



# ADVANCING GENDER EQUITY IN SCHOOL LEADERSHIP: POLICIES AND PATHWAYS FOR WOMEN LEADERS IN BANGLADESH

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## ABOUT THE LEARNING CYCLE ON INCREASING WOMEN'S REPRESENTATION IN SCHOOL LEADERSHIP

This case study is a result of the KIX EMAP Learning Cycle "Increasing Women's Representation in School Leadership". Facilitated by Dr Fenot Aklog and Dr Cathryn Magno, this Learning Cycle ran from 18 September 2024 to 28 February 2025. The course equipped participants with the conceptual and analytical tools for understanding conditions that promote and serve as barriers to the recruitment, development, and retention of women in school leadership roles. Sixteen national teams took part in this Learning Cycle, including Albania, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Indonesia, Kyrgyz Republic, Maldives, Moldova, Nepal, Pakistan (Punjab), Pakistan (Sindh), Philippines, Sri Lanka, Timor Leste, Ukraine, Uzbekistan and Vietnam.



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## LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

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<b>ADB</b>	Asian Development Bank
<b>BANBEIS</b>	Bangladesh Bureau of Educational Information and Statistics
<b>BCS</b>	Bangladesh Civil Service
<b>CPD</b>	Continuous Professional Development
<b>EMIS</b>	Education Management Information System
<b>FGD</b>	Focus Group Discussion
<b>GDP</b>	Gross Domestic Product
<b>GER</b>	Gross Enrolment Ratio
<b>HSE</b>	Higher Secondary Certificate
<b>MoE</b>	Ministry of Education
<b>MoPME</b>	Ministry of Primary and Mass Education
<b>NAEM</b>	National Academy for Educational Management
<b>NGO</b>	Non-Governmental Organisation
<b>PTI</b>	Primary Teacher Training Institute
<b>TTC</b>	Teachers' Training College
<b>UGC</b>	University Grants Commission

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This brief draws on rich qualitative data collected through focus group discussions and interviews conducted in four secondary schools near the slum areas of Bhashantek, Hazaribagh, Mirpur and Jatrabari in Dhaka City. We sincerely thank the head teachers, senior teachers, mothers and students for their time, openness and valuable contributions.

Special appreciation goes to the 96 students, boys and girls, who participated in separate group discussions across the four schools (each group consisting of 8 to 12 participants). Their lived experiences and thoughtful reflections were central to shaping the findings and recommendations presented in this brief.

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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Despite achieving near gender parity in primary school enrolment, Bangladesh faces a persistent gender gap in school leadership: Women hold 41% of primary and only 8% of secondary head teacher positions (Bangladesh Bureau of Educational Information and Statistics [BANBEIS], 2024). This policy brief analyses national statistics, policy frameworks and qualitative evidence from interviews with school leaders and experts, as well as focus group discussions with students and mothers.

The findings highlight key barriers to women's advancement, including the absence of secondary-level quotas, inequitable access to professional development, entrenched gender norms and limited mentorship. Enablers such as the Continuous Professional Development framework, supportive school management committees and NGO-led leadership initiatives demonstrate potential when effectively implemented.

Recommended actions include introducing secondary leadership quotas, enhancing work-life supports, ensuring transparent and gender-sensitive recruitment, creating formal mentorship networks and promoting community acceptance of women leaders. Additional priorities are strengthening gender-disaggregated leadership data systems, commissioning research on barriers, impacts and leadership practices and advancing outreach through public awareness campaigns, stakeholder collaboration and policy dialogues. Increasing women's representation is both a matter of equity and a strategic investment in building inclusive, high-performing schools that benefit all learners.

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# INTRODUCTION

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Bangladesh has made significant progress in achieving gender equality in education, for example, achieving near gender parity in primary school enrolment. When it comes to school leadership, however, the picture is very different. While women make up 66% of primary school teachers, they hold only 41% of head teacher positions. In secondary schools, the gap is even wider, with only 30% of teachers and 8% of head teachers being women (Bangladesh Bureau of Educational Information and Statistics [BANBEIS], 2024).

This underrepresentation matters because research shows that having more women in leadership positions can improve school inclusivity, strengthen role modelling for girls and address gender-specific challenges in education (CONFEMEN & PASEC, 2020; Freudenberg & Davis, 2017). In Bangladesh, the gap persists despite policies and programmes that support girls' education, such as stipend schemes that have boosted enrolment (Talukder, 2011). Many girls still drop out before completing school, and few make it to higher education. This limits the number of women who can gain the qualifications and experience typically required for leadership positions, and without targeted action, the shortage of women leaders risks undermining both education quality and gender equity in schools.

This policy brief examines the factors contributing to women's underrepresentation in school leadership in Bangladesh and proposes actionable recommendations to address this gap. It draws on national statistics, policy analysis and qualitative evidence from interviews with head teachers and experts, as well as on focus group discussions (FGDs) with students to draw a comprehensive picture of the challenges and opportunities for advancing women's participation in school leadership.

## Country Context

Bangladesh is a lower-middle-income country in South Asia with a population exceeding 170 million. Its diverse geographic regions range from dense urban centres such as Dhaka to rural and hard-to-reach areas. Administratively, Bangladesh is a unitary state organised into eight divisions, which are further subdivided into districts, *upazilas* and union councils (See Appendix 1 for a map of Bangladesh). Women's representation

in school leadership varies considerably across these settings; in urban areas, 35%–40% of school leadership posts are held by women, compared to only 15%–20% in rural areas (BANBEIS, 2024).

Economic and sociocultural disparities influence opportunities for women in leadership roles. Poverty rates remain higher for women (26%) than for men (22.4%) (World Bank, 2022). Rural poverty stands at 20.5%, compared to 14.7% in urban areas, and extreme poverty rates are 6.5% in rural areas and 3.8% in urban areas (World Bank, 2022, 2023). Low income levels and financial dependence limit women's ability to pursue professional advancement in many fields (World Bank, 2022). Many women are employed in low-skilled, low-income jobs, and cultural expectations and traditional views of women as primary caregivers remain powerful barriers, restricting mobility and willingness to accept positions that require relocation to remote areas (United Nations Development Programme [UNDP], 2023). Limited professional networks and mentorship opportunities further constrain women's career progression. Similar barriers, including gender-biased hiring practices and weak recruitment systems, have been observed in other countries, including Indonesia (UNICEF Innocenti, n.d.).

## Education Context

Bangladesh's education system is organised into four main levels: pre-primary, primary, secondary and tertiary education. The Ministry of Primary and Mass Education (MoPME) oversees the pre-primary level (age 5, with a pilot for age 4+) and primary level (grades 1–5, ages 6–10), whereas secondary (grades 6–12, ages 11–17) and tertiary education fall under the Ministry of Education (MoE) and the University Grants Commission (UGC). Primary education in Bangladesh is compulsory and provided free of charge. It is delivered by government, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), and private providers, and all students receive free textbooks (BANBEIS, 2024). Secondary education includes general, madrasa and vocational streams; tertiary education includes degree colleges, technical institutes and universities.

Access to primary education is nearly universal, with a net enrolment rate of 98% and a completion rate of about 82% (BANBEIS, 2024). At the secondary level, the gross enrolment ratio (GER) is around 75%, but the net enrolment ratio is lower due to high dropout rates, particularly among girls, with about 40% leaving school before completion due to factors such as child marriage, poverty and safety concerns (BANBEIS, 2024). At the tertiary level, the GER is 21%, and women remain underrepresented, especially in STEM fields (BANBEIS, 2024). While gender parity has been achieved in primary enrolment (51% girls), disparities persist at the secondary and tertiary levels, and higher dropout rates among females limit their access to higher education and, in turn, the qualifications often needed for school leadership roles.

## Importance of School Leadership and Women in the Role

School leadership is the second-most important in-school factor affecting student achievement after classroom teaching (Leithwood et al., 2020; United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization [UNESCO], 2019). Effective leaders influence school culture, teacher performance and learning outcomes and play a key role in translating policy goals into daily practice (Heck, 1996; UNESCO, 2019).

Research from low- and middle-income countries shows that female school leaders often foster inclusive, supportive and participatory environments that benefit all students (CONFEMEN & PASEC, 2020; Freudenberger & Davis, 2017). In Bangladesh, FGDs indicate that female head teachers are perceived as more approachable, empathetic and inclusive,

qualities associated with improved mental health, attendance and engagement, particularly among girls. As one mother noted, “নারী প্রধান থাকলে অভিভাবকের সাথে কথা বলা সহজ হয়।” (When there is a female head, it is easier for parents to talk to the school).

Women leaders can be instrumental in addressing gender-specific issues such as harassment, discrimination and safety concerns, creating a stronger sense of fairness and security for female students and staff. This is reflected in the FGDs, in which one student explained, “একজন স্কুলের প্রধান যদি নারী হন তাহলে ছাত্রীদের প্রতি গুরুত্ব দেবে বেশি, ছাত্রীদের নিরাপত্তার কথা চিন্তা করবে বেশি” (If the school head is a woman, she will pay more attention to the girls and their safety). Others associated female leadership with a nurturing and protective school climate, with one girl student sharing, “জি মনে হয়, বিদ্যালয়ের প্রধান নারী, মহিলা, একজন যেভাবে তার পরিবারকে আগলে রাখেন, তিনিও আমাদেরকে ঠিক সেইভাবে আগলে রাখেন” (Yes, I think that, like how a woman protects her family, she also protects us in the same way). These local perspectives align with global and regional evidence that women leaders strengthen school climate, build community trust and raise student aspirations, fostering inclusive environments that encourage engagement even in challenging contexts (Cubillo & Brown, 2003; Oplatka, 2006; UNICEF Innocenti, n.d.).

Increasing women’s representation in school leadership in Bangladesh is therefore not only a matter of advancing gender equality but also a strategic investment in improving educational outcomes and creating more equitable, high-performing schools.

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# SCHOOL LEADER POLICIES AND PATHWAYS

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Effective school leadership in Bangladesh is shaped by the policies and procedures that govern eligibility, recruitment and professional preparation for head teacher roles. While these frameworks include some provisions to promote women's participation, significant disparities persist, particularly at the secondary level.

## Qualifications, Recruitment and Appointment

At the primary level, the 2019 Teacher Recruitment Policy mandates that 60% of new teachers be women. Head teacher appointments require teaching experience, leadership skills and, in some cases, advanced qualifications; 65% are filled through promotion and 35% through direct recruitment, with some appointed from non-cadre Bangladesh Civil Service (BCS) candidates. At the secondary level, candidates must hold advanced degrees, have substantial teaching experience and demonstrate leadership ability. As in primary schools, 65% of positions are filled through promotion and 35% through direct recruitment (MoPME, 2019).

## Training and Professional Development

Leadership training receives limited emphasis in formal preparation systems. Teachers' training colleges (TTCs) and the National Academy for Educational Management (NAEM) provide some leadership-related content, but these opportunities are neither systematic nor scaled. Historically, teachers entered leadership roles without mandatory preservice leadership training, instead receiving in-service preparation through programmes such as the Certificate in

Education (C-in-Ed) or the Diploma in Primary Education (DPEd) after appointment (Ahmed et al., 2005). The 2019 Continuous Professional Development (CPD) framework offers structured in-service training, including leadership skill development, but participation is not universal (Directorate of Primary Education, 2019).

Non-governmental organisations also provide leadership training targeted at female educators. Programmes such as the BRAC Institute of Educational Development's leadership initiative and the British Council's Connecting Classrooms project offer skills in school management, communication and decision-making, but coverage remains limited.

## Gaps in Current Policy and Pathways

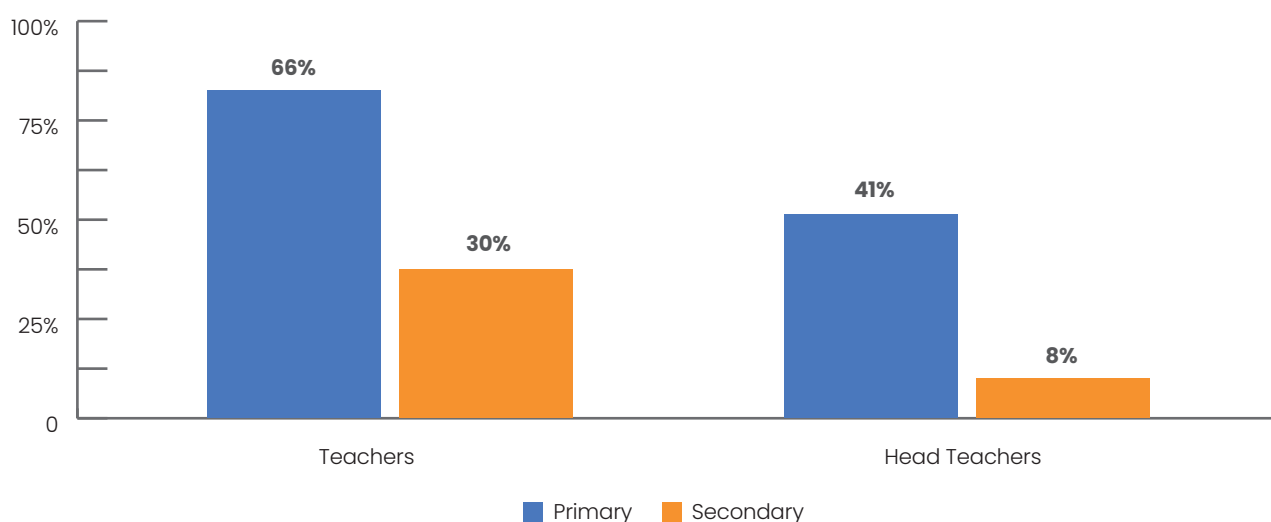
Bangladesh lacks an explicit national policy to increase women's representation in school leadership, and gender equity principles are not consistently applied in secondary school recruitment, where no quota or systematic mechanism exists to encourage female appointments. Leadership development before appointment is limited and non-mandatory, and structured mentorship or peer support systems for aspiring female leaders are scarce. The absence of a clear career progression framework from teacher to head teacher at either the primary or secondary level makes pathways to leadership less transparent and harder to navigate. The Education Sector Plan (2020/21–2024/25) acknowledges these challenges and proposes strategies such as establishing mentorship programmes and exploring gender quotas for leadership roles, though these remain at the proposal stage (MoE, 2020).

## WOMEN IN SCHOOL LEADERSHIP: BY THE NUMBERS

Women's representation in school leadership in Bangladesh remains notably lower than in the teaching workforce (see Figure 1). At the primary level, women make up 66% of government primary school teachers but only 41% of head

teachers (BANBEIS, 2024). At the secondary level, women account for 30% of teachers and just 8% of head teachers (BANBEIS, 2024).

**Figure 1: Women's Representation in Teaching and School Leadership**



Source: BANBEIS, 2024

These school leadership representation gaps are shaped by multiple structural and contextual factors, including geographic location, qualifications and access to training. Urban areas have higher representation, with women holding approximately 35% to 40% of leadership positions, compared to 15% to 20% in rural areas (BANBEIS, 2024).

Educational qualifications also influence women's advancement to school leadership roles. Women make up 77% of teachers with the lowest qualification - Higher Secondary Certificate (HSC) - and 63% of those with postgraduate degrees

(BANBEIS, 2024). This pattern suggests that fewer women obtain the advanced academic credentials that recruitment practices suggest are important for school leadership positions.

Broader educational inequities critically narrow the school leadership pipeline, limiting the number of women who can progress to leadership roles. Female students represent only 34% of those enrolled in higher secondary education, and 21% drop out before completion (BANBEIS, 2020). This reduces the pool of academically qualified women who can later pursue school leadership roles.

# WOMEN IN SCHOOL LEADERSHIP: BARRIERS AND ENABLERS

Women play a central role in Bangladesh's education system, yet their pathways into school leadership remain constricted by a mix of persistent obstacles and enabling factors. Interviews and FGDs reveal that while female leaders are active in school management and informal leadership, their progression into formal decision-making positions is often hindered by structural, cultural and personal constraints.

## System-Level Barriers

The secondary level has no quotas or recruitment mechanisms to promote women into leadership roles, and leadership training prior to appointment is rare. Opportunities for CPD are unevenly distributed, with some female school leaders reporting that head teachers repeatedly select the same individuals for training while others are overlooked.

The interviewed female head teachers reported barriers at the governance level. As one explained, “ম্যানেজিং কমিটির কেউই চাই নাই যে আমি এই পদে আসি।” (No one from the managing committee wanted me to take this position). An interviewed expert described the difficulties women face in achieving promotions:

অবশ্যই চ্যালেঞ্জের মুখোমুখি হতে হয়। প্রতিষ্ঠানে নারীর সংখ্যা খুবই কম থাকে তো এই ক্ষেত্রে পদোন্নতিতে সবাইকে পেরিয়ে অনেক যোগ্যতা থাকা সত্ত্বেও পদোন্নতি অনেক চ্যালেঞ্জ এর সম্মুখীন হয়ে থাকে। কারণ কর্মক্ষেত্রে যেসব পুরুষরা থাকে বিভিন্ন ধরনের প্রতিবন্ধকতা কি করে সেটা ধর্মব্যবহার করেই হোক বা সামাজিক প্রথা ব্যবহার করে হোক আ বা র অনেকে ক্ষমতা দেখিয়েও চাপিয়ে রাখা বা দমিয়ে রাখার চেষ্টা করে।[Undoubtedly, women face significant challenges in the workplace. Since their representation in institutions is very low, achieving promotion becomes especially difficult, even for those with strong qualifications. This is largely because men in the workplace often create barriers – whether by invoking religion, relying on social traditions or exerting power to suppress and hold women back].

The interviewed experts also noted that professional development opportunities, especially those tied to leadership preparation, are often allocated informally, limiting women's ability to gain the experience needed for promotion. They further explained that leadership positions are often informally earmarked for men, regardless of women's qualifications, due to entrenched gender norms in hiring and promotion processes.

One leader noted that part-time female staff do not receive the same maternity leave benefits as full-time staff, which can create additional strain. The absence of structured leadership development programmes for women, with mentorship occurring informally rather than through institutional support, further limits women's progression into leadership positions.

## Societal and Cultural Barriers

Traditional expectations place primary responsibility for caregiving and domestic duties on women, limiting their mobility and willingness to accept postings, particularly in remote areas (United Nations Development Programme [UNDP], 2023). As one female school leader observed, “একজন ফিমেল টিচার মানেই একজন মা এবং কোথাও না কোথাও একজন পুত্রবধু; এজন্য একটু ছাড় দিতে হয়।” (A female teacher means she is a mother and somewhere also a daughter-in-law; for this reason, we have to give some leeway).

Cultural norms also favour male leadership. As one mother in a focus group stated, “আমাদের সমাজে এখনও পুরুষদেরকেই প্রধান হিসেবে বেশি মেনে নেয়।” (In our society, men are still more accepted as heads). Another mother explained, “অনেক অভিভাবক মনে করে মেয়েরা এত বড় দায়িত্ব নিতে পারবে না।” (Many parents believe that girls cannot take on such big responsibilities).

Stereotypes about women's decision-making ability also play a role. As one female school leader shared, “নারীরা আবেগ দিয়ে সিদ্ধান্ত নেয় বলে অনেকে মনে করে, এজন্য তাদের দায়িত্ব দিতে চায় না।” (Many people think women make decisions based on emotion, so they do not want to give them responsibility).

Concerns about safety and propriety can further limit women's participation in leadership activities. A mother in a focus group noted, “মেয়েদের রাতে স্কুলের কাজে বের হওয়া ঠিক নয় বলে অনেকে মনে করে।” (Many people think it is not right for women to go out at night for school work).

Religious interpretations can also reinforce resistance to female leadership. In one boys' FGD, a participant referred to a religious saying to argue that “নারী নেতৃত্ব কোনো দেশের জন্য কখনো ভালো কিছু বয়ে আনতে পারে না।” (Female leadership never brings good to a country).

Women leaders often face heightened scrutiny of their appearance, speech and conduct as noted by one interviewed head teacher:

আমার এক সহকর্মী বোরকা পরে। আরেকজন স্যার বলছে যে আপনার আর একটু ঢিলা বোরকা পড়া উচিত। অনেক খারাপ ভাবে বলে নাই কিন্তু কথাটা নেগেটিভ অ্যাটিটিউড দিয়েছে। এটা অন্য এক শিক্ষক এসে আমাকে বলেছে। আমি সবাইকে বলে ডেকেছি কেউ যেন কাউকে অপমান করে যেন কথা না বলে এবং রাজনৈতিক আলাপ যেন না করে। [One of my colleagues wears a burqa. Another teacher told her that she should wear a looser burqa. He did not say it in an overtly offensive way, but the comment carried a negative attitude. Later, another teacher came and told me about it. I called everyone together and made it clear that no one should speak in a way that insults others and that political discussions should also be avoided].

## Individual-Level Barriers

Female leaders described facing scepticism about their capacity to lead, which at times affected their confidence early in their tenure. One explained, “প্রথম দিকে নিজের উপর আত্মবিশ্বাস কম ছিল, ভাবতাম পারব কিনা।” (In the beginning, I had little confidence in myself; I wondered if I could do it).

Balancing leadership responsibilities with family obligations was another common challenge. As one female school leader stated, “পরিবারের দায়িত্ব আর স্কুলের দায়িত্ব একসাথে সামলানো কঠিন হয়।” (Managing family responsibilities and school responsibilities at the same time is difficult).

Some leaders reported having to learn leadership skills entirely on their own due to the absence of structured guidance or mentorship. One assistant head teacher noted, “কেউ শিখিয়ে দেয়নি, নিজের অভিজ্ঞতা দিয়ে শিখেছি।” (No one taught me, I learned from my own experience).

There was also a sense of heightened scrutiny in their work performance. As one female head teacher reflected, “নারী বলে সবাই আমার কাজ বেশি খেয়াল করে।” (Because I am a woman, everyone watches my work more closely).

## Enabling Policies, Programmes and Practices

Several national policies and non-governmental initiatives provide pathways for increasing women’s participation in school leadership. The 2019 Teacher Recruitment Policy mandates that a majority of new primary-level teachers be women and prioritises female applicants for head teacher positions, thereby expanding the pipeline for leadership (MoPME, 2019). Bangladesh has also implemented quotas in public-sector recruitment, including education, to increase women’s representation and address systemic biases in hiring and promotion (UNDP, 2012).

The CPD framework (Directorate of Primary Education, 2019) offers in-service training opportunities that can strengthen women’s leadership skills and readiness for administrative roles. The framework also provides structured leadership development components and encourages head teachers to

mentor and support female teachers in improving instructional and managerial skills. The National Education Policy (MoE, 2010) and CPD framework mandate the involvement of parents and community members in school decision-making through school management committees, fostering supportive environments for women in leadership.

The Education Sector Plan 2020/21–2024/25 acknowledges low female representation in leadership and recommends strategies to increase women’s participation, including exploring the feasibility of a gender quota system (MoE, 2020). This policy-level recognition signals an important shift toward addressing gender imbalances in leadership.

NGOs also play a role in creating enabling conditions. The BRAC Institute of Educational Development offers leadership training that empowers women educators to overcome personal and societal barriers, equipping them with skills in school management, communication and decision-making (Nath, 2021). The British Council’s Connecting Classrooms programme includes leadership training components that address the unique needs of women leaders (British Council, 2018). The MoE, in partnership with organisations such as the Asian Development Bank (ADB), has also provided scholarships and incentives for female educators to pursue higher qualifications, strengthening their readiness for leadership roles (ADB, 2015).

Evidence from school leader interviews also points to enabling practices within schools and professional networks. One female school leader shared, “পূর্বের প্রধান শিক্ষক অনেক সাহায্য করেছেন, তার অভিজ্ঞতা শেয়ার করেছেন।” (The previous head teacher helped me a lot and shared his experience), highlighting the role of informal mentorship in building confidence and capacity. Another explained, “ম্যানেজিং কমিটির কিছু সদস্য সবসময় পাশে থেকেছে।” (Some members of the managing committee have always supported me), showing that governance bodies can serve as allies for women leaders. Peer support networks also emerged as valuable, with one assistant head teacher noting, “অন্য নারী প্রধানদের সাথে যোগাযোগ আছে, তারা অনেক উপদেশ দেয়।” (I have contact with other female heads; they give me a lot of advice).

Addressing the barriers to women’s participation in school leadership in Bangladesh requires coordinated action at multiple levels. Systemic reforms, such as transparent recruitment, equitable access to professional development and structured leadership training, must be paired with efforts to shift societal norms that continue to favour male leadership. At the same time, the experiences of female leaders who have benefited from mentorship, supportive governance bodies and peer networks illustrate that change is possible when enabling conditions are in place. Strengthening these supports while dismantling discriminatory practices and cultural biases can create a more inclusive leadership pipeline that not only advances gender equality but also enhances school performance and student well-being.

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# RECOMMENDATIONS

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Addressing the underrepresentation of women in school leadership in Bangladesh requires a multi-pronged strategy that adapts existing policies, introduces targeted new measures and strengthens existing enabling conditions. The recommendations below are grouped thematically into actions that respond directly to the barriers and opportunities identified in the preceding analysis.

## 1. Strengthen Existing Policies to Promote Gender Equity in Leadership

- **Introduce quotas for women in secondary leadership positions.** Update the teacher recruitment guidelines to reserve a percentage of secondary school leadership positions for women. This would ensure more equitable representation and counter systemic biases that hinder women's progression into leadership roles.
- **Improve work-life balance support.** Amend the Women Development Policy to mandate flexible working hours, childcare facilities and other family support systems for school leaders. These provisions would make leadership roles more accessible to women who balance professional responsibilities with caregiving duties.
- **Enhance transparent and gender-sensitive selection processes.** Require gender sensitivity training for hiring committees and introduce accountability mechanisms to prevent bias in recruitment and promotion.
- **Promote community engagement to build acceptance of women school leaders.** Leverage the National Education Policy to implement community engagement programmes that promote acceptance of women in leadership, especially in conservative or rural areas.

## 2. Introduce New Policies to Support Recruitment, Retention and Professional Growth

- **Develop clear, inclusive recruitment criteria.** Establish transparent, gender-sensitive selection standards for leadership positions, reflecting a broad set of qualifications including teaching experience, leadership potential and community engagement.
- **Provide incentives for retention.** Offer competitive salaries, rural posting incentives and additional benefits for headteachers, with a focus on encouraging women to take up leadership roles in underserved areas.
- **Institutionalise leadership development and mentorship.** Create formal mentorship programmes and professional networks for women leaders, ensuring the participation of women in marginalised groups, including those from ethnic minorities and with disabilities.
- **Introduce flexible work arrangements.** Allow for flexible scheduling and, where feasible, remote work for certain administrative functions to accommodate family obligations while maintaining effectiveness in leadership roles.

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## AREAS FOR FURTHER INVESTIGATION

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To better understand and address the challenges of gender disparities in school leadership roles in Bangladesh, several areas require further investigation.

### Strengthen Monitoring and Evaluation Systems

- Expand the education management information system (EMIS) to monitor gender-disaggregated data on leadership roles.
- Publish annual reports on progress toward gender parity in school governance.

### Commission Research Studies to Further Understand Women in School Leadership in Bangladesh

- **Barriers to entry.** Cultural, systemic and institutional obstacles to leadership, especially in secondary education.
- **Impact of women leadership.** Comparative studies on male vs female leaders' effects on student learning, enrolment and retention (particularly for girls) and school climate and community involvement.
- **Perceptions and biases.** Stakeholder views on women leaders and biases affecting their career progression.
- **Leadership practices.** Case studies of successful women leaders' styles, strategies and community influence.
- **Professional development.** Evaluation of leadership training programmes' relevance for women.

### Advance Outreach and Engagement in Support of Increasing Representation of Women in School Leadership

- **Stakeholder collaboration.** Work with women's organisations, universities, teacher unions and other education stakeholders to codesign leadership development programmes tailored to women's needs.
- **Public awareness campaigns.** Share success stories of female school leaders through media and community platforms to counter stereotypes and increase acceptance of women in leadership.
- **Policy dialogues and forums.** Create spaces for policymakers, educators and civil society to review evidence, exchange experiences, and build consensus on reforms such as quotas or dedicated professional development funding for women.

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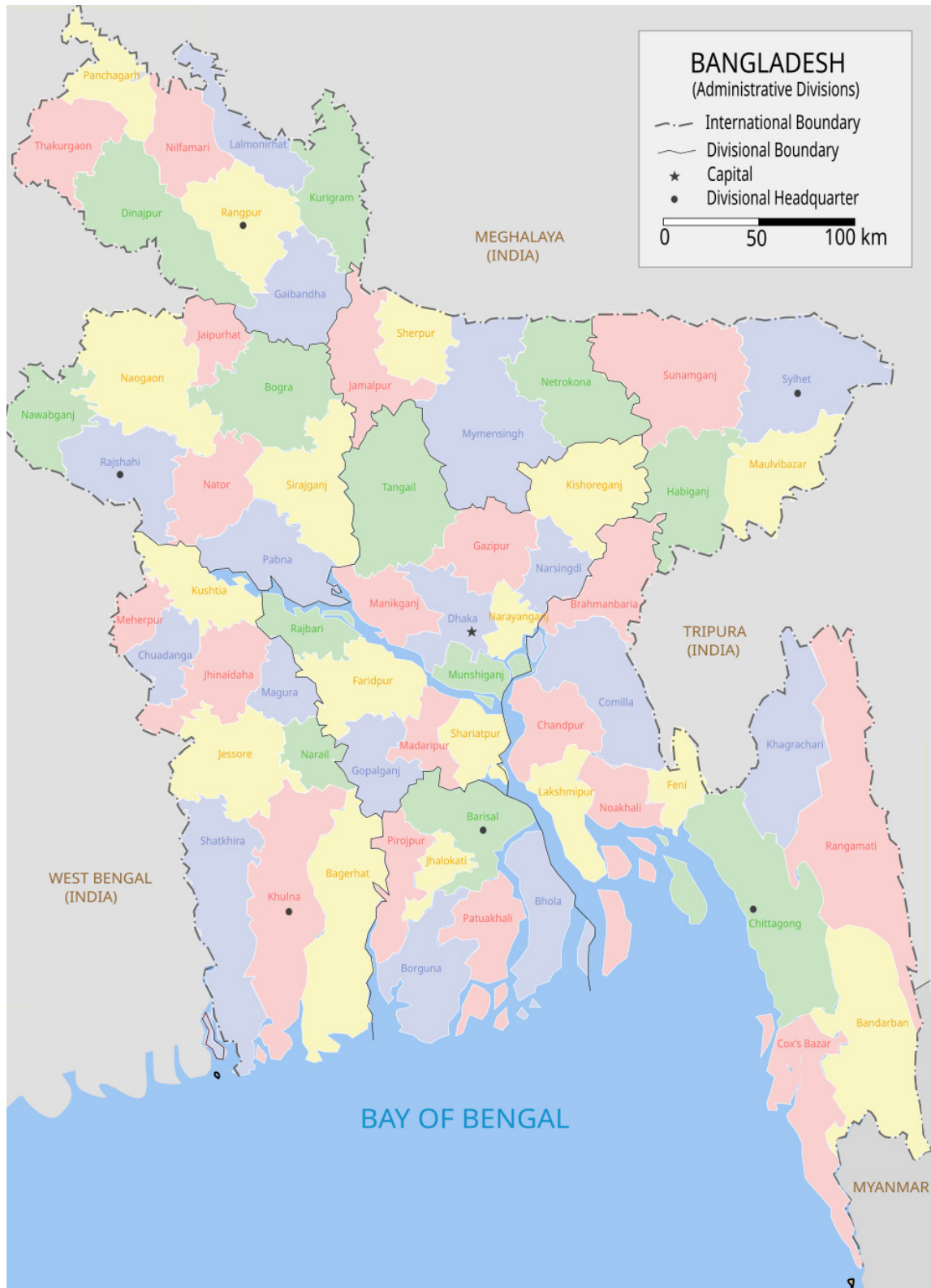
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# APPENDICES

## Appendix 1: Map of Bangladesh

Figure A1: Map of Bangladesh



Source: Armanaziz, 2007

## Appendix 2: Girls' Enrolment and Dropout Rates

**Table A1: Percentage of Girls' Dropout from Primary, Secondary and Higher Secondary Level Education in Bangladesh, 2009–2018**

Year	Primary Level		Secondary Level		Higher Secondary Level	
	National Enrolment Rate of Girls	Percentage of Girls' Dropout	National Enrolment Rate of Girls	Percentage of Girls' Dropout	National Enrolment Rate of Girls	Percentage of Girls' Dropout
2009	93.90	45.01	54.01	64.93	17.81	42.48
2010	94.80	39.94	55.09	53.57	19.60	37.88
2011	94.90	29.70	59.94	56.43	21.40	34.80
2012	97.70	26.20	63.58	52.36	24.98	23.29
2013	97.30	21.40	64.16	48.89	28.40	23.16
2014	97.70	20.90	67.74	47.67	27.82	17.05
2015	97.70	20.40	71.85	45.92	26.24	24.60
2016	97.96	19.20	73.10	42.19	36.25	23.83
2017	97.97	18.85	74.38	41.52	36.37	22.99
2018	97.85	18.60	74.68	40.19	33.90	21.21

Source: BANBEIS, 2020

## Appendix 3: Summary of Primary Data Collection

The policy brief drew on five interviews and nine FGDs. Interviews were held with three school leaders (head teachers and assistant head teachers) from two schools and with two university-based experts (a professor and a lecturer). FGDs were conducted with 38 female students, 43 male students and 25 mothers across four schools.

**Table A2: Data Collection by Location and Type**

Data Collection Method	Participant
<b>School leader interviews</b>	Head teacher, Pogose Laboratory School
	Head teacher, Muklika High School
	Assistant head teacher, Muklika High School
<b>Education expert interviews</b>	One professor and one lecturer, Jagannath University
<b>Focus group discussions with female students</b>	8 students, Pogose Laboratory School
	12 students, Muklika High School
	10 students, Muktijodhya High School
	8 students, Kajjarpar High School
<b>Focus group discussions with male students</b>	12 students, Pogose Laboratory School
	9 students, Muklika High School
	12 students, Muktijodhya High School
	10 students, Kajjarpar High School
<b>Focus group discussions with mothers of students</b>	6 mothers, Pogose Laboratory School
	7 mothers, Muklika High School
	5 mothers, Muktijodhya High School
	7 mothers, Kajjarpar High School

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