Situational Analysis of Gender and Governance in Bangladesh

Md. Reazul Haque[1]
Fahmida Sultana[2]

Abstract

This paper explores key issues and challenges in governance relation to gender in Bangladesh. It discusses the concepts of development, gender, governance, gender mainstreaming, sameness, difference or transformation. This paper is based on the redistribution and recognition model provided by Nancy Fraser to understand key issues and dilemmas of governance in Bangladesh relation to Gender. Result of the research, will be able to get an understanding of actual barriers that exists in the society. Initiatives taken by government, NGOs, civil society can build policies that would ensure gender equality, thereby equal empowerment, elimination of discrimination, violence against women (♀) and eventually the overall development of the country. This research will therefore add for the body of literature, which looks to develop new and strengthen old strategies to achieving gender equality in governance by bridging the gap between theory and practice to enhance entitlements, capabilities of women in our country.

Introduction

Bangladeshi society, because of its socio-cultural and religious background, facilitates the perception of a woman as submissive, dependent and all accommodating. Her role as a wife and a mother must remain the only goal in her life. Further, the old proverbs saying that for a woman "heaven lies under the feet of her husband" and "the part beaten by husband goes to heaven" are also self-explanatory of a woman's position in Bangladesh (Ameen: 2005). The Constitution of the People's Republic of Bangladesh (BDC) has mentioned equality among men and women at all sphere of life. Government of Bangladesh (GoB) has taken various initiatives to ensure women in development activities and to eradicate gender difference. Policies for women have been formulated from country's highest document Constitution to lower administrative unit (UP[3]). The 1972 Constitution of the People's Republic of

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[1] Associate Professor, Department of Development Studies, University of Dhaka, Dhaka -1000. Bangladesh.

[2] Assistant Professor, Department of Development Studies, University of Dhaka, Dhaka -1000. Bangladesh.

[3] UP means Union Parishad.

Bangladesh has recognized and guaranteed equal rights to women and article 28(1) states "the state shall not discriminate against any citizen on grounds only of religion, race, caste, sex or place of birth" and article 28(2) states the "women shall have equal rights with men in all sphere of the state and public life" (BDC 1998). Women's development has been prime priority by different governments in the consecutive Five Year Plans of Bangladesh. But women continue to be underprivileged, disadvantaged, ignored and facing discrimination even after 40 years of independence. The society is highly patriarchal while women are vulnerable and continue to be victims of domestic, social, political and religious violence. Socio-cultural and religious barriers and attitudes based on gender roles and stereotype that is persisting in the society. In such situation, good governance for women is utopia in Bangladesh.

The main objective of this research is to investigate the problems of gender governance that traces the pattern, means and nature of violation of basic human rights of women with a broader perspective to facilitate appropriate policy meditation to improve gender specific basic human rights and entitlements. To reach the goal the research makes a quest of answer to the dominant question 'what are the key issues and challenges in governance in terms of gender mainstreaming and ensuring gender equality in the context of Bangladesh?' with special focus on 'how the harmonization among government, non-government organization and civil society can be facilitated to advocate for gender sensitive policy to ensure good governance. Apart from these dominant issues, the issue that have been addressed in this research include structure of labour market in terms of nature of contracts, patronage, dependence, control; the perception of women on their own situation and the negotiation strategies undertaken therein; the ways gender and governance is perceived by family, NGOs and Civil Society and the policy based interventions that could be taken for the better livelihood of women. To conduct the research, both primary data and secondary data have been taken into consideration. A strong pool of seasoned researchers with specialized expertise in the respective field, assisted by research assistants interviewed personnel of NGOs, Civil Servants, Students, and Teachers of Dhaka University on the basis of their convenience using unstructured questionnaires as research tool. To avoid the breach of research ethics each key informant was given the introduction of interviewer and informed about the objective of the study taking care of personal privacy issues.

2.1. Theoretical Framework

2.1.1. The Key Concepts

This research is based on few concepts, which should be discussed for the purpose of analyzing the research questions.

2.1. a. Development

According to Gunnar Myrdal, the author of famous "Asian Drama", development means:

> *the process away from underdevelopment of rising out of poverty, it is sought and perhaps actually attained by means of "Planning for Development (Hossain 1994: 4)*

In the word of Edward W. Weidner:

> *Development is a state of mind, a tendency a direction rather than a fixed goal, it is a rate of change in a particular direction (Ibid).*

These definitions, perhaps generally denote that development is a process of change towards betterment. Some administrators think that, there is no need of women participation in development process because development is a technical issue and women are not expert on that (Author's interview 2008).

2.1. b. Governance

According to Hasnat Abdul Hye:

> *Governance can be interpreted as the undertaking of activities, management of resources, organization of men and women by groups of people, communities, local government bodies, business organizations and the branches of the state (Legislature, Judiciary and Government) through social, political, administrative and economic arrangements that meet the daily needs of people and ensure sustainable development (Hye 2000: 2).*

Broadly governance can be defined schematically that is shown below through comparison in Figures I and II:
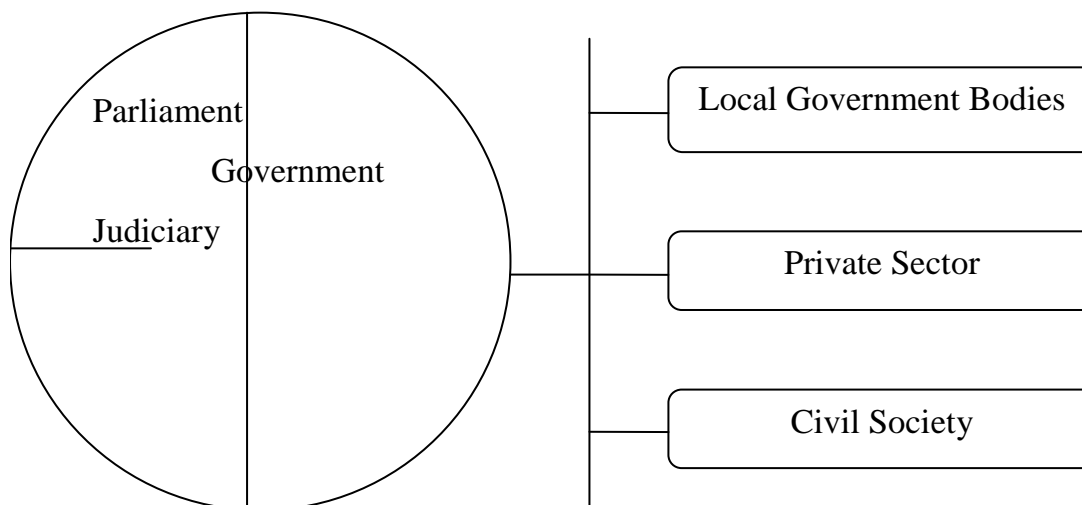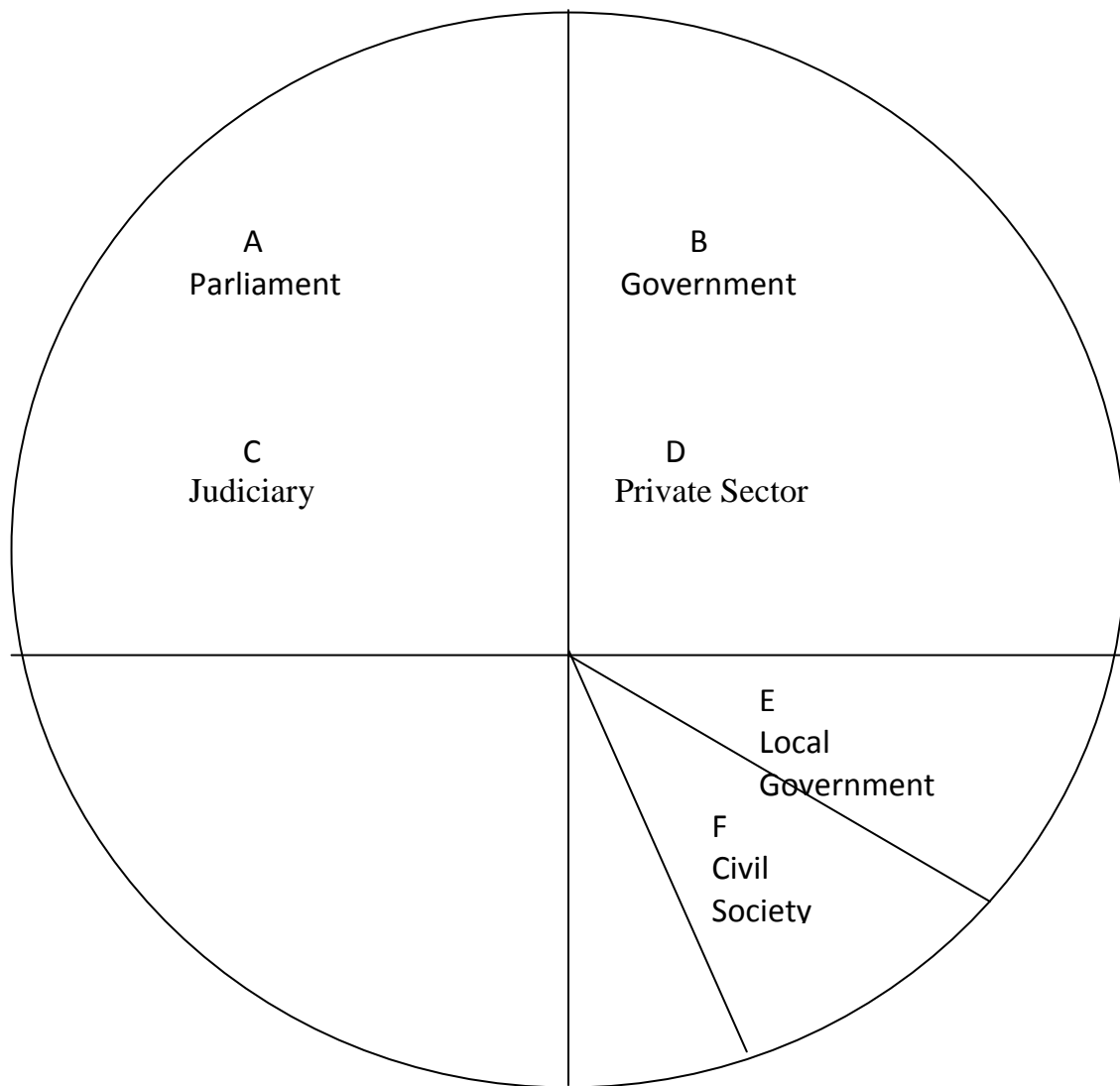
Figure I: Conventional State

Figure II: State Redefined

Source: Hye, H.A. (2000). Governance, South Asian Perspective. p: 3

2.1. c. Gender: What, How and Where?

In this research, we will apply Scott's definition of gender as:

> *the social organization of sexual difference' in relation to gender mainstreaming as operating 1) On a symbolic level: where images of masculinity and femininity' within organizational culture 'impart meaning to phenomena which appear to be gender-neutral. 2) At the level of individual and collective identity of the institution, of specific programs, lectures, staffs: where meanings of sexual difference affect the self-image of wo/men and the normative concepts in interpreting the meanings of it; and 3) At the of social structures 'the availability of resources, accessibility of social institutions and positions of power marked by gender norms and gender symbols (Scott 1999: 2; Sevenhuijsen 1998: 81).*

With these different levels, the researchers wish to look at the interpretation of the sexual difference and how they organize themselves for interacting with the other people, how they express themselves, their experiences, and the desire for change, if any.

We have been arranging our everyday life in such distinction that we take gender for granted, where we were brought up with the socially constructed set of categories to learn gender-appropriate behaviour that is of being feminine and masculine. Believing and thinking of themselves as the kind of people they supposed to be and building character that is appropriate according to society for women or men. This gender arrangement, as Connell (2002) argued, are reproduced socially (not biologically) by the power of structures to constrain individual action, thus often they appear unchanging; yet, in fact the dynamics of human practice are always changing as they creates new situations (Connell 2002: 10).

The notions of femininity and masculinity have been socially, culturally and historically constructed deeply in our lives these are seen as part of the order of nature. Connell (2002) claimed that being a man or a woman is not a fixed state, it is a becoming, a condition actively under construction. Simone de Beauvoir, the pioneering French feminist, in her classic phrase said that "one is not born, but rather, becomes a woman" (Connell 2002: 4). Connell further claimed this is also true with men where "one is not born masculine, but acquires and enacts masculinity, and so becomes a man" (Connell 2002: 4). Moreover, because we have been taking gender for granted, it is difficult to see how it is constructed.

Gender as analytical framework helps us to denaturalize (look beyond the nature) men and women, masculinity and femininity; to see them as socially produced not given by birth, thus different through time and place. It helps us to analyze relations of power of dominance and marginalization, hegemony and subjugation, hierarchy oppression as productive of gender identities, ideologies and practices. It helps us to look at knowledge and experiences of being a women or men as social practice, linked to *power*.

2.1. d. Gender Mainstreaming

Gender mainstreaming has many definitions but the one that seems to be the most complete is that of The United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), which defines it as:

The process of assessing the implications for women and men of any planned action, including legislations, policies or programmes, in all areas and at all levels. It is a strategy for making women's as well as men's concerns and experiences an integral dimension of the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programmes in all political, economic and societal spheres so that women and men benefit equally and inequality is not perpetuated. The ultimate goal is to achieve gender equality (United Nations 2002: 1).

So gender mainstreaming is a procedural way to achieve the gender equality. Attaining gender equality depends on the nature and attitude of mainstreaming process. From Bangladesh perspective, we approach by saying gender mainstreaming to ensure more women/girls enrolment in education, women reproductive health, women rights, participation in power and decision making process, and in addition, providing gender sensitive training and gender budgeting, removing violence against them.

2.1. e. Sameness, Difference or Transformation

For this research, researchers would prefer to use the theoretical framework of Nancy Fraser. For the convenience of realizing her theory researchers present the three notable models of *gender equality*.

The first model of *gender equality* is based on sameness of women and men. In this model policies often are reflected in equal opportunities for both women and men especially in fields, which are male dominated and thus male biased. The second model is based on *difference*, which would include affirmative action programs to value women's contributions despite differences between the sexes. The third and final model is that of *transformation*. *Transformation* looks at both sameness and difference but at the same time looks at redefining gender relations through the setting of new standards for women and men (Walby 2003: 6-7).

The distinguishing feature of the theoretical framework of Nancy Fraser is that it analyzes the conflict between 'sameness' and 'difference' by distinguishing between economic and cultural injustices.

The attempt of the analysis is interesting and thought provoking. It is an attempt to clarify some of the current political dilemmas around issues of social justice. Economic injustices are rooted in political economy including exploitation, economic marginalization, and deprivation while

cultural injustices are symbolic and include cultural domination, non-recognition, and disrespect.

The dilemma which arises from these two types of injustices is that economic injustices are often remedied by acknowledging the difference in groups of individuals and providing 'special' benefits for those suffering injustices while the remedy for cultural injustices requires deconstructing the underlying assumptions about identifies thus blurring the lines between identities thereby following an approach of promoting sameness (Fraser 1995).

The remedies for the social injustices of redistribution and recognition are then divided into two different realms those of affirmation, which support group differentiation, and transformation, which blurs group differentiation.

	Affirmation	Transformation
Redistribution	*The liberal welfare state* surface reallocations of existing goods to existing groups; supports group differentiation; can generate misrecognition	*socialism* deep restructuring of relations of production; blurs group differentiation; can help remedy some forms of misrecognition
Recognition	*Mainstream multiculturalism* surface reallocations of respect to existing identities of existing groups; supports group differentiation	*deconstruction* deep restructuring of relations of recognition; blurs group differentiation

Source: From Redistribution to Recognition? Dilemmas of Justice in a 'Post-Socialist' Age.

Nancy Fraser (1995: 89) then gives examples of different types of policies for each of the four quadrants, which can then be used to analyze the programs of governments and other institutions to see what type of equality they are promoting:

	Affirmation	Transformation
Redistribution	Affirmative action, Ensuring women have fair share of placements in jobs and education	Socialist feminism
Recognition	Cultural feminism Revaluation of femininity	Dismantling of androcentrism

Thus as Nancy Fraser points out the key to equality is in the deconstruction of gender not in the reaffirmation of differences between men and women nor in the promotion of sameness between men and women but rather in the transformation of social relations and underlying policy paradigms (1995: 89-90). In this way, there can be both differences and similarities between men and women, bringing together remedies of redistribution and recognition, but the premise on which policies and programs and designed are based on completely different sets of rules than those that currently exist.

This research is based on the model provided by Nancy Fraser to understand key issues and dilemmas of governance in Bangladesh relation to Gender. Result of the research, will be able to get an understanding of actual barriers that exists in the society that attempts to mainstream gender. This research will therefore add to the body of literature, which looks to develop new and strengthen old strategies to achieving gender equality in governance by bridging the gap between theory and practice.

3.1. Gender Related Governance Issues and Problems in Bangladesh

Women Presence in the Legislature

In democracy, women should enjoy equal rights in political participation and exercise their rights fully. In Beijing 1995, issue of women leadership was placed on the agenda, concerning equality between women and men (Antrobus 2002: 50). As of 2002, only 11 countries could achieve the benchmark determined by the 1995 Beijing Platform of Action demanding 30 percent of women representation in the parliament by adopting quotas (Ahmed 2005: 521). Bangladeshi women participated in the anti British political movement in the 1930s and 1940s and during liberation war of Bangladesh in 1971 women also played a significant role but their historical contributions remain largely invisible. Women's participation in politics was widely discouraged and denied by the major political parties particularly religious based political parties such as Jamaat-e-Islam did not believe in gender equality and viewed women's participation as anti Islamic (Ahmed 2005: 525-526).

Elected Women's Members to the Bangladesh Parliament (1973-2001)

Year of Election	% of ♀ Candidates	Won in Direct seats and by election	Total elected ♀	Reserved Seats	% of ♀ in the Parliament
1973	0.3	0	0	15	4.8 (Out of 315 seats)
1979	0.9	0+2	2	30	9.69 (Out of 330 seats)
1986	1.3	5+2	7	30	11.21 (Out of 330 seats)
1988	0.7	4	4	0	1.33 (Out of 300 seats)

1991	1.5	8+1	9	30	11.81 (Out of 330 seats)
1996	1.36	13+2	15	30	13.03 (Out of 330 seats)
2001	1.79	6	6	0	2.00

Source: Ahmed, K. U. (2005). Women and Politics in Bangladesh. Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bangladesh (Hum.). Vol-50, p-532.

To achieve equality in political arena 'gender redistributive/ transformative', 'gender neutral' 'gender specific' policies need be introduced at household, market, community and state level (Kabeer 1994: 81-84). Its focus is on redistribution of power not resources, which is shown by the following flowchart.
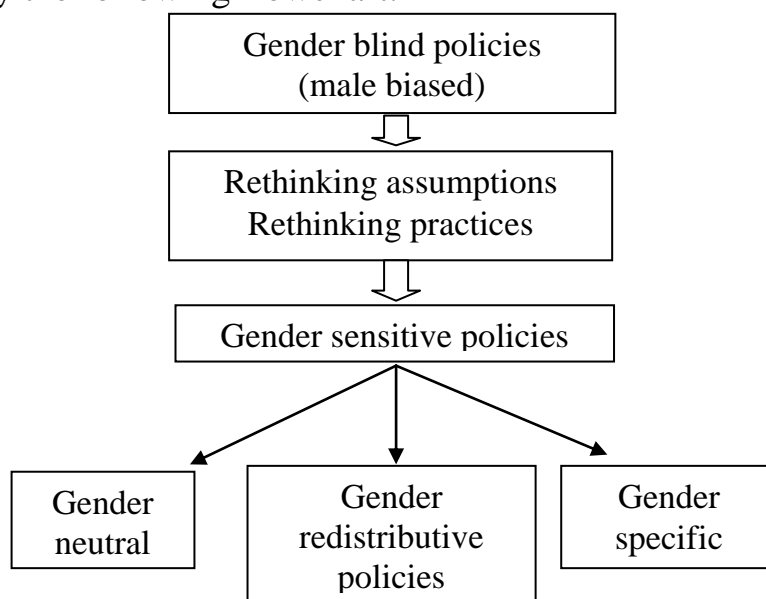

Fig: Policy Review Proposed by Kabeer (1994)

Taleya Rahman[4] has mentioned that, in order to ensure more women presence in the parliament each political party should give 10% nomination to women and all political parties should come forward on this common platform to ensure more women participation in legislature (Author's Interview 2008). Such kind of gender specific and gender-neutral policies will lead to more egalitarian participation in politics.

Nature and Characteristics of Political Parties

Women in Bangladesh are generally restricted to the household and their presence in the politics is considered a masculine public activity and that is why in Bangladesh, women are grossly underrepresented in politics and political parties (Ahmed 2005: 536). Most of the religious based political parties including Jamaat-e-Islam want to control women's rights and equality and deliberately deny women's political participation (Ibid: 538) as they do not believe in woman's leadership.

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[4] Founder Executive Director of Democracy Watch

Woman Members in the Party Hierarchy of Major Parties in Bangladesh

Party	Structures of party	Total no. of members	Woman members
Bangladesh Nationalist Party(BNP)	National Standing Committee	15	1
	National Executive Committee	164	11
Awami League	Presidium and Secretariat	36	5
	Working Committee	65	6
Jatiyo Party	National Standing Committee	31	2
	National Executive Committee	201	6
Jamaat-e-Islam	Majlis -e- Shura	141	0
	Majlish-e-Amela	24	0

Source: Ahmed, K. U. (2005). Women and Politics in Bangladesh. Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bangladesh (Hum.) Vol-50, p-536.

Taleya Rahman of Democracy Watch states that, male politicians take it for granted that politics is a matter of black money and armed hooliganism to keep pressuring voters to vote by visiting house to house. Women have not been part of this uneven political process (Author's Interview 2008). In order to capture the pooling booths, purchase of voters, motorcycles and gangster, major political parties have a preference to nominate those people who have huge black money as well as competence to manage motorcycles and musclemen. It has been observed that, women candidates are less enthusiastic to give protection to the hooligans to capture pooling booths (Ahmed 2005: 533). She also mentioned that, political parties want to be sure about the candidate's ability of winning in the election and that is why their presence remains poor in the party politics (Author's Interview 2008).

Local Government Structure and Women Participation

Local Government of Bangladesh is known as UP and women's participation at the local government is still insignificant. Article 9 of BDC states that:

> *the state shall encourage local government institutions composed of representatives of the areas concerned and in such institutions special representation shall be given, as far as possible, to peasants, workers and women (BDC 1998).*

In 1994, for the first time, 19 women ward commissioners were elected to the reserved seats of the Dhaka City Corporation. The government introduced a law of direct election of women for three reserved ward member seats to each UP. Apart from the exclusive reserved seats, women can also compete for any general seats. 43,969 woman candidates contested in the 1997 UP direct elections for 12,723 word member seats reserved for women (Ahmed 2005: 533-535).

Elected Women Chairperson to the Union Parishad of Bangladesh (1973 2003)

Year	Total Union Parishad	Women candidates	Elected Women Candidates
1973	4352	Not available	1
1977	4352	Not available	4
1984	4440	Not available	4
1988	4440	79	1
1992	4443	115	15
2001	4443	102	20
2003	4443	232	22

Source: Ahmed, K. U. (2005). Women and Politics in Bangladesh. Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bangladesh (Hum.). Vol-50, p- 534.

Hossain, head of Power and Participation Research Centre (PPRC) found that, in the men dominated UP, woman ward members hold subordinate position and cannot express their views. Advocate Salma Ali of Bangladesh National Women's Lawyers Associations (BNWLA) alleges:

> *many women elected through quotas were subjected to sexual harassment by their male counterparts and were looked down upon as second category members (Ahmed 2005: 535).*

Bureaucratic Structure & Gender Politics in Bureaucracy

It has been seen that governments perpetuated the kind of gendered policies that disempowered women within bureaucratic organization (Staudt 1997: 3-4). Men are predominant in states built on gender constructs that institutionalize their interests. A workshop was conducted with government official "Gender workshops with men" in Bangladesh.

> *Several senior male who had agreed to participate did not attend, and did not give any reason for their absence. Some of us wondered if this might be because focus was on women's issues. What is there to learn on women's issues? Seems to be the attitude (Bhasin 1997: 56).*

GoB has advertised for Health Assistant in the news paper where they mentioned that, for female candidates they have to be married and need to submit their marriage certificate but at the same time, these conditions are not applicable for men. Ain-O-Salish Kendra (ASK) sued against GoB to High Court and won the case and government was bound to re-advertise for that job. Thus they have tried to make bureaucracy more gender sensitive and gender neutral (Author's Interview 2008).

Lack of Human Rights

Human rights can be seen as "claims to set 'set of social arrangements' – norms, institutions, laws, enabling economic environment-that can be best secure enjoyment of these rights" (Elson 2002: 78). We need information not only about the gap between men and women in their enjoyment of rights but also at the level of rights they enjoyed.

It has been observed that women are regularly overlooked when they wish to make a point, they are interrupted when they speak, male speakers refer to contributions of other male speakers, but not to those of women in the meetings and conferences which is considered as a symbolic violence against women (Krais 1993: 173). Researchers have taken interview of 14 students of Dhaka University (7 ♀ and 7 ♂) who are using mobile phone and all the woman students responded that they are facing unwanted phone calls from unknowns and eve teasing and these are considered as a symbolic violence against them but the male students are not facing such kind of situation (Author's Interview 2008).

This structural system of women's subordination is underpinned by widespread violence against them. Women face frightening situations from their bedroom to their workplace, even while walking in the streets. It is a shame that in 2000 Bangladesh was ranked first in the world in wife beating (domestic violence) by their husband (UNDP 2000: 18)[5]. In her study reported in 2005 Siddiqi states that, 62 percent of rural and 52 percent of urban women experience physical and/or sexual violence (Siddiqi 2006: 206). Except for some serious cases of murder or severe physical assault domestic violence is usually not exposed publicly as exposure may make the situation worse for the women (BNWLA 2002: 17). Rape is a horrific version of violence against women. It has been found in Bangladesh that a number of cases that women were raped not only by stranger but also by their close male relatives such as paternal, maternal uncles, cousin brothers, neighbours (Ibid: 31). Rape by a husband is not recognized in Bangladesh and the issue of rape by husband is an imagination by the general public in Bangladesh. According to the Bangladesh Institute of Human Rights (BIHR), during the first six month of the year 2009, 1479 women were raped in Bangladesh. Women who have been raped face shame in front of society and sometimes due to this they suicide. They are considered as spoiled as they lost their virginity, become socially stigmatized, and therefore, it is

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[5] UNFPA Report Released in September 2000 in *Ibid.,* p. 18

difficult to arrange a marriage[6]. That is why, parents do not want to report sexual assault to police and few convictions are pursued.

Trafficking of women is not uncommon in Bangladesh. Women of poor families in a country like Bangladesh where many people live below the poverty line are often deceived by the promise of job opportunities. According to the BNWLA, approximately 7000 women and children become victims of trafficking every year in Bangladesh (BNWLA 2002: 44). A particular Bangladeshi form of violence against women is Acid violence. There were 130 cases of acid attacks on women reported in the news paper in 2005 (Siddiqi 2006: 212). Acid violence against women is still a prime issue for the human right workers.

In 17th October 2002 the daily Ittefaq reported that there were 4304 reported cases on different types of violence against women in Bangladesh. This statistics regarding violence against women is reported from the corresponding responsible local agency where it has been ensured that a lot of violence occurred against women cannot be focused for the lack of support from the victim and for social constraint. Acknowledging it though, the situation of violence against women is undoubtedly severe. That means lack of human rights, violence and threat to violence (physical, psychological) limits female's capabilities and has negative effect on governance.

Religious Fundamentalism (Fotwa) and Gender Governance

Religious fundamentalism refers to the activists of those people who literally follow the instruction of religious books. They are referring as fundamentalist or redicalist (Winter 2001). Now a day, religious language becomes political language and religious content is used instrumentally to advanced political goals (Freeman 1998:59). *Mullahs* have massive influence on today's communal politics. Fundamentalist projects give top priority to laws that focus intensively on women's bodies-on controlling their movements, sexualities, interaction with others in public and private sphere and their roles in the home, family and society. Current feminists

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[6] See also [Bangladesh War's Toll on Women Still Undiscussed, http://www.awid.org/eng/Issues-and-Analysis/Issues-and-Analysis/Bangladesh-War-s-Toll-on-Women-Still-Undiscussed, (Last viewed on 4th October 2010)]. [See Justice Denied: Marianne Scholte Questions Whether the War Crimes Tribunal will Bring Justice to Bangladeshi Women, *Forum, A Monthly Publication of Daily Star*, Volume 3, Issue 6, June 2010, http://www.thedailystar.net/forum/2010/june/justice.htm (Last viewed on 4th October 2010)].

scholars have also acknowledge that control of women's behaviour is high on the fundamentalist agenda (Winter 2001).

Rural women in Bangladesh can be victims of *fatwa* (religious judgements)[7]. From a legal and indeed from the Islamic point of view the practice of *fatwa* is misused in Bangladesh. Whenever a woman seems to cross a cultural boundary (e.g. working outside through micro-credit) she risks becoming subject to a *fatwa* (Rozario 2006: 370). Neither *shalishes* nor local elites have any legal authority to punish (Shehabuddin 1999: 1016). *Fatwas* have also been used to express local objections to women's increasing access to credit, employment and educational opportunities outside the home (Ibid: 1019). In Bangladesh one union namely *Kalikpur* located in the Madaripur district, women are still prohibited from going to the pooling centres because of local fatwa's declaring that it is not appropriate for women to vote (Ahmed 2005: 529). Poor village women have little alternative but to accept these specious verdicts (Ibid: 1029). In 2005, a total of 46 *fatwas* were reported in the different news papers (Siddiqi 2006: 210). In addition, fundamentalists also fomented attacks on NGOs - including the women's credit programme of Grameen Bank, the educational programmes of Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee (BRAC) as well as community based family planning activities as a part of their struggle for political power in the country (Freeman 1998: 64). At 12th May 2011, High Court Division has given their verdict regarding Fatwa where it has been mentioned that only educated men could give Fatwa regarding religious issue but would not able to impose any punishment (Prothom Alo 13th May 2011, p 1).

Land Rights System for Women in Bangladesh

Rights are defined here as claims that are legally and socially recognized (Agarwal 1996: 268) and women need independent land right for welfare, efficiency, equality and empowerment. Land rights can reduce household risk of poverty and destitution. Women with land strengthen economic wellbeing, sense of empowerment which linked with economic

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[7] Basically, in Islam, *fatwa* means a religious edict pronounced by a *Mufti* or an Islamic scholar. The term *fatwa* in Islamic legal parlance refers to a clarification of an ambiguous judicial point or an opinion by a jurist trained in Islamic law. In Islamic jurisprudence, a *fatwa* is "an opinion on a point of law rendered by a *mufti* (legal consultant) in response to a question submitted to him by a private individual or by *qadi* (religious judge, magistrate)". Shehabuddin, E., "Contesting the Illicit: Gender and the Politics of Fatwas in Bangladesh", *in Signs*, *Institutions, Regulation and Social Control,* Volume, 24, No. 4, Sept 1999, p. 1015.

equality, to speak and walk, strong fallback position, bargain power, self confidence, ability of change oppression, participation in public decision making bodies which leads to challenge social and political inequalities (Agarwal 1996: 271-277).

The land rights of women is not equal as men in Muslim and Hindu inheritance law and it is very common in Bangladesh that married sisters feel shy and do not claim father's property as they think their brothers may feel bad of it. Cultural constructions of gender, including the definition of how a "good" sister should behave, and the wide spreading feeling that it is "shameful" for a sister to claim her share (Agarwal 1996: 280). Therefore, when they become widowed women following their husband's death, they turn into the most vulnerable group. Therefore vulnerability is closely linked with asset ownership. The more assets people have, the less vulnerable they are and the greater the erosion of people's assets, the greater their insecurity (Moser 1998: 3). In Bangladesh, it is really difficult to change religious law but through implementation of constitutional law government can ensure rights on land both for Muslim and Hindu and other women minorities (Majumder 2001: 26).

Gender bias Government Budget

Government budgets are important mediators of gender inequality. Gender equality focus on government budgets has come from the feeling of lackness about government budget that it has not been designed and implemented in ways that promote gender equality. When government cut back on expenditure, cuts have fallen disproportionately on projects dealing with women empowerment; and that when they have restructured taxation, they have done so in ways that disproportionately increase women's tax contribution, through the introduction of sales tax, like value added tax (Elson 2004: 623-624).

If government raise in Value Added Tax (VAT) leads to a rise in price of commercial fuels used for cooking then there is likely to be a disproportionate effect on women. Poor families likely to reduce their purchase of commercial fuel in effect and make more use of fuels they can acquire without any cash payment living in subsistence economy, such as animal dung and wood. Women discriminately gather and prepare this fuel, thus paying an invisible price in terms of additional workload. If the state introduces policies that increase the direct costs to health sector

(such as introduction of fees in public hospital), then families prioritize son's health over daughters. There will be disproportionate negative impact on women health (especially pregnant women). For that reason, feminists have to engage with the politics as well as the economics of government budget.

Micro Credit, A Tool of Empowerment but Who Controls the Loan?

Micro credit has positive effect in increasing women's ability to exercise agency. In Bangladesh, a rapid fall of birth rates, improvement of child survival and schooling, reduction of gender gap, increase labour participation, users of modern contraceptives has increased due to empowerment of women through micro credit. Empirical evidence[8] on this relationships comes from evaluation studies of micro credit programmes, the largest development programme in Bangladesh today and that is believed to have strong conceptual links to women's empowerment (improvement of women position in the family relative to men, control over house hold income and assets, control over loan taken and so on which reduce subordination to men (Mahmud 2003: 577-579).

Access to credit to widowed and divorced women can reduce their vulnerabilities, resulting in lowered poverty by providing them with an income of their own. Professor Naila Kabeer pointed out, if we can assume that the woman has had some control over the loan, there may be a correlation with her overall empowerment by increased decision-making ability within the household, increased legal and political awareness, which may lead to meeting some of the strategic needs of the women (2001).

Micro credits also help to create 'social capital'. According to Putnam's (1993): "the greater the collaboration of horizontally based social institution at community level, the higher the stocks of social capital" (Moser 1998: 13). Social capital is therefore seen as simultaneously financial sustainability, poverty targeting and women's empowerment that ultimately leads to good governance for women (Mayoux 2001: 335). Through micro credit, Bangladeshi women have been able to create social capital.

In contrast, Gupta (1996) question the empowerment contribution of credit to rural women in Bangladesh illustrates the high degrees of male control over loans, undermining women's capacity to determine the way

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[8] Khandker, S. R. (1998). *Fighting Poverty with Micro Credit: Experience in Bangladesh.* UK: Oxford University Press.

is loan invested or its profit used (Kandiyoti 1998: 138). Another assumption is that, new cash input to the household through women are likely to be identified by household males as a resource for their use. It is also believed that women's labour burden is increased without any significant concomitant increase in control over the productive process. As a result, it is suggested that, women do not benefit from access to credit in terms of welfare outcomes.

Judiciary, Gender Justice and Governance

In Bangladesh women do not have freedom of movement to get judiciary service and the process is gender bias. Researcher has taken interview with Sanaiyya Faheem Ansari[9] and could able to find out some inequitable laws (Author's Interview 2008).

According to Muslim law, a husband can put into effect divorce right on his wife at anytime without any reason. In this case, men have unilateral supremacy. If husband has given divorce right in the marriage certificate then she can go to court and later she needs to send application to world commissioner. After 90 days, it will be effective. Muslim woman has divorce right but she has to overcome several steps. In Hindu law there is no space for divorce but has separation rule and due to no divorce right female cannot remarriage but male can exercise polygamy. In Muslim marriage, evidence of two women is equivalent to one man. Another interesting thing is Muslim woman cannot marry with a Hindu man unless he does not change his religion (Author's Interview 2008).

In Muslim law, there is no scope of guardianship for women. Even, father is alive, but he is not accomplishing any responsibilities, will get invisible guardianship!! Mother can get custody for certain period only (Author's Interview 2008).

In case of asset right, Muslim daughter will get 1/3 and son will get 2/3 of their father/mother assets. Wife will get 1/8 of her death husband's property and husband will get ¼ of his death property. If a couple has no son but has daughter, in this case daughter will not get full property of her parents. In Hindu law, girl has no rights on her father's property (Author's Interview 2008).

According to article 70 and 71 of Criminal Procedure Code, if court summons against a person and in absence of that person, only adult men

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[9]Advocate of Bangladesh Supreme Court and Coordinator – Gender Social Justice Unit, ASK.

of that family will be able to take it. If there is no adult men then authority will hang that summons at the gate of that house but no woman of that family is entitle to receive that paper (Author's Interview 2008).

In a report of 'Gender Dimensions in Development, Statistics of Bangladesh 1999' reveals that 2.7% women are engaged as district judge and equivalent position. 10.1% are engaged as additional district judge, 9.3% as sub-judge, 11.3% as senior assistant judge and 12.5 as assistant judge (p. 86). In Bangladesh Bar Council 18.6% women were registered advocates (p. 90) and there were 8.9% women registered advocates in Bangladesh Supreme Court Bar Association (Ibid).

In a patriarchal society like Bangladesh, who are the policy makers, law maker, justice, lawyers? It is men who are doing this and definitely men will serve their interests. If we see the above statistics we will find the ration of women participation in judicial process, then it will be easy to understand this discrimination which is playing anti role to ensure good governance especially for women.

Media and Gender Governance

Media has an important impact on our day-to-day life. Every day we are watching lot of advertisements in the television. Giti Ara Safia Chowdury[10] in an interview states her experience while she was preparing an advertisement for a milk company. She wanted to use a mother who was offering a glass of milk to her daughter. But owner of that milk company expressed that, this is not our practice and pressed her to change the concept and she was bound to use a boy who was at first taking a glass of milk and then her sister was taking glass of milk from mother (Author's interview 2008). Professor Giti Ara Nasrin of Dhaka University, express that, some advertisements are creating negative impact on society. Such as, in an advertisement *Raduni* spices, where mother is telling her son to bring a good cook [cum wife] for him. That means she is shaping role of wife who will cook for her husband and creating negative impact on society (Author's Interview 2008).

4.1. Progress of Gender Governance in Bangladesh

GoB, NGOs and civil society have given weight on gender governance but there is slight progress in governance relation to gender. Here I have mentioned few progresses which are as follows:

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[10] Former Advisor of Care Taker Government who is also owner of an Ad firm.

Major achievements at a glance 2001-2005

- Bangladesh has ratified the CEDAW Convention except Articles (2) and 16.1(c). Withdrawal of reservation on these two Articles is under review.

- Women's participation in Local Government is another arena of political participation. Women have reserved seats in all Municipal and Local Government bodies.

- Land Ministry made the provision to provide the name both of husband and wife on the document of land.

- Provide mother's name as a guardian besides the father's name in all documents.

- Pension Rule has been revised to make it women-friendly.

- Recruitment of the women in Police Force, Army, Air Force and Navy.

- Appointment of women judges in the High Court Division of Supreme Court.

- Made the provision of 4 months maternity leave instead of 3 months.

- Bangladesh has ratified ILO Convention No.100 which is related to equal remuneration for equal work for both the sexes.

- Developed a National action plan for promoting proper image of women in media.

- Newspaper brings special pages on women on a weekly basis.

- Media now reports events of violence against women.

- Making Education free for girls' unto Grade 9 outside the metropolitan area from January 2002 with a view to promote girls' education and reduce the drop-out rate.

- Gender issues have been incorporated in the training curriculum of all Government Training Academy with a view to make the entire government machinery more responsive to gender concerns.

- To combat the heinous crime of acid throwing to the victims of which are mostly women and children, two Laws are enacted in the year 2002 under the title of "Acid Control Act 2002" and "Acid Crimes Control Act 2002".

- "The Suppression of Violence against Women and Children Act 2000" has been amended in the year 2003 imposing more stern punishment for the offenders.

- Establishment of One Stop Crisis Centre for providing medical, legal and police assistance to women victims of violence, especially of rape and acid violence.

- Speedy Trial Tribunal Act 2002 has been in operation which also tries the sensational cases of violence against women with highest priority.

- Formulation of "National Plan of Action against the Sexual Abuse and exploitation of Children including Trafficking (SEACT) in the year 2002 with view to protect children from all sorts of sexual exploitation.

- Increasing the women's seats in the national parliament to 45 from the immediate previous number of 30.

- ASK is working in eleven districts through training, gender justice, popular

> theatre and rape, fatwas, hilla marriage, marriage without registration, early marriage have been reduced and awareness among male and female, organizational development, capacity building, female participation in the *salish* have been increased (Author's Interview 2008).
>
> ● Democracy Watch has established "gender and governance" training to make young people (both man and woman) more gender sensitive (Author's Interview 2008).
>
> *Source: Bangladesh Country Paper 2005*

6.1. Policy Recommendations and Conclusion

The sufferings of women are viewed by literature as a noble gesture. That is why the folktales of Bangladesh are full of stories of self-sacrificing women. The ideal woman in folklore is the woman who sacrifices herself without any protest for the benefit of her husband and father and, of course, for her children. The folktales of Bangladesh points out the fact that women are destined to suffer (Ameen 2005).

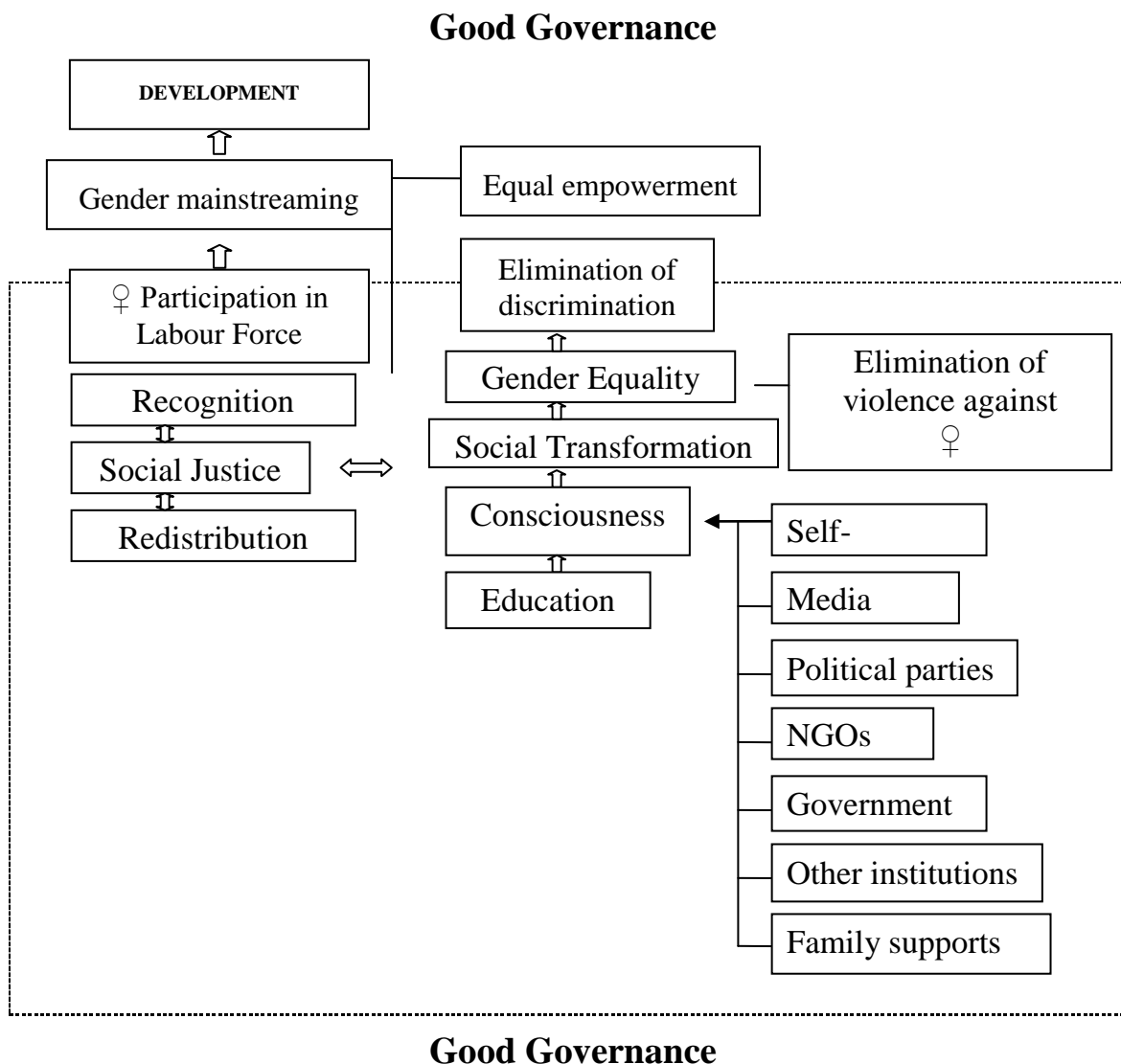**Good Governance**

Good Governance

Fig: Steps to development through gender mainstreaming ensured by good governance.

From the above flow chart, we can explain the development as an integrated process of gender equalizing and consciousness building components of the society. At first, we must have to build up the consciousness among the people, then with this matured conscious social –body we would be able to transform the very masculine attitude from every institute of the society. For this expected social transformation, according to Nancy Fraser, we have to ensure the social justice through applying the recognition and redistribution concepts. Social transformation will ensure the gender equality, thereby equal empowerment, elimination of discrimination and of violence against women. These will help the society to reach in a more normally skewed labour participation whereas then we can achieve gender mainstreaming and eventually the development. In operating the process of this development, good governance must be applied in each and every sector of the channel mentioned above.

Men do not think themselves as gendered being and that is why policy makers and development practitioners both (♀ and ♂) misunderstood gender as women issue. Achieving gender equality is not possible without changes in men's lives as well as women's but vital is to focus on male. Working through institutions (familial, educational, religious and cultural) that help to socialize boys into men, creates an entry point for development practitioners concerned with increasing men's commitment to gender equality. Such work offers the possibility of reconstructing masculinity and creating new models and identities for men that will enable and encourage them to work towards gender equality and there for more effective model for development which will ensure good governance for women. For that, increasing attention is being given to identify and challenging the barriers that prevent women from participating fully in the political process, with the aim of creating a critical mass of women in positions at all levels. In a similar vein, encouraging men to invest time and energy in changing the gender status quo for example it has been argued that men are likely to listen to men, including when it comes to talking about gender. That is why, GoB has taken initiative to educate influential male religious leaders to make family planning programme successful. Need more male – inclusive strategies for change, and to put the man in to humankind in gender and development.

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