A-2

### List of informal interviewees

1. Mahfuz Anam, Editor, The Daily Star; General Secretary, Editors' Council
2. Dr. Gitiara Nasreen, Professor, Mass Communication and Journalism, University of Dhaka
3. Sajjad Sharif, Managing Editor, Prothom Alo
4. S. M. Haroon or Rashid, former Director General, Bangladesh Television
5. Nasimun Ara Huq, President, Bangladesh Nari Sramik Kendra (BNSK)
6. Fowzul Azim, former Chief Research Officer (Additional District Judge), Bangladesh Law Commission
7. Sanjeeb Drong, General Secretary, Bangladesh Adibasi Parishad
8. Dr. Taslima Yasmin, Assistant Professor, University of Dhaka
9. Dr. Nazmuzzaman Bhuiyan, Professor, University of Dhaka
10. Dr. Abul Hossain, Project Director, Ministry of Women and Children Affairs
11. Md. Rabiul Islam, Assistant Director, National Human Rights Commission Bangladesh
12. Mir Akram, Public Relations Officer, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting
13. Nurul Amin, Office Staff at the Office of the Deputy Commissioner and District Magistrate of Dhaka
14. Rabeya Islam, Centre in-charge, Kazi Media Care Centre
15. Nasimun Ara Huq, President, Bangladesh Nari Sramik Kendra (BNSK)
16. Farida Yasmin, President, National Press Club
17. Mozammel Babu, President, Editor's Guild
18. Syed Ishtiaque Reza, Member, Bangladesh Press Council
19. Morsalin Nomani, President, Dhaka Reporters Unity
20. Abul Hasan Hridoy, Secretary, Sub-Editors Council
21. Udisa Islam, Chief Reporter, Bangla Tribune
22. Naznin Munni, Reporter and Presenter, Ekattor TV
23. Bayezid Ahmed, Chief Reporter, Deepto TV
24. Shamima Dola, Editor, Newsnowbangla
25. Rita Nahar, Senior Reporter, Boishakhi TV
26. Jasmin Moli, Chief Reporter, Banik Barta
27. Moushumi Islam, Senior Reporter, Newsbangla24.com
28. Jesmin Papri, Diplomatic Correspondent, Dainik Bangla
29. Tahamina Islam, Staff Reporter, Bangladesh Sangbad Sangstha (BSS)
30. Jenia Kabir Shuchona, Senior Reporter, Channel24
31. Atika Rahman, Senior Reporter, RTV
32. Smriti Mondal, Staff Reporter, Ekushey TV
33. Noor Un Nahar Weely, Staff Reporter, Maasranga TV
34. Labonyo Lipi, Senior Sub Editor, Amader Shomoy
35. Shahnaz Munni, Chief News Editor, News24 TV
36. Angur Nahar Monty, Assignment Editor, News24 TV
37. Shathi Akter Pinky, Reporter, Somoy TV



## A-3

Table 3: Presence of provisions in different laws and regulations (by laws)

Document Name	Provisions YES	Provisions No	Comment
<b>Constitution: human dignity, gender equality (1)</b>			
The Constitution of the People's Republic of Bangladesh	1, 2, 4-12	3	The Constitution covers all the areas of non-discrimination and human dignity. Gender equality is also broadly covered, but specified as in 'national' and 'public' life. For women, equality in private life is barred by these specifications. Inequality there is not addressed or faced. Another hitch could be the Article 29 (3) (c). This provision says, the state can reserve for members of one sex any class of employment or office on the ground that it is considered by its nature to be unsuited to members of the opposite sex. The context of this provision indicates positive intentions, and in certain cases this would be necessary. But its interpretations could create grounds for perpetuating stereotyping of work by gender. VAW is covered by the Article of equality before law and justice. In the absence of any freedom of press law, Article 39 of the Constitution remains the only guarantee for freedom of thought, conscience and freedom of expression, and that of the press. Subject of course to the usual 'reasonable restrictions' which might leave scope for censoring interpretations.
<b>General Law: Gender equality (6)</b>			
The General Clauses Act, 1897	5, 10,	1- 4, 6- 9, 11, 12	The Constitution and the laws historically used terms connoting male gender. More recent times see introduction of gender-inclusive terms in laws and policies, but not always and not by default. The provisions of Section 13 of this Act try to mitigate the discrimination. Nonetheless, the terms need to explicitly spell out genders or at the least be gender-neutral or inclusive for effectively providing for equality. Confirms inclusion of male and female, but not yet the Hijra.
The Representation of the People Order, 1972	3, 4, 11	1, 2, 5-10, 12	The state-owned broadcasters must give coverage to each candidate, irrespective of their political allegiance or gender. Inclusion of 33 per cent women in all committees by 2020 is a condition for granting registration to a political party. Definition of candidates have not included Hijra yet, but is inclusive, as it is gender-neutral.

Document Name	Provisions YES	Provisions No	Comment
National Parliament (Reserved Women's Seat) Election Act, 2004	3, 4	1, 2, 5-10, 11, 12	Positive discrimination for women, but not for Hijra yet. On another front, elections to these seats are not direct and in effect leads to handpicking of women to the reserved seats.
The Law Commission Act, 1996	1- 3, 5-12	4	Sometimes specifically, often in general, but covers the issues.
National Human Rights Commission Act, 2009	1,-3, 5-12	4	Sometimes specifically, often in general, but covers the issues.
Child Day-care Centre Act, 2021	3, 9,11	1, 2, 4-8,10, 12	The act stresses the need for adequate child day-care centres and focuses on establishment, registration, management, quality control and related issues.
<b>General laws: Gender-based Violence (7)</b>			
The Prevention of Repression of Women and Children Act, 2000	1, 2, 6	3, 4, 5, 7-12	This main anti-VAW law of the country has specific instructions for the media regarding Identity protection of victims. Violations are heavily penalised, although no evidence of this provision ever being used. The Law also provides for camera trial. These two provisions are in a few other anti-violence laws too. For journalists they have much significance. Penalising disclosure of identity clearly underscores the importance of issues of privacy, safety, re-victimisation and dignity of victims/survivors. Although the mainstream news media are relatively or unevenly aware of the identity protection needs, often full and more often jigsaw identification is done by a large majority of the outlets. And in cases where victims are dead, generally all outlets tend to identify them fully, often complete with photographs. Provisions of camera trial again underscores the need to take into account the issues of privacy, safety, re-victimisation and dignity of victims/survivors. Two major shortcomings of the law are that its definition of rape does not include male or Hijra/other as victims or survivors. It rather discriminates (the definition of rape). Nor does it recognise marital rape—consent is irrelevant if the wife is not under 13 years of age (as per the penal code).
Domestic Violence (Prevention and Protection) Act, 2010	1, 2, 6	3, 4, 5, 7-12	For the media: Camera trial.
Pornography Control Act, 2012	1, 2, 6, 8	3, 4, 5, 7, 9-12	Harming social or personal status is mentioned as an offence. The definition of victims include men as well, thus breaking a stereotype. Though, Hijras are not included yet.

Document Name	Provisions YES	Provisions No	Comment
The Prevention and Suppression of Human Trafficking Act, 2012	1-3, 6, 11	4, 5, 7-10, 12	The Act makes provisions for camera trial, identity protection of the victims and evidential value to journalists' documentation. Besides, Journalists will have the responsibility to assist when such data is provided by the authority, but with caution about protecting the privacy rights of the victim.
High Court Judgment and Directives/ Guidelines on Eve-teasing, 2011	1, 2, 5-8, 10	3, 4, 9, 11, 12	Strongly banned a prejudicial term 'eve teasing' and replaced it with 'sexual harassment'. Defined sexual harassment. Deals with gender-based discrimination. The definitions do not include Hijra, whose recognition came later. Men should be covered too. The judgment built upon the 2009 High Court guidelines to also address sexual harassment in public places. The term eave-teasing, almost solely used in South Asian countries, continues to thrive. Generally speaking, the term sexual harassment is not being used by the media. Nor is it getting into the parlance of regulations (Coined generally as sexual torment and violation of modesty). Some such offences, i.e. stalking, leering, whistling, catcalls, even showing of genital organs, are often referred to as minor mischiefs in common talks.
High Court Judgment and Directives/ Guidelines on Sexual Harassment, 2009	1, 2, 5-8, 10	3, 4, 9, 11, 12	These directives will be like a law, until the Parliament enacts such a law. No such law has yet been drafted. Defined sexual harassment, mentioned sexual abuse. Mandated all workplaces (that include the media) to have its institutional committee for ensuring safeguards and reforms. Mandates appropriate disciplinary actions. Definitions do not include Hijra, whose recognition came later. Men should be covered too.
The Children Act, 2013	1-3, 11	4-10, 12	For the media identity protection of children accused of any crime or who are witnesses; camera trial. Penalty extends to the media organisation and the fine is more in amount.
<b>General Law: Anti Discrimination (1)</b>			
Rights and Protection of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2013	1, 2, 8, 9, 12	3-7, 10, 11	The media cannot discriminate on grounds of disability. Equal rights for the disabled, but not amongst the genders (considering inheritance and other personal laws)
<b>Other General Laws: Some provisions of which have relevance to media, freedom of expression or gender-sensitivity (7)</b>			

Document Name	Provisions YES	Provisions No	Comment
The Right to Information Act, 2009	2, 3, 5, 11	1, 4, 6-10, 12	The Act is not specifically meant for journalists or media. But journalists can make use of this Act for getting information, often difficult to obtain, from public and other authorities covered under this law. The process could be lengthy, but worthwhile. Non-discriminatory provisions, as they are inclusive of all genders. The Information Commission will consist of one Chief Information Commissioner and two other Commissioners, at least one of whom shall be a woman.
The Digital Security Act, 2018	1, 3, 7,	2, 4-6, 8-12	This was preceded by the Information and Communication Technology (ICT) Act, much criticised for its Section 57. Since DSA came with the mandate to deal with digital security and cyber violence, Section 57 and some other sections of the ICT Act have been repealed and the Act has gone out of use for filing new cases. The Section 57 is however embedded in four sections of the DSA. Two of these are relevant for the media. These sections penalise publication of falsehood; defamation; intimidating, annoying, humiliating, offending or maligning a person, tarnishing the image of the country, etc. One of them Refers to the Penal Code section on defamation. The rest of the erstwhile 57 are in Sections 28 and 31. There are other sections too. Different clauses severely penalise hurting or provoking religious or social unrest, propagating against the liberation war or the father of the nation etc. The words and framing are very vague and leave wide scopes for manipulation. These and other oppressive provisions have made the DSA the crippling act for journalists and freedom of expression. Sweeping barriers make gathering information a very risky business. This Act is an example, how apparent concerns about security, privacy and dignity of persons can be framed in a way and be manipulated to suppress dissent. The notorious section 57 in new form and with other sections of the DSA continues to subject journalists, writers and citizens to harassment, arrest, detention, torture and oppression.
The Penal Code, 1860	1, 2, 5-8 ,10	3, 4, 9, 11, 12	Introduces a non-discriminatory clarification and deals with defamation and also a few gender-based violence or offences. Mentions obscenity. Blanket coverage under defamation. Defamation and libel are criminalised, whether done to a woman or to a man. The hijra/third gender now should also get this coverage, but not specified. These provisions are only applicable to the print media though.
The Code of Criminal Procedure, 1898	1, 2, 5-8 ,10	3, 4, 9, 11, 12	Similar to the Penal Code. Mentions obscenity, indecency and scurrilousness.

Document Name	Provisions YES	Provisions No	Comment
The Post Office Act, 1898	1, 5	2-4, 6-12	On prohibition of contents in the line of indecency, morality, obscenity. In much the same way as the Indecent Advertisement Prohibition Act.
The Telegraph Act, 1885	1, 5	2-4, 6-12	On prohibition of contents in the line of indecency, morality and obscenity. In much the same way as the Indecent Advertisement Prohibition Act.
The Disaster Management Act, 2012	2	1, 3-12	Specifies a mandatory legally binding role for media. Indicates some gender- and ethnic-minority sensitivity. Disasters profoundly affect women and in diverse ways. From gender-equality and gender-sensitivity perspectives, directives for the media could include some content guidelines. The Law grants photographs, video footage or audio recordings documenting any violation of disaster management evidential value in related trial procedures. The media could also play effective roles for gender equality and sensitivity this way.
<b>Laws specific to media, mainly Print (4)</b>			
The Printing Presses and Publications (Declaration and Registration) Act, 1973	1, 3, 5	2, 4, 6-12	Inclusive about the sex of editors or publishers. Anybody, qualified as per the law, irrespective of her/his gender could apply for registration. Penalises indecency or obscenity related publications with imprisonment. Grants the government power to seize, detain and forfeit the document/product. On another front, the definition of indecency is kept widely open to subjective judgment.
The Indecent Advertisements Prohibition Act, 1963	1, 5, 7	2, 3, 4, 6-12	Applies to advertisement in print media; not clear if it would apply to broadcast as well. Definition of indecency implies (sexuality-related) gender-based issues from a moralistic perspective. It can be called to some extent gender-aware or gender-sensitive, but not really in the right way. Does not explicitly or pointedly address gender-sensitivity issues including stereotyping or discrimination, but could imply hatred on the basis of sex/gender ('pernicious/'deprave').
The Undesirable Advertisements Control Act, 1952	10	1-9, 11, 12	This law actually assigns the media's responsibility for the welfare of women, and also for men. But Hijra is not considered, as they were not recognised as a gender at that time.

Document Name	Provisions YES	Provisions No	Comment
The Press Council Act, 1974	1, 2	3-12	<p>The institution established by this law is mandated with furthering freedom of expression and press and developing journalism standards and ethics. No specific mandate on gender equality. They have issued a code of conduct for newspapers and news agencies. Could and should have spelt out non-discriminatory and gender-equality or sensitivity-related mandates for the Council's code of conduct and specifically assign monitoring responsibilities.</p> <p>Has mandate to handle complaints from the public on breach of ethics and professional misconduct. Could include clauses in its code of conduct for journalists.</p> <p>Though statutory, the Press Council is listed as an organisation under the Information Ministry. It is funded by the government and can also receive funds from national sources. In the entire Act, there is no provision reflecting promotion of gender equality in the media sector. Representation of women is not mandated in the council nor in any committee formed by it, The objectives or the functions do not mention anything on promotion of gender equality.</p>
<b>Laws specific to broadcast/digital media, including the state-run ones (6)</b>			
The Bangladesh Sangbad Sangshta Act, 2018	0	1-12	Does not address these issues in the Act. No women member mandated in the Board of Directors.
The Bangladesh Television Authority Act, 2001	3, 5, 9	1, 2, 4, 6-8, 10-12	<p>Addresses the issue of equality in the internal structure and gender-inequality or gender-based discrimination by mandating a female member in the board.</p> <p>This and the following Bangladesh Betar authority could have granted an extent of autonomy to the public-funded state-run electronic media. But these authorities never came into being.</p> <p>A Broadcast Act, approved by the Cabinet in 2018, is yet to be passed by the Parliament. This Act provides for a broadcast commission or authority which could perhaps ensure supervising and monitoring of the policies.</p>
The Bangladesh Betar Authority Act, 2001	3, 5, 9	1, 2, 4, 6-8, 10-12	Addresses the issue of equality in the internal structure and gender-inequality or gender-based discrimination by mandating a female member in the board.
The Cable Television Network Operations Act, 2006	1	2-12	Content-related prohibitions, in the line of indecency, morality, obscenity, nudity etc.

Document Name	Provisions YES	Provisions No	Comment
The Cable Television Network Operations and Licensing Rules, 2010	1	2-12	Content prohibited in the Act are penalised with imprisonment or fine.
The Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulation Act, 2001	1, 2	3-12	Content related prohibitions, in the line of indecency, morality, obscenity. Seriously offensive, insulting, scaring messages, extortion attempts, are also prohibited. Nothing specific on threats against journalists, women especially. Hijra too not considered.
<b>Laws related to employment, benefits and rights in media institutions (7)</b>			
Bangladesh Labour Act, 2006	1, 2, 5-10, 12	3, 4, 11	Applies to media, includes many provisions including equal pay. Quite a few enabling provisions, from separate toilets to maternity leave. Previously, and still in the Labour Act, maternity leave is of 16 weeks or four months. The government extended the period for public servants. So it applies to the BTV and Bangladesh Betar employees. The extension is not mandatory for private employers, but some of them, including some newspapers and TV channels have followed the government provision. For newspapers, the Wage Board has already made it mandatory.
Eighth Newspaper Wage Board, 2013	2, 5, 9	1,3, 4, 6-8, 10-12	Makes provisions including maternity leaves. Could have included paternity leave too. Not a single woman in the 13 members of the board. Could have mandated at least one.
Ninth Newspaper Wage Board, 2019	2, 5, 9	1, 3, 4, 6-8, 10-12	Makes provisions including maternity leaves. Could have included paternity leave too. Not a single woman in the board. Could have mandated at least one.
The Civil Service Act, 2018	2, 5, 9, 12	1-4, 6-8, 10, 11	Applies to the state-run electronic media and the news agency. Not included Hijra yet though.
The Civil SERVICE RULES, AMENDMENT 2011	2, 3, 5, 9	1, 4, 6-8, 10-12	Directly applies to the state-run media, but has had a replication effect in some of the private media houses. This has extended the with-pay period of maternity leave to 180 days. Anti-discriminatory, positive discrimination. Could have initiated paternity leave too.
The Civil SERVICE RULES, AMENDMENT 2021	2, 3, 5, 9	1, 4, 6-8, 10-12	The maternity benefits for the public servants have been expanded.

Document Name	Provisions YES	Provisions No	Comment
The Public Servants (Conduct) Rules, 1979	3, 5, 9, 12	1, 2, 4, 6-8, 10, 11	Applies to the state-run electronic media and the news agency. The definition of family indicates that public servants can be men and women. But the Hijra is yet not written down. Warns against sectarian or any other discrimination
<b>Laws specific to films (2)</b>			
The Censorship of Films Act, 1963		1-12	Tough law. From advertising to screening, nothing without approval of the censorship authority. Penalty for violation of any prohibition includes imprisonment. The law sets the mechanism of censorship, the criteria for it is in the rules. So, it has to be reviewed along with the censorship rules.
The Bangladesh Censorship of Films Rules, 1977	1, 2, 5, 7	3, 4, 6, 8-12	Censorship criteria contains clauses in the line of indecency, morality and obscenity. In much the same way as the Indecent Advertisement Prohibition Act. Also, causing no harm. Not hurting any section of the community.
<b>Others: for improving conditions of journalists and journalism (2)</b>			
The Bangladesh Journalists Welfare Trust Act, 2014	5, 10	1- 4, 6-9, 11, 12	Gender-inclusive by its definition of family but for husband or wife. Hijra is not considered.
Press Institute Bangladesh (PIB) Act, 2018	2	1, 3-12	The institute was established by this law for journalists' training and certification up to diploma and degree levels, research and publication, awarding recognitions and for developing and enriching professional journalism befitting the present times. Neither the board of trustees nor the governing board mandate inclusion of any woman member. Not one of the 14 responsibilities or functions designated to it mentions gender-related goals. The PIB has however conducted a number of studies on gender and media; published a gender and media training guidelines. Its journal has published a good number of articles on gender equality in media and gender sensitivity in media contents.



**A-4, Table 4**

Document title	Provision Type	Provision	Comment/observation
National Women Development Policy 2011	Gender portrayal in content	Section 40.1. Take positive initiatives for: promoting portrayal/projection of accurate/just roles of women in the mass media; ensuring women’s access to the mass media; eliminating discrimination in women’s participation in the mass media; AND for all matters concerning women and children in the mass media.	Also gender equality in media organisations. The objective has too broad a scope. Gender portrayal, gender-sensitive content, gender equality in media and advocacy for development--all lumped together. Overlapping too.
	Gender portrayal in content	Section 40.2. Take measures for ending derogatory, defamatory, negative and traditional portrayal/reflection/imaging of women in the mass media (content); and for promoting/publicising messages/(contents) aimed at bringing an end to violence against women.	Gender portrayal conducive to curbing VAW.
	Gender equality in media organisations	Section 40.3. Create equal opportunity for women’s participation in the management of media institutions and in formal professional trainings.	Identifying training as a facilitating factor.
	Other (SPECIFY IN COMMENTS)	40.4. To integrate gender perspectives in the media policies.	Integration of gender perspectives in media pollicies.
	Other (SPECIFY IN COMMENTS)	Part II Section 19.10: Create widespread public awareness in the mass media for prevention of abuse of women.	Media Advocacy: Public awareness for preventing VAW
	Other (SPECIFY IN COMMENTS)	Part II Section 32.1. Motivate political parties and the mass media to make all out efforts for ensuring increased and active political participation of the women.	Media Advocacy: Raising women's political participation
	Gender Equality in Media Organisations	22.4. To arrange to make government grants to encourage women in making dramas and movie	Identifying facilitating factor as in government grants and awards

Document title	Provision Type	Provision	Comment/observation
The National Action Plan, 2013 on National Women Development Policy of 2011	Gender portrayal in content	<p>Policy Section 40.1: Planned activities concern issues of portrayal/projection of women’s roles, including formulation of a comprehensive gender policy; monitoring media activities on women and children, and gender-sensitivity training to the MOI staff and orientation to journalism students.</p> <p>Ongoing activities mentioned: Putting out various programmes/contents on women’s health, rights, self-employment, empowerment, and maternal and child health on mass media.</p> <p>Lead responsibility: Ministry of Information and MOWCA; Auxiliary: Ministry of Liberation War Affairs, Ministry of Cultural Affairs, Bangladesh Television, Mass Communication Directorate, Department of Films and Publications, Bangladesh Betar, Bangladesh Sangbad Sangstha, National Institute of Mass Communication, related non-governmental institutions and media houses.</p>	<p>The Monitoring cell is a much needed provision.</p> <p>Gender-sensitivity training for MOI staff and similar orientation for university-level journalism students is a specific and good component.</p> <p>The comprehensive policy needed to be defined in detail and in more specific terms. Besides, it overlaps with the indicator on another head.</p> <p>A bias to development roles for media is evident from the ongoing activities.</p>

Document title	Provision Type	Provision	Comment/observation
	Other (SPECIFY IN COMMENTS)	<p>Policy Section 40.2: Concerns issues of portrayal of women and violence against women in media contents.</p> <p>Planned actions.</p> <p>One action planned was formulating and implementing code of conducts for checking sexual abuse in all media institutions.</p> <p>A long-term plan was using decent and objective terms about women victims and survivors #Incorporation of the principle of absolute identity protection of women victims of abuses in media codes of conduct; #Organising/producing public awareness programmes/contents to resist negative views about women and child victims and survivors across rural and urban areas; #Putting out awareness-raising programmes/contents to challenge negative views about women and child victims and survivors across rural and urban areas; #Producing biographical documentaries on women and putting out biographical programmes/contents on illustrious women with a goal to make women self-aware and self-confident; #Broadcasting documentaries and programmes/contents on women rape victims of war (beerangana) and women freedom fighters; #Ensuring 33 per cent participation of women in mainstream media institutions; #Formulating one of the main principles/ethical codes of journalism as encouraging positive attitude towards women and girl children, and #exercising care while doing news on people of backward/disadvantaged and ethnic minority communities, disabled women and abuse of girl children.</p> <p>Lead responsibility: Ministry of Information and MOWCA. Auxiliary: Information Commission, Bangladesh Television, Mass Communication Directorate, Department of Films and Publications, Bangladesh Betar, Bangladesh Sangbad Sangstha, National Institute of Mass Communication, related non-governmental institutions and media houses.</p>	<p>Portrayal and also gender equality in media organisations:Portrayal issues concerning victims and survivors of violence against women; gender-sensitive code of conduct; campaigning against VAW using media; producing biographical documentaries; ensuring 33 percent participation of women in mainstream media and a few more issues lumped together.</p>

Document title	Provision Type	Provision	Comment/observation
	Gender equality in media organisations	<p>Policy Section 40.3: Concerns equal opportunity for women in media management roles and in getting professional training.</p> <p>Planned actions: Long-term: #Preserving quota for women in mass media jobs and in journalism education; #Providing contemporary and advanced professional training to all media workers and reserve quotas for women there; #Providing accommodation facilities to working mothers, and different groups of disadvantaged women including divorcees to ensure their participation in long-term training courses; #Designing and imparting gender-sensitivity training to all and especially to the management-level media workers; #Formulating a gender-sensitive national integrated mass media policy and a training module assimilating gender-sensitivity.</p> <p>#Ensuring the proportion of women employees and officials to be 33 per cent in news media.</p> <p>Lead responsibility: Ministry of Information and MOWCA . Auxiliary: Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Cultural Affairs, Ministry of Education, non-governmental media institutions and Press Institute of Bangladesh.</p>	

Document title	Provision Type	Provision	Comment/observation
	Gender Portrayal in Content	Policy Section: 40.4: Concerns integrating gender perspectives in the media policies. Planned Actions: Short-term: #Formulating a national gender-sensitive mass media policy. Long-term: #Including gender-sensitivity as a condition for granting of broadcast licenses and for transmission of programmes. Lead responsibility: Ministry of Information, MOWCA, and Ministry of Planning; Auxiliary: Information Commission, Bangladesh Television, Mass Communication Directorate, Department of Films and Publications, Bangladesh Betar, Bangladesh Sangbad Sangstha, National Institute of Mass Communication, related non-governmental institutions, media houses and development partners.	This incorporates Media Ownership. This comes in the form of formulating a gender-sensitive media policy. The objective concerned integrating gender perspectives in the media policies, inclusive of content and all. Here, this comes with the recommendation for a licensing condition as well. The Actions need to be more specific and define the media policy more precisely; also mention who should do it. Besides, it overlaps with another indicator in the first field. A more specific statement is needed for the action/indicator on the license issue.
	Other (SPECIFY IN COMMENTS)	Policy Section 19.10: Concerns creating mass awareness to resist violence against women through the mass media	Media advocacy: Awareness to resist violence against women.
	Other (SPECIFY IN COMMENTS)	Policy Section 32.1: Concerns women's political participation. One of the planned actions: publication and transmission of programmes on media about positive participation of women in politics. Lead responsibility: Ministry of Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs and the Election Commission. Auxiliary: MOWCA, National Parliament and Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development.	Media advocacy: Raising women's political empowerment.

Document title	Provision Type	Provision	Comment/observation
	Gender equality in media organisations	Policy Section 22.4: Provide government grants for encouraging women in making films and dramas. Planned action: provide grants; introduce awards for best women filmmakers. Lead responsibility: Ministry of Information; auxiliary: Ministry of Cultural Affairs, MOWCA.	The 'Best Woman Filmmaker' award also presupposes qualitative judgment of content but this has not been specified with fixing any criteria for judgment.
The National Broadcast Policy, 2014	Gender portrayal in content	1.2.6 Raising public awareness to ensure participation of the people in development and poverty alleviation activities including empowerment of women, people with disability and other backward sections.	Media advocacy: Through contents, raise people's participation in development, poverty alleviation and in empowerment of women, people with disability, backward sections.
	Gender portrayal in content	3.4.6 Ensuring equal dignity and active participation of men and women in all spheres of political, economic, religious and social life, and no statement or content shall portray women in a derogatory manner or suppress them.	Also, promoting participation in all spheres through contents.
	Gender portrayal in content	3.6.2. Refrain from promoting programs that provoke violence, discrimination or harassment against children and women (in entertainment programmes).	Addresses issues of gender stereotyping, specifically, refraining from portrayals that might encourage violence, discrimination, harassment. In entertainment.
	Gender portrayal in content	3.6.3. Exercise caution against broadcasting programmes which are indecent, obscene, factually incorrect, marked by use of bad language and depiction of violence, which can negatively affect the psychological and moral development of children (in entertainment programmes).	In entertainment. Keeping in mind child viewers.

Document title	Provision Type	Provision	Comment/observation
	Other (SPECIFY IN COMMENTS)	3.6.6. Must not show visuals that hurt human sensitivity or emotions, such as images of killing, bodies of people dead in accidents or from suicide; cruelty to human beings and animals, and photographs or footages showing women or children devastated by rape and perverted assaults (in entertainment programmes).	Prohibiting graphic and Violent content involving women or children. In entertainment.
	Other (SPECIFY IN COMMENTS)	4.3.5 The clothes and attires of models must be decent.	Concerns about indecent, scurrilous, or obscene contents are mentioned in quite a few occasions, not just on advertisements.
	Other (SPECIFY IN COMMENTS)	Chapter IV in its five sub-sections deals with advertisements. 4.1.1 says, language, images or style and tone of advertisements must not hurt religious sentiments, noncommunal ideals and political sentiments.	Prohibiting advertisement harmful for religious or communal harmony.
	Other (SPECIFY IN COMMENTS)	4.4.1. Advertisements must not show children engaging in slandering, fighting and hazardous activities and special attention must be given to their healthy character development.	(4.4 is titled: Rights of Children and Women) Advertisement showing children committing violence.
	Other (SPECIFY IN COMMENTS)	4.4.2. Advertisements must not include contents that might cause moral, mental and physical harm to children. No advertisement should exploit and abuse the natural tendency of trust and simplicity of children.	Advertisement causing harm to children.
	Gender portrayal in content	4.4.3 Advertisements must be in line with the National Women Development Policy, National Children Policy and other relevant policies. They should also follow the law on marketing substitutes of mother's milk, baby food, commercially produced supplementary baby food and products for using these.	Advertisements must also abide by other relevant policies including those concerning women development and children.

Document title	Provision Type	Provision	Comment/observation
	Gender portrayal in content	4.4.5. Advertisements must not contain visuals of rape, adultery, perversion, obscenity or obscene visuals or films, torture, violence and disturbing visuals such as death by hanging, strangulation, suicide, butchering of limbs; and violence against women, children, young, old or sick people. Any image or depiction that might incite physical, psychological, social and economic negative attitudes towards these groups of people must be avoided.	Addresses issues of privacy, dignity, stigmatising, stereotyping, commodification and violence.
	Gender portrayal in content	4.4.6 Advertisements must shun unwarranted, unjustified, irrelevant and excessive sensational representation of women.	Addresses issues of commodification and sexual exploitation / objectification.
	Other (SPECIFY IN COMMENTS)	4.5.3.Provides a list of products, advertisements of which cannot be broadcast. The list includes: (6) Slimming products for men, women or children, weight-loss products, non-licensed medical drugs or treatments for figure maintenance, sexual problems, cure of early-aging, unscientific and superstitious cures.	Advertisement of harmful products.
	Other (SPECIFY IN COMMENTS)	5.1.2. Must refrain from broadcasting hate speech against any race or class; mockery of any religion or derogatory or attacking comments against any religion; any visuals, depictions or statements that can create division or hatred between people of different races, colour or faith and opinion.	Hate speech. Gender-inclusive.
	Other (SPECIFY IN COMMENTS)	5.1.3.Information that are defamatory or derogatory (harming dignity) to anybody or violate anybody's privacy rights, will not be broadcast.	Defamation, dignity and privacy issues. Gender-inclusive.
	Other (SPECIFY IN COMMENTS)	Chapter VI in its eight sub-clauses, sets the rules for forming a Broadcast Commission. This Commission is to hear and arbitrate peoples' complaints about programmes, news or advertisements. The Commission would send its recommendations to the government for necessary actions as per the law/rules. The Ministry of Information will decide all relevant matters until laws, rules and policies are formed on broadcast and broadcast commission.	Monitoring and public complaint redress mechanism.



<b>Document title</b>	<b>Provision Type</b>	<b>Provision</b>	<b>Comment/observation</b>
The National Online Mass Media Policy, 2017	Other (SPECIFY IN COMMENTS)	1.2.7 With the help of online media, increase awareness of people to ensure their participation in development activities, especially as regards information and communication technology, trade and commerce, employment, export generation, government service, education, health, agriculture, empowerment of women and poverty alleviation.	Media advocacy: for development and empowerment of women. [See Note-1, Page-87]
	Other (SPECIFY IN COMMENTS)	1.2.8. Ensure a firm role of online media for establishing justice and equality by ending all injustice and discrimination	Media advocacy for equality
	Gender portrayal in content	1.2.11 Make sure that online media plays a role in empowering children, women and other backward sections of the people.	Media advocacy: for empowering women
The Community Radio Installation Broadcast and Operation Policy, 2017	Other (SPECIFY IN COMMENTS)	2.2 The broadcast programs schedule must include education, agriculture, health, society; locality based rural development of women, environment, weather, climate change, disaster management, culture and other development issues, and publicity against violence, militancy and drugs.	Media advocacy for development [See Note-2, Page-87]
	Other (SPECIFY IN COMMENTS)	6.1.2 Not to include content that promotes hatred against races and classes to create unrest and division, criticism, insult or attack against any specific religion, creates hatred or division against any particular race or faith group;	Hate speech and disturbing content
	Gender portrayal in content	6.1.5 The licensee (institution or organization) shall ensure that the broadcasting programs will not include the contents which degrades women and children;	
	Other (SPECIFY IN COMMENTS)	6.2.1 Private or confidential or disgraceful information about any individuals shall not be broadcast;	Defamation. Gender-inclusive

Document title	Provision Type	Provision	Comment/observation
	Other (SPECIFY IN COMMENTS)	8.5 The program contents of the community radio broadcast service have to give priority on agriculture, adult and children education, gender issue, primary health care, environment and weather, social welfare, legal aid, market prices, demand of agro products, rural and community development, child care, maternity health care, family planning, national bulletin of Bangladesh Betar), income generation of the local community and other development issues. That means the interests and demands of the particular community should specially be represented in the programs of community radio	Media advocacy for development, highlighting gender-concerns
The Private Radio Station (FM) Installation and Operation Policy, 2010	Other (SPECIFY IN COMMENTS)	14.6.4 Any programme that might hurt the sentiments of a community or ethnic group, any programme maligns a religion, race or sect, and which triggers communalism or increases discrimination on the basis of sex, or spreads stigma about any kind of physical disability is barred from broadcast	Media advocacy for development, highlighting gender-concerns [See Note-3, Page-87]
	Other (SPECIFY IN COMMENTS)	14.6.5 Indecent or offensive jokes/songs/advertisement/news or subtitle containing any programme, which might tarnish, corrupt or hurt the morality of the people cannot be broadcast.	Morality concerns: Offence, hurt, corrupt and tarnish morality
	Other (SPECIFY IN COMMENTS)	14.6.6 News or programmes that contain Defamatory or knowingly inserted false contents will be barred from broadcasting.	Defamation. Gender-inclusive
The National Telecommunication Policy 2018	Gender portrayal in content	6.6.1 Ensure protection from cyber crime and its threat to the sovereignty and security of the country, public safety, social and cultural values. Deploy measures to ensure security of critical infrastructure from digital attack that might threaten individual, institutional and banking related information. Furthermore initiate effective and legal measures to bar spreading hate, distrust, vulgarity towards women, violent religious extremism and anti-religious messages on social media/internet if cyber security is under threat.	Also, hate speech, vulgarity towards women

Document title	Provision Type	Provision	Comment/observation
The National Film Policy, 2017	Other (SPECIFY IN COMMENTS)	Standards to follow (4). All laws/rules regarding films, among other issues, must mention the standards to follow on: a) Objectivity of information depicted in films; b) Professional ethics and impartiality c) Responsibility in producing, distributing and screening films.	Although not specifically on gender-equality, this underscores the role of the owners. [See Note-4, Page-87]
	Gender portrayal in content	6.11 Films cannot show direct rape scenes.	
	Gender portrayal in content	6.12 Scenes or incidents that incite violence, discrimination or harassment against children or women or both cannot be shown in films.	Content inciting violence, discrimination against women and children
	Other (SPECIFY IN COMMENTS)	6.14. Dialogues must not be in language that is indecent and in bad taste.	Language causing harm
	Other (SPECIFY IN COMMENTS)	6.2 Films must reflect proper culture and tradition of the ethnic minorities.	Diversity: Covering ethnic minorities
	Other (SPECIFY IN COMMENTS)	6.3. Films must show respect to all religious faiths and inspire people to resist religious violence.	Diversity: Respect to religious faiths
	Gender portrayal in content	6.4 Ensure gender equality and active participation of women as well as men in all spheres of social life.	Gender equality and active participation of men and women.
Policy for Government grants to Full-length films 2020	Gender portrayal in content	25. The language and content of the film must be gender sensitive.	Gender-sensitivity of content
Policy for Government grants to Short-films, 2020	Gender portrayal in content	27. The language and content of the film must be gender sensitive.	Gender-sensitivity of content
The Code for Censorship of Films in Bangladesh, 1985	Other (SPECIFY IN COMMENTS)	III. (a) Ridicules, disparages or attacks any religion. (unsuitable for showing)	Diversity: Respect to religious faiths

Document title	Provision Type	Provision	Comment/observation
	Gender portrayal in content	IV (f) Depicts actual act of sex, rape or passionate love scenes of immoral nature. (unsuitable for showing)	Section titled: 'Immorality or Obscenity' Moralist, restrictive Has such bars as tending to lower the sanctity of marriage; condones or extenuates acts of immorality etc.
	Gender portrayal in content	IV (h) Exhibits the human form, actually or in shadow graphs- (i) in a state of nudity; (ii) indecorously or suggestively clothed; (iii) indecorous or sensuous posture. (unsuitable for showing)	Gender-inclusive as well
	Gender portrayal in content	IV (j) Indecently portrays national institutions, traditions, custom or culture. (This covers kissing, hugging and embracing which should not be allowed in films of subcontinental origin. This violates accepted canons of culture of these countries . Kissing may, however, be allowed in case of foreign films only. Hugging and embracing may be allowed in sub-continental films subject to the requirements of the story, provided that the same do not appear to be suggestive or of suggestive nature.)	Moralist, restrictive
	Gender portrayal in content	IV N.B.- (i) Deception of attempts or indication to rape may be permissible on when it is intended to condemn it. (ii) Bikini or bathing costume scene may be permissible in case of foreign films. (iii) Modern dress and suitable bathing costume in local production may be allowed in export quality films, provided these are of modest presentation. (iv) In case a picture creates such an impression on the audience as to encourage vice or immorality, the film should not be certified even it shows that the vicious to the immoral has been punished for his/her wrong. (exemptions, unsuitable for showing)	Moralist, objectionable
	Gender portrayal in content	VI. Crime: (i) Upholds trafficking women, children, liquor, drugs, and smuggling of any kind (unsuitable for showing)	

Document title	Provision Type	Provision	Comment/observation
	Gender portrayal in content	VIII (1) Displays dowry unless it is done to condemn it. (unsuitable for showing)	
The Advertising and Supplement Policy 2008, with Amendments, 2010	Gender portrayal in content	7.e . The newspapers enlisted as qualified to get government advertisements, shall not publish any news that contradicts the ideology of the country's independence; sovereignty, integrity and liberation war. It also refrains from publishing any news that is contrary to the principles of state management and state policy or any news that tarnish the history and heritage of Bangladesh, or tarnish the education and culture, social and religious values, national unity and state image. <b>They shall not publish nude/obscene/ gruesome images or advertisements or news that may hurt the feelings of any religion, community or group.</b>	

**Note-1** : Has other provisions for resisting moral degradation; not to broadcasting obscenity, anything against social values; broadcasting objective news etc.

4.1: National Broadcast policy 2014 will be applicable for news, programmers and advertisement on issues including rights of children and women. Every institution must formulate a charter of duties and editorial guidelines/policies, which must not go against this policy.  
On registration and license criteria: Educational qualification, experience of the editor and journalists, financial and other logistics capabilities.

**Note-2** : Eligibility criterias to get permission /license to establish and operate community radio in Bangladesh

3.1 The following types of organizations/institutions shall be considered eligible to apply for installing and operating of Community Radio:

3.1.1 Research and development organizations, and educational and training institutions which are certified by the proper authorities

3.1.2 Non-government development organizations or institutions, which have at least five years of experiences of working on poverty alleviation/mass media/information technology and development interventions at the community level

3.1.3 The organizations or institutions must have a legal status or be registered with NGO Affairs Bureau (NGO AB)

3.1.4 The concern institutions or organizations must have a management committee, who have immense understanding on the thought and values of the community and marginalized people and committee will be run under a bylaws.

3.2 The following organizations or institutions shall be ineligible to run a community radio.

3.2.1 Either individual or joint business organization;

3.2.2 Political Parties or their affiliated and associated organizations etc.

3.2.3 Companies or organizations, both local and foreign, which distribute profits to the owners/shareholders;

3.2.4 International/Foreign NGOs or foreign broadcasters/channels; and

3.2.5 Organizations or institutions banned by the Government; and

3.2.6 Organizations or institutions which is declared bankrupt or convicted in criminal offenses by an appropriate court.

**Note-3** : On ownership: 3(a) Applicant must be a citizen of Bangladesh, company must be Bangladeshi. Income tax payee. No defaulter of loans, convicted of criminal offences or moral turpitude will be eligible for application.

**Note-4** : Ownership is gender-inclusive for all media. The Film Policy stresses responsibilities of production authorities. All laws/rules regarding films, among other issues, must mention the standards to follow on: Responsibility in producing, distributing and screening films.

**Note-5** : Private television Stations: A policy for private television stations was drafted in 1998, which desk research could not locate. That policy has not been finalised.

## A-5

Table 5: National Indicators on gender-equality in Media

Serial	Document Title	Indicator Type	Indicator	Comment/Observation
1	The National Action Plan, 2013 on National Women Development Policy of 2011	Gender portrayal in content	<p>Policy Section 40.1: Planned Short-term Activities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li># Formulate comprehensive gender-sensitive policy guidelines for the mass media</li> <li># Follow gender-responsive comprehensive guidelines when broadcasting programmes on women and children.</li> <li># Establish a monitoring cell to monitor all gender-related activities of all mass media organisations.</li> <li># Publish and broadcast programmes on women freedom fighters.</li> </ul> <p>Long-term Activities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li># Make gender-sensitive programmes and publish or broadcast them in a gender-sensitive manner on all national-level mass media.</li> <li># Impart training to the staff at the MOI and orientation to students of media studies at universities on gender-sensitivity with an aim to disseminate messages about diverse roles of women.</li> </ul>	<p>The objective comprised issues of portrayal/projection of women's roles, and also gender parity in their access to and participation in the mass media.</p> <p>While the objective had too broad a scope, the target activities have narrowed down the focus to portrayal issues. Quite a few though.</p> <p>The Monitoring cell is a much-needed provision.</p> <p>Gender-sensitivity training for MOI staff and similar orientation for university-level journalism students is a specific and good component.</p> <p>The comprehensive policy needed to be defined in detail and in more specific terms. Besides, it overlaps with the indicator under another head.</p> <p>A bias to development roles for media is evident from the ongoing activities.</p>

Serial	Document Title	Indicator Type	Indicator	Comment/Observation
		Gender portrayal in content	<p>Policy Section 40.2:  Short-term Actions:  # Formulate and implement codes of conduct for resisting sexual abuse in all media institutions.  # Long-term Actions: (A long list)  # Use decent and objective terms about women victims and survivors  # Incorporate the principle of absolute identity protection of women victims of abuses in codes of conduct of the print and visual mass media;  # Organise/produce public awareness programmes/contents to challenge negative views about women and child victims and survivors across rural and urban areas;  # Put out programmes/contents to build social awareness and public resistance for redressing and resisting violence against women;  # Produce biographical documentaries on women and broadcast biographical programmes/contents on illustrious women with a goal to make women self-aware and self-confident;  # Broadcast documentaries and programmes/contents on women victims of rape during the liberation war (beerangana) and on women freedom fighters;  # Ensure 33 per cent participation of women in mainstream media organisations;  # Formulate ethical codes of journalism with encouraging positive attitude towards women and girl children as one of the main principles.  # Exercise caution while doing stories of abuse concerning women from backward/disadvantaged and ethnic minority communities, women with disabilities and the girl children.</p>	<p>The objective concerned issues of demeaning, traditional and negative portrayal of women in media contents and of ending violence against women.  Too many actions or indicators jammed together here.  Portrayal issues dominate, ensuring 33 percent participation of women in mainstream media does not fit here and might get lost.  Should have spelt out and integrate the print media with equal importance.</p>



Serial	Document Title	Indicator Type	Indicator	Comment/Observation
		Gender equality in media organisations	<p>Policy Section 40.3:</p> <p>Planned actions: Long-term: # Preserve quota for women in mass media jobs and in journalism education to enhance women's participation;</p> <p># Provide contemporary and advanced professional training to all media workers and reserve quotas for women there;</p> <p># Provide accommodation facilities to working mothers, and different groups of disadvantaged women including divorcees to ensure their participation in long-term training courses;</p> <p># Design and impart gender-sensitivity training to all and especially to the management-level media workers;</p> <p># Formulate a gender-sensitive national integrated and comprehensive mass media policy and a training module assimilating gender-sensitivity. # Ensure the proportion of women employees and officials to be 33 per cent in news media.</p>	<p>The objective concerned equal opportunity for women in media management roles and in their getting professional training.</p> <p>The activities are more focused here. The quota demand needed to be for management roles though.</p>
		Gender portrayal in content	<p>Policy Section: 40.4: Planned Actions: Short-term:</p> <p># Formulate a national gender-sensitive mass media policy.</p> <p>Long-term:</p> <p># Include gender-sensitivity as a condition for granting of broadcast licenses and for transmission of programmes.</p>	<p>The objective concerned integrating gender perspectives in the media policies.</p> <p>Here, this comes with the recommendation for a licensing condition as well.</p> <p>The Actions need to be more specific and define the media policy more precisely; also mention who should do it. Besides, it overlaps with another indicator in the first field.</p> <p>A more specific statement is needed for the action/indicator on the license issue.</p>

Serial	Document Title	Indicator Type	Indicator	Comment/Observation
		Other (SPECIFY IN COMMENTS)	Policy Section 19.10: Planned Action: Short-term # Broadcast Television promotional spots to build up resistance to VAW. # Run poster campaigns on the mass media to build up resistance to VAW. # Make programmes on survivors of gender-based violence and show them on the mass media.	The policy objective concerns creating mass awareness to resist violence against women through the mass media. The last one might backfire if privacy, consent and sensitive handling is not ensured.
		Gender portrayal in content	Policy Section 32.1: # Publish and broadcast programmes on media about positive participation of women in politics.	This was one of the planned actions for enhancing women's political participation. This also indicates a stress on media's role in gender-related development.
		Gender equality in media organisations	Policy Section 22.4: # Provide government grants for encouraging women in making films and dramas. Planned action: provide grants; introduce awards for best women filmmakers.	Identifying facilitating factor as in government grants and awards.
	SDG Tracker	Gender equality in media organisations	16.10.1 : Number of verified cases of killing, kidnapping, enforced disappearance, arbitrary detention and torture of journalists, associated media personnel, trade unionists and human rights advocates in the previous 12 months	This will indicate enabling situation for women in journalism.
		Gender equality in media organisations	16.10.2 : Number of countries that adopt and implement constitutional, statutory and/or policy guarantees for public access to information	This will indicate enabling environment for women. Bangladesh has the law, although the process to get information has many problems.
		Other (SPECIFY IN COMMENTS)	<u>16.b.1 Proportion of population reporting having personally felt discriminated against or harassed in the previous 12 months on the basis of a ground of discrimination prohibited under international human rights law</u>	It will indicate enabling situation for gender- equality in news media.

Serial	Document Title	Indicator Type	Indicator	Comment/Observation
		Gender Equality in News Media	5.b.1 : Proportion of individuals who own a mobile telephone, by sex.	The tracker does not give any gender-disaggregated data. The 8th five-year development plan of the government has also set this indicator.
		Other (SPECIFY IN COMMENTS)	5.4.1 : Proportion of time spent on unpaid domestic and care work, by sex, age and location.	It will indicate facilitation to gender-equality in news media.
		Other (SPECIFY IN COMMENTS)	4.3.1.c Participation rate of youth and adults in formal education and training in the previous 12 months (Tertiary), by sex.	It may indicate scopes for gender-equality in news media.
		Other (SPECIFY IN COMMENTS)	<u>5.1.1 Whether or not legal frameworks are in place to promote, enforce and monitor equality and non-discrimination on the basis of sex.</u>	It may indicate scopes for gender-equality in news media.
		Other (SPECIFY IN COMMENTS)	5.2.1 : Proportion of ever-partnered women and girls aged 15 years and older subjected to physical, sexual or psychological violence by a current or former intimate partner, in the last 12 months, by form of violence and by age group.	It will indicate enabling situation for gender-equality in news media.
		Other (SPECIFY IN COMMENTS)	5.2.2 : Proportion of women and girls aged 15 years and older subjected to sexual violence by persons other than an intimate partner, in the last 12 months, by age group and place of occurrence.	It will indicate enabling situation for gender-equality in news media.
	SAARC Convention on Preventing and Combating Trafficking in Women and Children for Prostitution	Gender portrayal in content	8. The State Parties to the Convention shall promote awareness, inter-alia, through the use of the media, of the problem of trafficking in women and children and its underlying causes including the projection of negative images of women.	Also, the role of the media as advocates of a cause for safeguarding the safety and security of women and children.

## A-6, Table 6

### Gender equality measures in media organisations

Name of Media organisation	Circulation	Newsroom org. Yes=X	Content Yes=X	Comments
<i>Prothom Alo</i>	5,01,800	X	X	<p>No organisational gender policy. But the practice is non-discriminatory, with a thrust to positive enabling measures. One clause in the recruitment policy pledges non-discrimination on the basis of religion, race, colour, sect and gender. The written policy for promotion to higher grades have been updated in 2019. Two main criteria for promotion: serving years and performance (annual and special contribution). This policy reads gender-inclusive (nothing specified on gender; in other words neither negative nor positive discrimination.)</p> <p>Salary is as per the Wage Board but going for contractual terms in the recent years, especially for the senior staff. For some posts, the pay is higher than the Wage Board. All retirement benefits according to the wage board are given. These include gratuity, provident fund and earned leave's payment. Not for contractual employees though.</p> <p>Gender is not considered when designating management responsibilities or when assigning work or beats. Security for the female staff members are ensured, including drop-off 9 p.m. onwards.</p> <p>Six months of maternity leave; enough separate toilets.</p> <p>They have three policies regarding news gathering conduct and content: one general, one exclusively on gender, and one on children.</p> <p>The policies cover general ethical norms of journalism. They also cover gender-equality and sensitivity issues including absolute protection of identity of victims and survivors in stories on sexual abuse and other sensitive cases; diversity issues; hate speech; and considering best interests of the vulnerable people. The directions are thorough and in detail. Some indicate Influence of different experiences.</p> <p>These are monitored regularly and steps are taken accordingly. The policies are introduced upon joining at orientation sessions. Refreshed during professional training, which take place more or less regularly. There is a system for daily monitoring of all contents (post mortem), which covers gender issues.</p> <p>Aware of the High Court's 2009 guidelines but has not formed the mandated complaint redress committee. A high-level general redress committee co-opts senior female employees for addressing complaints on gender-based issues.</p>

Name of Media organisation	Circulation	Newsroom org. Yes=X	Content Yes=X	Comments
<i>Daily Ittefaq</i>	2,90,200	X		<p>No organisational gender policy, nor any editorial policy. Said has Human Resources policy; code of ethics; recruitment policy; conflict sensitivity policy.</p> <p>Did not mention if these have gender-related provisions. Did not provide way policy document.</p> <p>Has maternity leave and enough toilets for women. Gender is not considered when designating management responsibilities but it is considered when assigning work or beats. <u>Female reporters are usually not sent to cover Islamic or religious gatherings and events at night.</u></p> <p>Women do not work till late, nor do they do night shifts.</p> <p>Said has policies on content and follow their implementation, but did not provide any written document. Mentioned that the editor takes this issue seriously, so do Department heads. Did not mention having gender-focused reporting guidelines.</p>
<i>Kaler Kantho</i>	2,90,200	X		<p>No organisational gender or recruitment policy in place. Said has code of ethics and editorial policy. Also has human resources, advertising, social media, children policies and guidelines; in place. Did not specify any gender-related clauses in these. Did not provide any policy document.</p> <p>Provides maternity leave, separate toilets. Wage board given to 90 per cent females.</p> <p>For content regularly follows the guidelines, however did not provide any written document. No monitoring. Said has gender-specific reporting guidelines, but did not elaborate.</p>
<i>Daily Samakal</i>	2,71,000	X		<p>Said has all relevant policies including one organisational gender policy. But did not provide any. Did not mention if these have any gender-related clause.</p> <p>Gender is taken into account in certain situations both for designating responsibilities and for assigning beats/work. No explanation provided; nor mentioned if takes any facilitating measures.</p> <p>Has maternity and paternity leave. Enough toilets. Provided no information on wage board. Said that the editor, news editor and feature editors monitor the gender issue. Did not mention having gender-focused reporting guidelines.</p>
<i>Dhaka Tribune</i>	40600	X	X	<p>Said has organisational gender policy along with other relevant policies—on structure and function, and on content. Did not mention if these have gender-related provisions.</p>

Name of Media organisation	Circulation	Newsroom org. Yes=X	Content Yes=X	Comments
				<p>But provided a Style Guide—the only document—which has some ethical points concerning coverage on women and a sexual minority too. Said has gender-focused reporting guidelines and on query, a senior newsroom manager gave details.</p> <p>Provides maternity leave. Women work late. The entire office premise is covered under security camera monitoring, including a certain vicinity outside the office; Female staff members get drop-off by office transport.</p> <p>In case of out-of-station assignments: An additional staff member accompanies; Local correspondents are instructed to ensure security and other related issues; Local law enforcement agencies are notified.</p> <p>Aware of the High Court’s 2009 guidelines and has formed a complaints redress committee.</p>
<i>New Age</i>	40,100	X	X	<p>Said has an organisational gender policy, along with other relevant policies. All have clauses on gender-related issues.</p> <p>Maternity leave and adequate toilets are there. All staff get wage board. Women are dropped off by office car if it’s late. Gender is not considered when assigning management responsibilities but considered while giving assignments/beats. No facilitating measure mentioned. Safety of female colleagues is considered while giving them assignments.</p> <p>Said has gender-focused reporting guidelines but did not elaborate. Did not provide any document. The study team however collected a thorough Style Guide, which has a few pertinent points on language. On query, a senior news manager later provided similar information. Guidelines are discussed while working on particular stories and a monitoring is maintained.</p> <p>Aware of the High Court’s 2009 guidelines and has formed a complaints redress committee comprising two women and two men.</p> <p>A general complaints and redress system is in place. The Union of New Age Journalists receive the complaints.</p>

Name of Media organisation	Circulation	Newsroom org. Yes=X	Content Yes=X	Comments
<i>Gramer Kagoj</i>	25,000		X	<p>No organisational gender policy. Editorial, safety security, advertising and children policies are in place. Did not mention if these have any gender-related clauses. Did not provide any document.</p> <p>16 men and 4 women are paid as per the wage board.</p> <p>No maternity leave. Equal number of toilets for men and women (one for male and one for female toilets).</p> <p>Women are not sent to assignments which are potentially unsafe. Women work in night shifts. Usually, women don't work out of station; when they do, a male photo journalist is sent with them.</p> <p>Do not have any written gender-focused reporting guideline. But some verbal ones are there in practice, as the Editor later detailed out on query.</p> <p>Aware of the High Court's 2009 guidelines but has not formed the mandated complaint redress committee.</p>
<i>Purbokone</i>	55,000	X		<p>Said has an organisational gender policy but did not provide any document. Wage structure not given. All get retirement benefits.</p> <p>Did not respond about maternity leave. Three toilets for men and one for women.</p> <p>Women work late night. They provide transportation service if necessary.</p> <p>Gender issues are considered occasionally. No separate guidelines or content monitoring system.</p>
<i>BTV</i>	N/A	X	X	<p>No individual organisational gender policy; follows relevant state policies and rules on all matters. Recruitment follows civil service regulatory requirements, which are non-discriminatory. A separate policy on enlistment and gradation of artists and creative content-makers pledges non-discrimination, but does not specifically mention any gender-equality criteria.</p> <p>Provided four sets of content guidelines, issued in 1986. These include guidelines for films and procuring privately produced programmes too. These have gender-equality provisions with a tinge of development orientation. Provisions concerning gender-sensitivity and children are there, which read like moralistic litany.</p> <p>The provisions are not bad really, except for the framing and the moralist tone—<i>thou shalt not</i>—of preaching. Even if seen as gender-sensitive, too many 'don'ts are not really supportive of gender equality.</p>

Name of Media organisation	Circulation	Newsroom org. Yes=X	Content Yes=X	Comments
				<p>Also follows the government broadcast policy and has gender-related unwritten reporting guidelines. One common trait is that the policies are rather conservative and often over-protective.</p> <p>Aware of the High Court's 2009 guidelines and has formed the mandated complaints redress committee. Complaint redress committee formed as per HC ruling with 1 man and 6 women.</p> <p>Informally monitors the content.</p> <p>Provides maternity leave. 110 toilets for men and 20 for women.</p> <p>Women do night shifts and are dropped home by official car.</p> <p>Salary as per government pay scale.</p>
<i>ATN News</i>	N/A	X	X	<p>No organisational gender policy; said has human resources and recruitment policies. Did not mention if these had gender-related clauses. The documents provided were not appropriate.</p> <p>Provides both maternity and paternity leave. All female staffs get pick-up and drop-off services. Women work late night.</p> <p>No content-related written policies. But has specific reporting guidelines. Policies like identity protection of rape victims are often run as scrolls on screen.</p> <p>Content is monitored to avoid gender stereotypes and to ensure balanced portrayal of women. No regular training but issues are discussed at daily and weekly meetings.</p> <p>Aware of the High Court's 2009 guidelines but has not formed the mandated complaint redress committee. No general response committee either. But have an informal system of dealing with complaints. The office head, the executive editor is a women, and that helps.</p>
<i>Maasranga TV</i>	N/A	X	X	<p>No organisational gender policy. Said has editorial, gender, human resources, recruitment, Safety and security, advertising, guidelines, code of ethics. Did not mention if these had gender-related clauses.</p> <p>Did not provide any policy document. Salary structure follows the company act which is equally applicable for both male and female staffs.</p> <p>Provides maternity leave. Gender not considered for assigning responsibility or work. But if the assignment is risky, safety measures are taken for both male and female reporters.</p>



Name of Media organisation	Circulation	Newsroom org. Yes=X	Content Yes=X	Comments
				<p>Transportation is provided to female staff members. Women work late night shifts.</p> <p>On query, a top news manager later detailed out some gender-sensitive reporting guidelines. Nothing written down, but in practice.</p> <p>One of them is on equality in news: Always try to ensure gender balance while taking interviews for reports and selecting guests for talk shows.</p> <p>If any issue comes up, then gender-related rules are being discussed and staff members are reminded. But no regular awareness building programme is there.</p> <p>Aware of the High Court's 2009 guidelines but has not formed the mandated complaint redress committee.</p>
<i>News 24</i>	N/A	X	X	<p>No organisational gender policy. Said have editorial, human resources and recruitment policies/guidelines but did not provide any document. Did not mention if these have gender-related clauses.</p> <p>Did not provide any salary structure but said pays more than the wage board. Provides maternity leave. Equal number of toilets for male and female.</p> <p>No monitoring system in treatment of gender-related contents.</p> <p>Some guidelines are followed while creating contents. Later a senior newsroom manager detailed out three core guidelines for gender-sensitive reporting. One is: Try to report on success stories of women.</p> <p>Aware of the High Court's 2009 guidelines but has not formed the mandated complaint redress committee. No general redress system exists.</p> <p>If any complain comes, inquiry committee is formed instantly to address the complain</p>
<i>Channel 24</i>	N/A	X		<p>No organisational gender policy. No gender-focused reporting guidelines. Said have editorial policy, code of ethics and other such policies. Did not mention if these have gender-related clauses.</p> <p>Provided a short list of corporate policies of Ha-meem group. Details were not given.</p> <p>Provides maternity leave. 15 toilets for men and 8 for women. Women work night shift, who get transport service at night and in morning.</p> <p>Gender is not considered while assigning management responsibilities or assignments. No special precautionary measure is needed.</p> <p>Aware of the High Court's 2009 guidelines but has not formed the mandated</p>

Name of Media organisation	Circulation	Newsroom org. Yes=X	Content Yes=X	Comments
				complaint redress committee. General redress system is there. Admin and HR receives complaints. If any complaint arises, admin and HR assess it and if required an investigative committee is formed and that committee takes necessary action.
<i>Ekattor TV</i>	N/A	X		<p>Said has organisational gender policy and policy for other structural matters. Did not mention if other policies have gender-related causes. Also has gender-sensitive reporting guidelines, which was not elaborated.</p> <p>No policy documents provided.</p> <p>They have their own salary structure which apply equally to both men and women.</p> <p>Provides both maternity and paternity leave.</p> <p>Sufficient toilets for both men (12) and women (7).</p> <p>Gender is not considered while assigning management responsibilities or assignments.</p> <p>No special precautionary measure is needed.</p> <p>If the assignment is risky, security measures are taken both for male and female reporters.</p> <p>Women work night shifts and they get transportation service from the office.</p> <p>Aware of the High Court's 2009 guidelines and has formed a complaints redress committee, comprising two men and three women.</p>
<i>Independent TV</i>	N/A	X		<p>Said has an organisational gender policy, which is 'Conviction in gender equality'. Also has editorial and other policies. Did not mention if these had gender-related clauses. No policy provided.</p> <p>Said had gender sensitive reporting guidelines. News editor monitors gender-related issues.</p> <p>Salary structure is similar to the wage board. Both maternity and paternity leaves are there.</p> <p>20 toilets for men and 10 for women.</p> <p>Women work late night and receive transport facility after 09:00 pm.</p> <p>Aware of the High Court's 2009 guidelines and has formed a complaints redress committee.</p>
<i>ABC Radio</i>	N/A			<p>No organisational gender policy. No other policy. The guidelines of Prothom Alo apply.</p> <p>Maternity leave is there.</p>

Name of Media organisation	Circulation	Newsroom org. Yes=X	Content Yes=X	Comments
<i>Dhaka FM</i>	N/A		X	<p>No gender policy or gender sensitive reporting guidelines.            Provided a code of conduct for the staffs.            The station maintains the status of gender equality as per the standards set by international bodies e.g UNICEF.            Provides maternity leave.            Equal number of toilets for both male and female.            Formed a committee as per the 2009 HC ruling; with one man and 2 women.            Sexual harassment, if proven, would cost the man's job.</p>
<i>Bangla Tribune</i>	N/A	X	X	<p>Said has organisational gender policy, along with a few other core policies. Did not mention if the other policies have gender-related clauses. Gender focused reporting guidelines are not formally codified. A senior news manager provided a few reporting guidelines. The first one calls for Strictly respecting privacy of women and men.            Aware of the High Court's 2009 guidelines and has formed a complaints redress committee. Later said, guidelines not written as such. The committee is also informally structured, but works regularly.</p>

### A-7, Table 1

#### Male-female ratio among total employees

<b>Name of the media</b>	<b>Male employees</b>	<b>Female employees</b>	<b>Total employees</b>	<b>% of female employees</b>
<i>Prothom Alo</i>	605	56	661	8.47
<i>Dhaka Tribune</i>	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
<i>Daily Ittefaq</i>	283	29	312	9.29
<i>Kaler Kantho</i>	498	15	513	2.92
<i>Samakal</i>	628	10	638	1.57
<i>New Age</i>	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
<i>Gramer Kagoj</i>	148	6	154	3.90
<i>Daily Purbokon</i>	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
<i>Maasranga TV</i>	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
<i>Ekattor TV</i>	399	171	570	30.00
<i>News 24</i>	320	36	356	10.11
<i>Channel 24</i>	485	43	528	8.14
<i>Independent TV</i>	535	58	593	9.78
<i>ATN News</i>	300	40	340	11.76
<i>Bangladesh Television</i>	1170	187	1357	13.78
<i>Dhaka FM</i>	15	4	19	21.05
<i>ABC Radio</i>	16	3	19	15.79
<i>Bangla Tribune</i>	70	6	76	7.89
<b>Total</b>	<b>5338</b>	<b>612</b>	<b>5950</b>	<b>10.29</b>

Table 2: Male-female ratio among decision-makers

<b>Name of the media</b>	<b>Male decision-makers</b>	<b>Female decision-makers</b>	<b>Total decision-makers</b>	<b>% of female decision-makers</b>
<i>Prothom Alo</i>	29	6	35	17.14
<i>Dhaka Tribune</i>	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
<i>Daily Ittefaq</i>	8	2	10	20.00
<i>Kaler Kantho</i>	23	0	23	0.00
<i>Samakal</i>	11	0	11	0.00
<i>New Age</i>	12	1	13	7.69
<i>Gramer Kagoj</i>	12	1	13	7.69
<i>Daily Purbokon</i>	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
<i>Maasranga TV</i>	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
<i>Ekattor TV</i>	40	10	50	20.00
<i>News 24</i>	8	3	11	27.27
<i>Channel 24</i>	16	0	16	0.00
<i>Independent TV</i>	25	1	26	3.85
<i>ATN news</i>	23	4	27	14.81
<i>Bangladesh Television</i>	29	6	35	17.14
<i>Dhaka FM</i>	6	5	11	45.45
<i>ABC Radio</i>	2	0	2	N/A
<i>Bangla Tribune</i>	16	3	19	15.79
<b>Total</b>	<b>261</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>302</b>	<b>13.58</b>

Table 3: Male-female ratio among senior content-makers

Name of the media	Senior content-makers: Male	Senior content-makers: Female	Senior content-makers: Total	% of female among senior content-makers
<i>Prothom Alo</i>	51	8	59	13.56
<i>Dhaka Tribune</i>	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
<i>Daily Ittefaq</i>	11	0	11	0.00
<i>Kaler Kantho</i>	14	0	14	0.00
<i>Samakal</i>	9	2	11	18.18
<i>New Age</i>	28	3	31	9.68
<i>Gramer Kagoj</i>	2	0	2	0.00
<i>Daily Purbokon</i>	5	0	5	0.00
<i>Maasranga TV</i>	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
<i>Ekattor TV</i>	62	16	78	20.51
<i>News 24</i>	1	0	1	0.00
<i>Channel 24</i>	30	0	30	0.00
<i>Independent TV</i>	45	12	57	21.05
<i>ATN news</i>	35	9	44	20.45
<i>Bangladesh Television</i>	20	1	21	4.76
<i>Dhaka FM</i>	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
<i>ABC Radio</i>	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
<i>Bangla Tribune</i>	28	3	31	9.68
<b>Total</b>	<b>330</b>	<b>54</b>	<b>384</b>	<b>14.06</b>

Table 4: Male-female ratio among reporters

Name of the media	Male reporters	Female reporters	Total reporters	% of female reporters
<i>Prothom Alo</i>	194	9	203	4.43
<i>Dhaka Tribune</i>	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
<i>Daily Ittefaq</i>	11	0	11	0.00
<i>Kaler Kantho</i>	27	3	30	10.00
<i>Samakal</i>	9	0	9	0.00
<i>New Age</i>	19	1	20	5.00
<i>Gramer Kagoj</i>	130	2	132	1.52
<i>Daily Purbokon</i>	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
<i>Maasranga TV</i>	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
<i>Ekattor TV</i>	34	4	38	10.53
<i>News 24</i>	1	0	1	0.00
<i>Channel 24</i>	17	0	17	0.00
<i>Independent TV</i>	139	5	144	3.47
<i>ATN news</i>	78	7	85	8.24
<i>Bangladesh Television</i>	132	18	150	12.00
<i>Dhaka FM</i>	0	0	0	N/A
<i>ABC Radio</i>	0	0	0	N/A
<i>Bangla Tribune</i>	66	3	69	4.35
<b>Total</b>	<b>857</b>	<b>52</b>	<b>909</b>	<b>5.72</b>

Table 5: Male and female in top positions

Name of the media	M/F	Top-most	2nd tier top positions	3rd tier top positions	4th tier top positions
<i>Prothom Alo</i>	M	Editor in Chief / Editor / CEO (1), Managing Editor (1), Co/Joint Editor (3), Deputy Editor (1)	Chief News Editor (1), Web Editor (1), Opinion in-charge / Editor (1)	Chief Reporter (1), Joint News Editor (1), Deputy News Editor (1), Assistant News Editor (2), Video in-charge (1)	Section / Programme Editor (5), Shift in-charge (1), Social Media Editor in-charge (1), Research in-charge (1), Magazine / Special Programme Editor (1), Deputy Shift in-charge (5)
	F	x	Online English Editor (1), Feature Editor (1)	Video in-charge, news (1)	Magazine / Special Programme Editor (2) , Deputy Shift in-charge (1)
<i>Dhaka Tribune</i>	M	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
	F	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
<i>Daily Ittefaq</i>	M	x	Online Bangla Editor (1), Online English Editor (1), Feature Editor (1), Opinion Programmes Editor (1)	Joint News Editor (1)	Shift in-charge (3)
	F	Editor in Chief / Editor / CEO (1)	x	X	Shift in-charge (1)
<i>Kaler Kantho</i>	M	Editor in Chief / Editor / CEO (1), Deputy Editor (3)	Online Bangla Editor (1), Feature Editor (1), Opinion Programmes Editor (1), Bureau Chief (7)	News Editor (1), Additional News Editor (1), Joint News Editor (1), Deputy News Editor (2), Assistant News Editor (1), Chief Reporter (1)	Shift in-charge (1), Research in-charge (1)
	F	x	x	x	x
<i>Samakal</i>	M	Editor in Chief / Editor / CEO (1), Co/Joint Editor (1), Consulting Editor (1)	Feature Editor (1), Opinion Programmes Editor (1)	News Editor (1), Additional News Editor (1), Joint News Editor (1), Chief Reporter (1)	Section / Programme Editor (1), Shift in-charge (1)

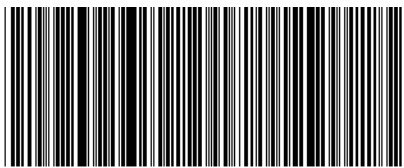


Name of the media	M/F	Top-most	2nd tier top positions	3rd tier top positions	4th tier top positions
	F	X	x	x	x
New Age	M	Editor in Chief / Editor / CEO (1), Managing Editor (1), Deputy Editor (2)	Opinion Programmes Editor (1)	News Editor (1), Joint News Editor (1), Chief Reporter (1)	Section / Programme Editor (4)
	F	x	x	x	Magazine / Special Programme Editor (1)
Gramer Kagoj	M	Editor in Chief / Editor / CEO (1), Executive Editor (1), Co/Joint Editor (2)	Web/Digital Editor (1), Chief News Editor (1), Bureau Chief (4)	News Editor (1), Chief Reporter (1)	x
	F	Co/Joint Editor (1)	x	x	x
Daily Purbokon	M	Editor in Chief / Editor / CEO (1)	N/A	N/A	N/A
	F	x	x	x	Shift in-charge (1)
Maasranga TV	M	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
	F	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Ekattor TV	M	Editor in Chief / Editor / CEO (1), Co/Joint Editor (4), Deputy Editor (2)	Planning Editor (1), Head of News (1), Head of Programmes (1), Web Editor (1), Chief News Editor (1), Head of Programmes (1), Bureau Chief (8)	News Editor (4), Additional News Editor (3), Joint News Editor (2), Assistant News Editor (2), Assignment Editor (1)	Executive Producer News (4), Others (4)
	F	Co/Joint Editor (1), Deputy Editor (6)	X	x	Others (3)
News24 TV	M	Editor in Chief / Editor / CEO (1)	Head of News (1)	News Editor (3), Assignment Editor (1), Video Editing in-charge (1), Audio Production in-charge (1)	x

Name of the media	M/F	Top-most	2nd tier top positions	3rd tier top positions	4th tier top positions
	F	X	Chief News Editor (1)	Joint News Editor (2)	x
Channel 24	M	Editor in Chief / Editor / CEO (1)	Web Editor (1), Bureau Chief (2)	News Editor (1), Joint News Editor (5), Video Editing in-charge (1), Audio Production in-charge (1)	Executive Producer News (1), Executive Producer Programme (1), Social Media in-charge (1), Research in-charge (1)
	F	x	x	x	x
Independent TV	M	Editor in Chief / Editor / CEO (1), Co/Joint Editor (1)	Web Editor (1), Chief News Editor (1), Bureau Chief (6)	News Editor (5), Deputy News Editor (2), Assistant News Editor (2), Assignment Editor (1), Input Editor (Head of Input) (1), Video Editing in-charge (1), Audio Production in-charge (1)	Social Media Editor (1), Research in-charge (1)
	F	x	x	x	Executive Producer News (1)
ATN News	M	Editor in Chief / Editor / CEO (1)	Web Editor (1), Chief News Editor (1), Head of News (1), Bureau Chief (2)	News Editor (4), Joint News Editor (1), Assignment Editor (1), Chief Reporter (1), Input Editor (1), Video Editing in-charge (1), Audio Production In-charge (1)	Section / Programme Editor (2), Shift in-charge (3), Executive Producer News (1), Research in-charge (1)
	F	Executive Editor (1)	X	Joint News Editor (1)	Shift in-charge (1), Research in-charge (1)
Bangladesh Television	M	DDG (1), Editor (1)	Chief News Editor (1), Head of Programme (1), Bureau Chief (1)	News Editor (3)	Section / Programme Editor (2), Others (19)
	F	x	x	x	Research in-charge (1), Others (5)

Name of the media	M/F	Top-most	2nd tier top positions	3rd tier top positions	4th tier top positions
Dhaka FM	M	Editor in Chief / Editor / CEO (1)	Web/Digital Editor (1), Planning Editor (1), Head of RJs (1)	Audio Editing in-charge (1)	Department Head (1), Social Media Editor (1)
	F	x	Opinion Programmes in-charge (1), Head of RJs (1)	Assignment Editor (1)	Department Head (1), Social Media Editor (1)
ABC Radio	M	x	Advisor (1)	x	Executive Producer (1)
	F	x	x	x	x
Bangla Tribune	M	Editor in Chief / Editor / CEO (1)	Opinion Programmes Editor (1), Head of News (1)	Joint News Editor (1), Deputy News Editor (1), Chief Reporter (1)	Section / Programme Editor (7), Video Executive Producer (2), Social Media Editor (1), Research in-charge (1)
	F	x	x	Deputy News Editor (1)	Section / Programme Editor (1)

\* N/A = Data not available or incomplete



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