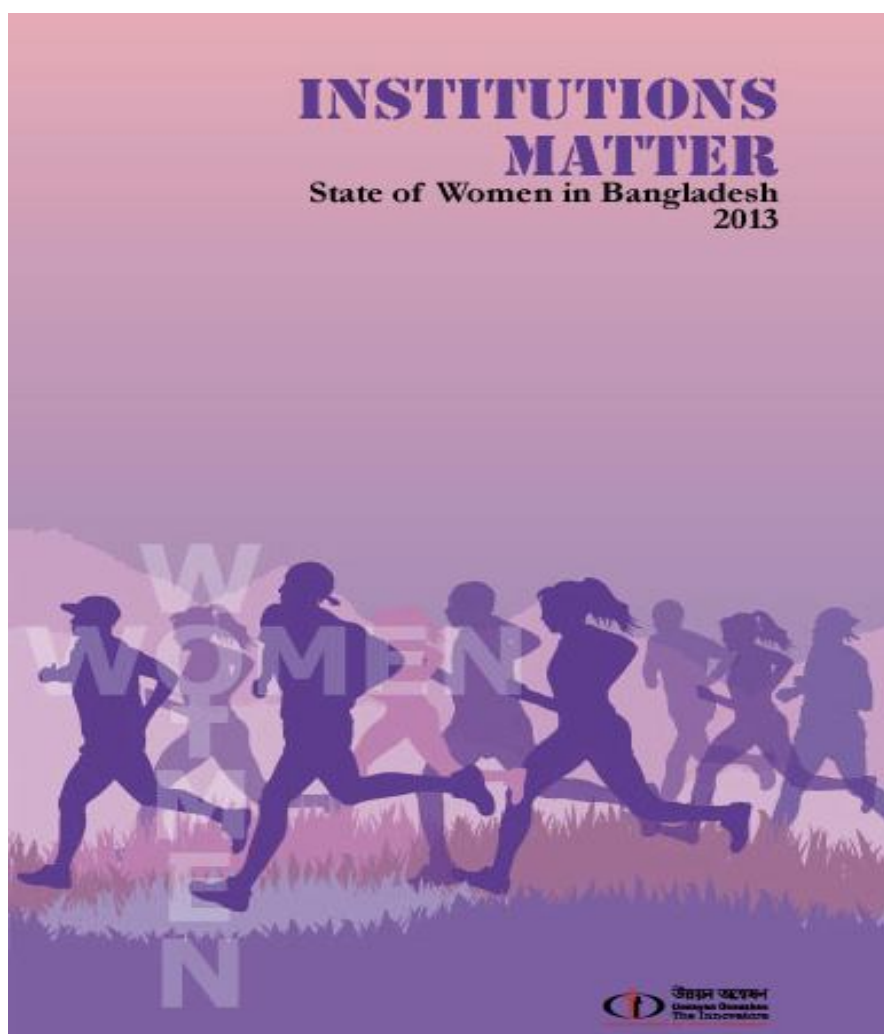


Demographic and Economic Profile of Women

K. M. Mustafizur Rahman



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DEMOGRAPHIC AND ECONOMIC PROFILE OF WOMEN

K. M. Mustafizur Rahman

1. INTRODUCTION

This chapter covers the demographic and economic variables of women as these variables have moderate effects on the development of the country. Over the years, Bangladesh has been trying to overcome the backwardness regarding women issues as well as to achieve considerable progress in socio-cultural and economic sectors for women. In spite of these achievements, a large portion of women in this country have yet to be empowered to participate actively in the social, cultural, economic, and political sectors. Discrimination of gender is still there in all spheres of life, as indicated by official statistics on health, nutrition, education, employment, and political participation. The Constitution of Bangladesh guarantees equal rights to all citizens; but family matters such as marriage, divorce, custody, maintenance, inheritance, discriminative laws against women etc. are not monitored as required. The policies and programmes of the government, NGOs, and other institutions do not address the apt measures sufficiently regarding the empowerment of women.

In Bangladesh, the life of a woman is dominated by a patriarchal and patrilineal social customary system. More frequently, such a system upholds a rigid division of labour that controls the mobility, roles and responsibility and sexuality of women. Traditionally, women in Bangladesh are plagiaristic of their family status. The role of a woman includes the maintenance of her family as a social institution as well as an economic entity. Due to persistent poverty and the gradual erosion of the familial umbrella of support, however, women's roles, responsibility, and mobility are changing now. Moreover, in the recent years, an increasing awareness of the productive roles of women, mobility, and their contribution in development has been witnessed.

Like many developing nations, in Bangladesh the socio-cultural and religious constitution imposes a number of constraints on women, hampering their access to various goods and services. The ability of a girl to develop and, ultimately, their ability to live their lives in dignity are greatly interfered by gender discrimination. Women, who form almost half of the population in Bangladesh are neglected and denied from their rights in every sphere of society (Begum, 2007). From a long-term economic development perspective, discrimination against girls means that a significant proportion of the population will be unable to participate in the economy as productive adults. There are no sufficient systematic efforts that have been undertaken by the government, civil society organizations (CSOs) or non-government organizations (NGOs) yet to date. Against these backdrops, an attempt is made in this chapter to sketch the current socio-demographic and economic status of women to have a clear image to generate evidence and insights that can be used for the development of women in Bangladesh.

2. SOCIO-DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE OF WOMEN

In Bangladesh, in spite of considerable progress in the status of women, the poor status of women in family and society exists even now due to the strong patriarchal structure of the

society. These poor socio-demographic statuses of women might not only affect the social harmony but also social wellbeing in various dimensions as well. In this section, the socio-demographic status of women has been reviewed in order to gauge the improvements which seem to have taken place over time.

2.1 Population by Broad Age Group

The female elderly population (60+ years) between 2001 and 2010 has increased in a more accelerated pace than their male counterparts. The annual rate of increase of female population in old age was 1.56 per cent while 0.51 per cent was for male during the same period. This might happen due to the direct result of higher life expectancy for female than that of the male. On the other hand, child population has decreased with an annual rate of 1.75 and 1.78 per cent for the male and female population between 2001 and 2010 respectively. There is, however, an increase in the economically active population (15-59 years) for both males and females, but this increment has occurred at a slower rate (1.10 per cent) for female than their male counterparts (1.25 per cent) from 2001 to 2010. The increase in the elderly (60+) population has implications for the labour force, economy, social services and health care. Moreover, the aged part of the population will put downward pressure on labour supply along with negative implications in material living standards and public finances. Hence, creative and effective policies are urgently needed to cope up the situation in the near future.

Table 1: Population by broad age group

Year	Age Group					
	0-14 years		15-59 years		60+ years	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
2001	40.1	38.6	53.3	55.7	6.6	5.7
2002	38.6	38.0	54.7	56.4	6.7	5.7
2003	38.2	37.5	55.1	56.8	6.7	5.7
2005	37.4	36.9	55.9	57.1	6.7	6.0
2006	36.5	36.0	56.8	57.9	6.7	6.2
2007	35.8	34.2	57.4	59.4	6.8	6.4
2008	34.5	33.0	58.8	60.8	6.8	6.3
2009	34.3	32.8	58.8	60.7	6.8	6.4
2010	33.3	32.4	59.3	61.1	6.9	6.5
Rate of Increase (per cent)	- 1.75	-1.78	1.25	1.10	0.51	1.56

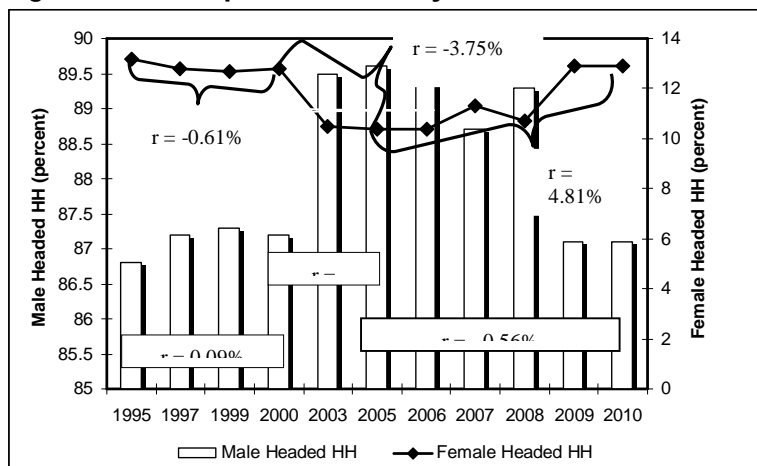
Source: Author's calculation based on the Report on Sample Vital Registration System, 2010, Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, 2011

2.2 Headship of Household

Bangladesh is generally a male dominated society; about 9 of every 10 households are headed by males. In recent times, however, some changes have taken place in the headship of household. There was an increase in the male headed household between 1995 and 2005 but it has decreased in the last five years. A completely reverse situation has been found for female generated households. More specifically, the percentage of male generated households has increased from 86.8 per cent in 1995 to 87.2 per cent in 2000 with an annual rate of increase of 0.09 per cent. This rate of increase was 0.55 per cent between 2000 and 2005. Again, this rate reduced for the next five years (i.e. 2005-2010) at a rate of 0.56 per cent. On the other hand, the percentage of female generated households has decreased from

13.2 per cent in 1995 to 12.8 per cent in 2000 at a rate of 0.61 per cent per annum whereas this rate of reduction was 3.75 per cent from 2000 to 2005. Furthermore, the percentage for female generated households during the last five years (2005-2010) has increased at an annual rate of increase of 4.81 per cent. This indicates that female empowerment and awareness about women's rights in Bangladesh has been higher in recent years than ever before.

Figure 1: Headship of household by sex

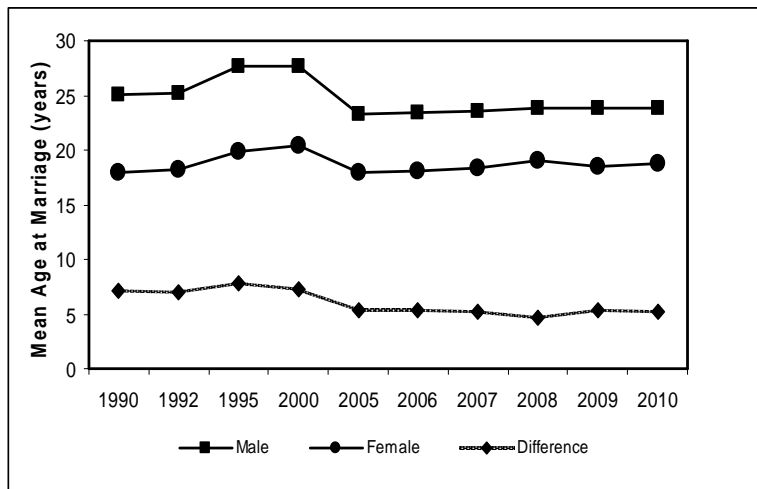


Source: Author's calculation based on the Report on Sample Vital Registration System, 2010, Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, 2011

2.3 Mean Age at Marriage

The legal age of marriage in Bangladesh is 21 years for the male and 18 years for the female. The authority is, however, rarely found to be involved in stopping child marriages and parents continue to marry their daughter secretly before the legal age. Though some progress has been found to prevent early marriages by spreading awareness, it is still frequently occurring especially in the rural areas. Poverty is a major underpinning factor to encourage early marriage.

Figure 2: Mean age at marriage by sex



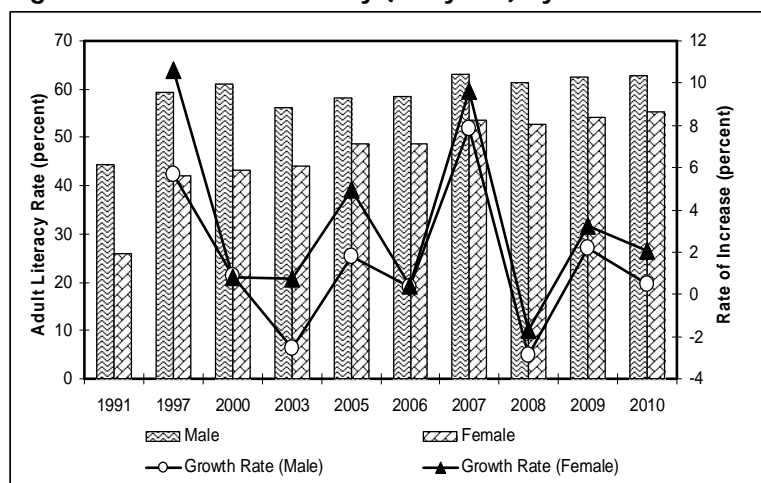
Source: Author's calculation based on the Report on Sample Vital Registration System, 2010, Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, 2011

It is apparent that the mean age of early marriage has reduced for males during the last twenty years (i.e. between 1990 and 2010) whereas for females, the mean age at marriage has increased during the same period. Moreover, the gap between the mean age at marriage of male and female has reduced during the same time period. The gap was 7.1 years in 1990, which has reduced to 5.2 years in 2010. The recent improvements in various sectors, especially those for women might be the reason for this difference.

2.4 Adult Literacy Rate (15+ years)

Considering the historical data of Bangladesh, an improvement in the percentage of rates in adult literacy is found both for male and female. The progress has, however, occurred at a slower rate than before. The rate in adult literacy¹ for the male population had increased at a rate of increase of 4.19 percent per annum during 1990-2000 whereas this rate of increase was 0.31 percent per annum for the next ten years (i.e. from 2000 to 2010). Similar results are also found in case of female adult literacy rate where this rate increased at 7.49 percent between 1990 and 2000 whereas it was 2.82 percent between 2000 and 2010. It is apparent that progress in the rate of female adult literacy has occurred at an accelerated pace than their male counterparts. Improvement in the percentage of adult literacy especially for females is the result of the satisfactory enrolment in the primary education. This increase in the enrolment of girls may be attributed to certain initiatives of the government that include stipend programmes, media outreaches, satellite and village-based schools and recruitment of female teachers (Kalene, *et al*, 2005). Despite improvements in bringing children, especially females to school, the rate of dropout in female children remains a great concern. Therefore, a revised and effective policy is needed to manage the situation.

Figure 3: Adult rate of literacy (15+ years) by sex



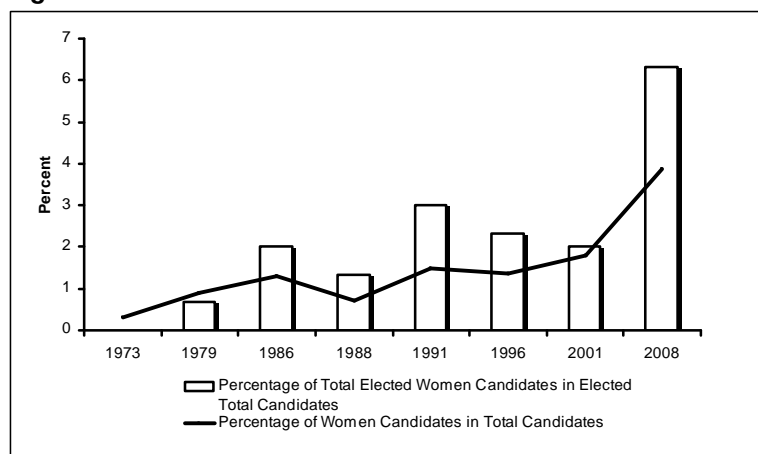
Source: Author's calculation based on the Report on Sample Vital Registration System, 2010, Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, 2011

¹ Percentage of population of age 15 years and over who write a letter to the total population of the same age group is the adult literacy rate.

3. WOMEN IN POLITICS

Generally, participation of women in the politics of Bangladesh is very limited due to various reasons such as the lack of appropriate organisational arrangements of political parties. Another reason for the low participation of women as decision- making bodies of the political parties is the persisting political culture that involves violence, use of musclemen and money. Over the last two decades, however, there has been a significant change in terms of women participation in politics. Participation of women in national election has gradually increased over time with the exception of 1988. The percentage of women candidates in national elections among the total candidates was only 0.3 per cent in 1973 which increased to 3.86 per cent in 2008. Beside this, women are participating in local government elections as well. A large number of women have contested in the union parishad and upazila elections and many of them won. The recent upazila elections have highlighted the overwhelming participation of women which ensured the reservation of female candidates as vice-chairpersons.

Figure 2.4: Situation of women in national elections



Source: Adopted from Khatun, 2009

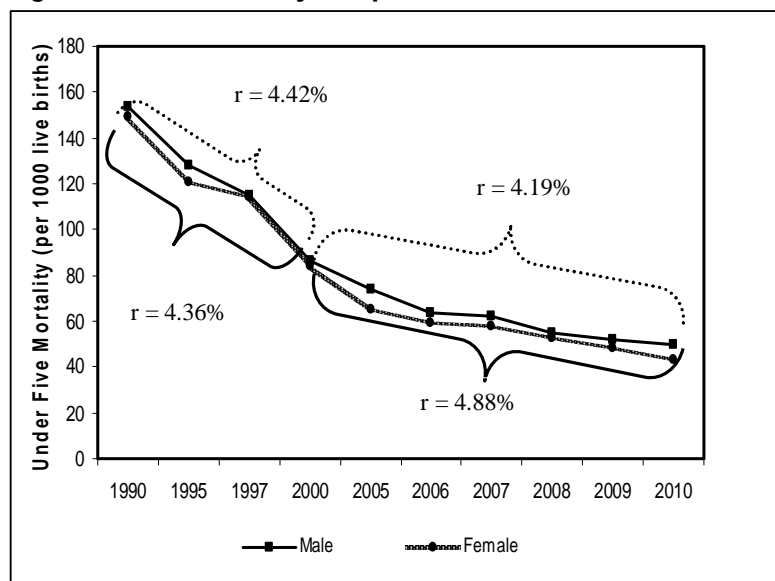
4. HEALTH STATUS OF WOMEN

Health is one of the concerning areas in the development of women not only for fundamental determinants of health care system but rather to build up a healthier nation. Hence, gender differentials in the health sector continue to exist throughout the country. The poor health status of women not only affects themselves but rather pass from generation to generation. Productivity and the opportunity to develop sustainable economies are adversely affected by the poor health. As female contains about half of the total population of the country, improvement in the health status of women is a matter of great concern. Although the lifespan of women is slightly longer than their male counterparts, they are found in a lower health status than the male. Despite this bleak scenario, improvements are being made in recent years for women's health. This section has highlighted the health status of women in order to examine the improvements which seem to have taken place over the last few years.

4.1 Child Mortality

Despite considerable progress over the past two decades, child mortality in Bangladesh is still high. The child mortality rate² for males was 154 per 1000 live births in 1990 which was reduced to 86 per 1000 live births in 2000 at a rate of 4.42 per cent per year whereas the rate of reduction was 4.19 per cent between 2000 and 2010. On the other hand, the rate of reduction in child mortality was 4.36 per cent per year between 1990 and 2000 whereas it was 4.88 per cent between 2000 and 2010 for the female. These progresses, however, do not indicate radical improvements in the recent years. This means that despite lots of programmes having been instated, the effectiveness of such programmes is not satisfactory.

Figure 5: Child mortality rate per 1000 live births



Source: Author's calculation based on the Report on Sample Vital Registration System, 2010, Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, 2011

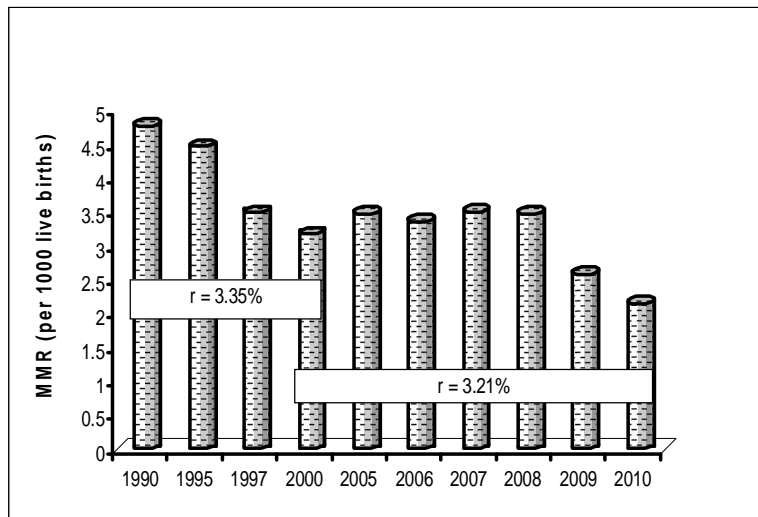
4.2 Maternal Mortality

Maternal mortality ratio³ is one of the important health status indicators of women. Though some progresses have been occurred in reducing maternal mortality over the last few decades, in the recent times, it has been occurring at a slower rate than before. The maternal mortality ratio has decreased from 4.78 per 1000 live births in 1990 to 3.18 per 1000 live births in 2000 with an annual rate of 3.35 per cent. On the other hand in 2010, the maternal mortality ratio has decreased to 2.16 per 1000 live births from 3.18 live births in 2000 and the rate of decrease was 3.21 per cent during that period. This indicates that, while the reduction of the maternal mortality ratio has decreased in numeric terms, the rate of reduction is not satisfactory compared to the previous years. Therefore, more radical activities are still needed to accelerate the progress in reducing maternal mortality ratio.

² Child mortality rate is defined as the number of deaths to children under five year of age per 1000 live births in a given year.

³ The maternal mortality ratio is defined as the number of total deaths of women due to complications of pregnancy, child birth and puerperal per 1000 live births during a year.

Figure 6: Maternal mortality ratio (per 1000 live births) by sex



Source: Author's calculation based on the Report on Sample Vital Registration System, 2010, Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, 2011 and Bangladesh Demographic Health Survey of Different Years

5. ECONOMIC STATUS OF WOMEN

Like many other sectors, women in Bangladesh are lagging behind from the men in terms of economic status. Lower access of female in the employment sector makes it difficult to establish gender equity as well. Despite the overall progress made in narrowing gender gaps, the position of women in Bangladesh like many other developing countries remains unequal to that of men. In Bangladesh, women are considered as minor players in the economy as well as secondary participants in the labour market largely because of the traditional views still held by some sections of the society regarding the role of women. Hence, female contribution to various sectors leads to a higher economic growth. The situation has changed over the last few years and women are trying to come out from their homes. As a result, their participation in the employment sector is increasing day by day. Additionally, one of the most striking phenomena of recent times has been the extension in the share of women labour force. The increasing participation of women in paid work has been driving the employment situation towards positive trends and the gender gaps in labour force have been shrinking. In this section of the chapter, an attempt is made to explore various sectors related to economic status of the female.

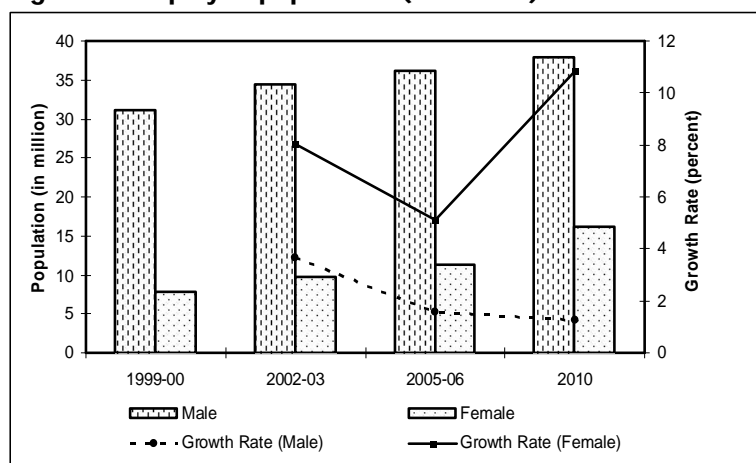
5.1 Employed Population

Bangladesh is a country with limited employment opportunities and more specifically, this is quite frequent for the female than their male counterparts. There is, however, a progress in the number of employed population⁴ over the years but it remains lower than desired. The

⁴ The employed population is made up of persons above a specified age who furnish the supply of labour for the production of goods and services. When measured for a short reference period (of one week or one day), it refers to all persons who worked for pay, profit or family gain during that period. It also includes all persons who had a job or enterprise but were absent from that job or enterprise during that period on a temporary basis: persons who during the reference period were sick, on vacation, maternity leave, strike or were temporarily laid off.

employed population for male has increased from 31.1 million in 1999-2000 to 37.9 million in 2010 with an annual rate of 2.19 percent. Although an increase in the employment status of the male population is present, such an increase has occurred at a slower rate than before. On the other hand, a reverse scenario has been found in the case of female population. The employed female population has increased from 7.9 million in 1999-2000 to 16.2 million in 2010 with a rate of 10.51 per cent per annum. Moreover, the increase has occurred at a more accelerated pace than before as well as than that of their male counterparts. This improvement in employment status of women might be the progress of other social status like education in the recent years.

Figure 7: Employed population (in million)



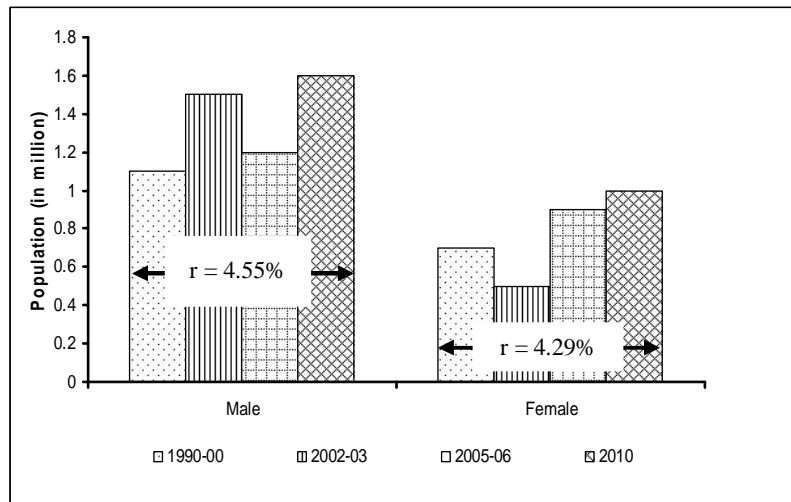
Source: Author's calculation based on the Report of the Labour Force Survey, 1999-2000, 2002-2003, 2005-2006 and 2010, Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, 2011

5.2 Unemployed Population

Despite several progresses in the percentage of employed population, the unemployed population⁵ has gradually increased over the years. The number of unemployed males has increased from 1.1 million in 1999-00 to 1.6 million in 2010 with an annual rate of 4.55 per cent. On the other hand, the number of unemployed females has increased to 1 million in 2010 from 0.7 million in 1999-00 with a rate of 4.29 per cent per annum. Lack of job opportunities along with socio-cultural and institutional barriers is responsible for the increase of the unemployed population, especially for females. Unless ensuring the participation of women in employment sector is taken seriously, development of the country might be elusive or distant dreams. Therefore, the state should be creative enough in renewing and revising its strategies and programmes to cope with the situation so that the development of the country can happen at a better pace.

⁵ The unemployed population is made up of persons above a specified age who are available to, but did not furnish the supply of labour for the production of goods and services. When measured for a short reference period, it relates to all persons not in employment who would have accepted a suitable job or started an enterprise during the reference period if the opportunity arose, and who had actively looked for ways to obtain a job or start an enterprise in the near past.

Figure 8: Unemployed Population (in million)



Source: Author's calculation based on the Report of the Labour Force Survey, 1999-2000, 2002-2003, 2005-2006 and 2010, Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, 2011

5.3 Main Economic Activity

It is quite evident that, women are largely involved in the non-monetised sector as well as in subsistence activities. Participation of women in the labour market has increased with the increasing poverty, the breakdown of the supportive kinship umbrella as well as due to the demand generated by some sectors. Over the years, women have experienced some major changes in the labour market, primarily in terms of the nature of jobs and opportunities. The main economic activity of a population is largely varies according to their sex. More specifically, agricultural occupations account for the single biggest group for the male whereas it is household work for the female. Over the years, the main occupational status of women has changed. It is apparent that the participation of male populations in agricultural occupations has decreased from 33.50 per cent in 2001 to 30 per cent in 2010 with a rate 1.16 per cent per year. Additionally, male participation in other sectors has increased over the years. The rate of increase was higher in industrial sector (11.23 per cent) followed by transport and communication sector (10.75 per cent), business sector (5.68 per cent) and household work (3.26 per cent). On the other hand, for females, there is a decrease in household work during 2001 to 2010 (2.10 per cent) while there is an enormous increase in the percentage of female in agricultural sector (30.26 per cent) followed by transport and communication sector (13.33 per cent), industrial sector (11.85 per cent) and business sector (6.67 per cent) during the same period. Decrease in female participation of household work and increase in other occupational sectors indicates that female are more likely to come out from their traditional work i.e. household work as well as want to engage themselves in other work like agriculture, industrial, transport & communication and business in order to generate their income along with their family income. Moreover, the above discussion on women's labour mobility and the nature of female labour force participation suggests that sectorial growth and supply push factors have increased the participation of women from home-based to market-oriented activities. Therefore, involvement of women in more productive and remunerative sectors is needed with proper training along with the education of female labourers.

Table 2: Main economic activity by sex

Year	Male				
	HH Work	Agriculture	Industry	Transport and Communication	Business
2001	2.66	33.50	1.95	2.80	10.38
2005	3.60	35.39	3.04	4.26	10.75
2007	3.79	33.93	3.16	4.34	10.90
2008	3.63	30.29	2.90	4.35	12.40
2009	3.14	30.03	3.21	4.44	13.65
2010	3.44	30.0	3.92	5.51	15.69
Rate of Growth	3.26	-1.16	11.23	10.75	5.68
Year	Female				
	HH Work	Agriculture	Industry	Transport and Communication	Business
2001	63.86	4.09	0.60	0.05	0.35
2005	52.86	13.69	1.17	0.04	0.29
2007	53.98	13.57	1.25	0.06	0.33
2008	54.69	11.96	0.98	0.06	0.39
2009	52.56	12.82	1.20	0.07	0.42
2010	51.86	15.23	1.24	0.11	0.56
Rate of Growth	-2.10	30.26	11.85	13.33	6.67

Source: Author's calculation based on the Report on Sample Vital Registration System, 2010, Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, 2011

6. CONCLUSION

Institutions along with the patrilineal system in Bangladesh have given high value to the males as potential providers as well as perpetuators of family names over the years. They receive better treatment and access to education, nutrition, and health care. Females, on the other hand, are commonly viewed in their reproductive roles giving an auxiliary status as economically dependents. However, recently, an increasing awareness has been witnessed in the productive roles and mobility of women as well as their contribution to development.

In spite of these progresses, a large portion of women in Bangladesh have yet to be empowered to participate actively in the social, cultural, economic, and political life of the country. Discrimination of gender is prevalent in all spheres of life as indicated by official statistics on health, nutrition, education, employment, and political participation. Lack of the choice in creative strategies, departing from the orthodoxy, suiting to the context and the capacity to delivery are the major obstacles to the development of the country. Moreover, these factors are responsible for not achieving such targets to reduce gender discriminations. The results of this chapter indicate not only the degree of socio-economic and demographic inequality by sex but also its pattern, which should be considered in formulating policies and programmes for the betterment of the country. The study reveals that gender inequality in the socio-economic and demographic sectors is persisting as well as the fact that the development of the country might be difficult unless proper efforts are accelerated.

It is difficult to say that a significant success has been achieved regarding the status of women in various sectors in Bangladesh. Hence, the position of women has changed a bit. Moreover, the family obstacles have also lessened compared to previous times. Women nowadays are working in industries (especially garment industries) and gradually feeling more

interest in acquiring an education. Furthermore, poverty has a positive influence to break down the social barriers for women by taking part in different economic activities in the society. Poor families will be benefited if the women become income generators. The participation of women in the labour market, especially in the garments industry has become the main source of foreign currency. Therefore, the status of women should be improved for the broader perspective of development in the country. Access of women to information and support, mobility, visibility and control over production cannot be materialised unless the instruments of bringing changes in the existing system dealing with development in women issues include macro-policies, resource allocation, regulation & monitoring, public awareness etc. Theoretically, some of the strategic documents and policy papers are sound and seem to be implementable, but in reality, the outcomes are yet to be discernible. The government should be creative and effective enough to take radical programmes or policies as well as to ensure its implementation.

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Appendix - A

Mathematical Equation

$$P_l = P_b (1 + ry)$$
$$\Rightarrow r = \frac{1}{y} \left(\frac{P_l}{P_b} - 1 \right)$$

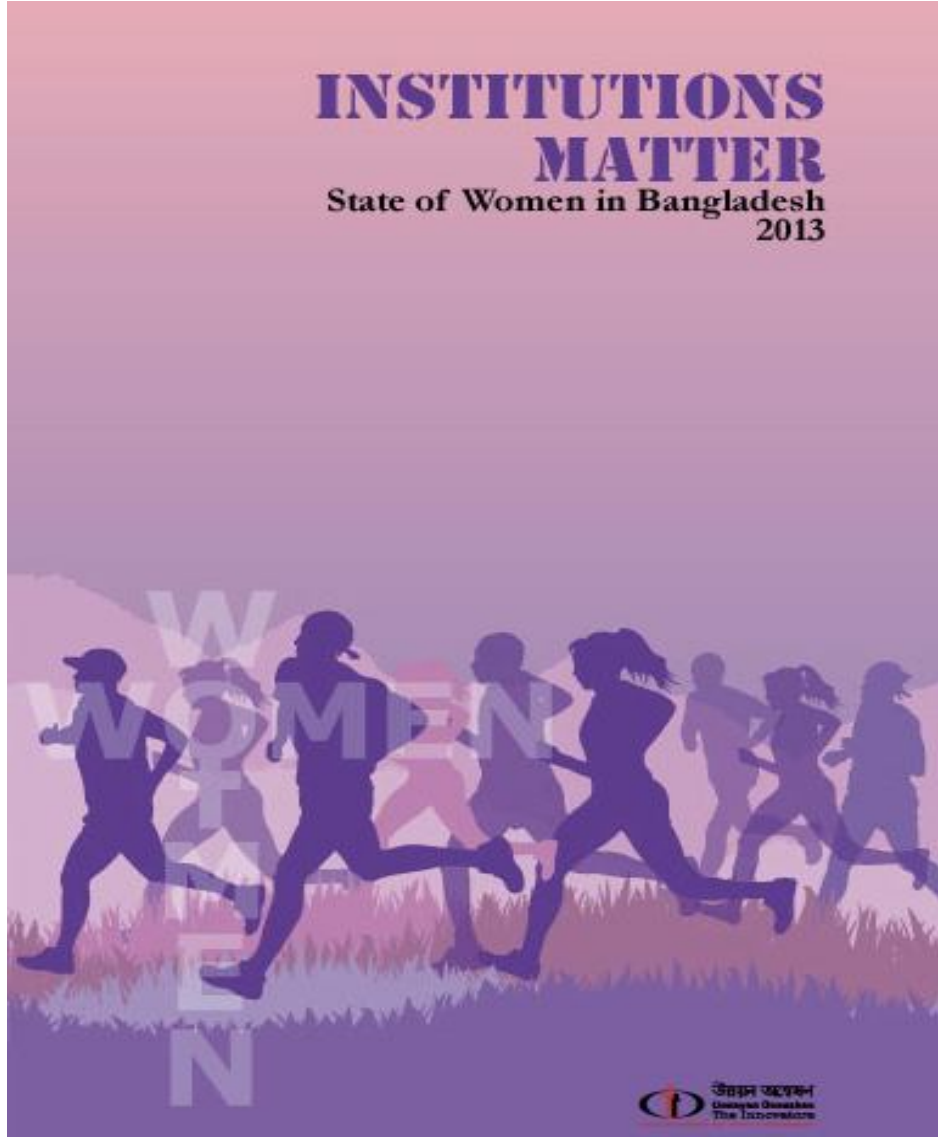
Where,

P_l = Value of the launch year;

P_b = Value of the base year;

y = Number of years between launch year and base year;

r = Rate of growth



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