



# RAPID REVIEW OF GENDER MONITORING NETWORK



© 2021 UN Women. All rights reserved.

The views expressed in this publication are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily represent the views of UN Women, the United Nations or any of its affiliated organizations.

Author: Julaikha bente Hossain

Design: MAASCOM

# RAPID REVIEW OF GENDER MONITORING NETWORK



UN WOMEN BANGLADESH COUNTRY OFFICE  
MAY 2021



# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>ACRONYMS</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>EXECUTIVE SUMMARY</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>1. INTRODUCTION</b>	<b>12</b>
1.1 Background	12
1.2 Objectives of the Review	14
1.3 Methodology	14
<b>2. KEY FINDINGS</b>	<b>18</b>
2.1 The Current State of the GMN Member Organizations in COVID-19 Pandemic	18
2.1.1 GMN Organizations' Interests/Priorities and Engagement in Response to COVID-19	18
2.1.2 Challenges and Needs of GMN Organizations in responding to COVID-19 Crisis	20
2.2 Feedback on Gender Monitoring Network (GMN)	24
2.2.1 Usefulness of GMN Activities to Member Organizations	24
2.2.2 GMN's Collaboration Possibilities	28
2.3 Expectation and Suggestion	28
2.3.1 GMN's Prospective Pathways	28
2.3.2 GMN's Possible Scope of Work and Sustainability	31
<b>3. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS</b>	<b>36</b>
3.1 Conclusion	36
3.2 Recommendations	36
<b>ANNEX</b>	
Annex 1: Sampling details for the study	41
Annex 2: List of GMN Organizations for Online Survey and Questionnaire	42
Annex 3: List of Key Informants and Questions Set	48
Annex 4: List of FGDs and Consultations and Questions	50
Annex 5: Additional Figures	52

## List of Figures

Figure 1:	Overview of Data Sources and Participants	15
Figure 2:	Areas of Focus of the GMN Organizations in Response to COVID19 Crisis (%)	18
Figure 3:	Intensity of challenges faced by GMN Organizations due to COVID-19	21
Figure 4:	Percentage distribution of organizations reported pressing needs in their operations in COVID-19 crisis	22
Figure 5:	How far do you feel GMN activities are in line with the priorities of your organization/your focus area/target group?	25
Figure 6:	Percentage distribution of GMN organizations regarding their feedback on usefulness of GMN activities	26
Figure 7:	Have you accessed and used knowledge products /resource and information circulated by UN Women to GMN?	52
Figure 8:	Did you make use of the advocacy brief produced by GMN in your response efforts?	52
Figure 9:	Did you make use of the Orientation on GBV Data collection during pandemic?	52
Figure 10:	How often would you like to receive information from GMN?	53
Figure 11:	Participants opinion on continuation of GMN	53

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This report, 'Rapid Review of Gender Monitoring Network', was supported by UN Women Bangladesh Country Office (UNW BCO) and developed by Ms Julaikha Bente Hossain Independent Consultant. This review report was developed with information received from 41 participants from 21 Gender Monitoring Network (GMN) member organizations and related participants associated with GMN. Ms. Shoko Ishikawa, Country Representative and Ms. Punna Islam, Coordination and Partnership Officer, UN Women Bangladesh provided the overall guidance and supervision to conduct the review.

## ACRONYMS

ASK	Ain-O-Shalish Kendro
BANDHU	Bandhu Social Welfare Society
BLAST	Bangladesh Legal Aid and Services Trust
BNSK	Bangladesh Nari Shramik Kendra
CDD	Centre for Disability in Development
CA	Christian Aid
CIC-BD	Citizens' Initiatives on CEDAW, Bangladesh (CEDAW Platform)
CIDV	Citizens Initiatives to End Domestic Violence
CSOs	Civil Society Organizations
FGDs	Focus Group Discussions
GBV	Gender Based Violence
GEEW	Gender Equality and Empowerment
GMN	Gender Monitoring Network
GOB	Government of Bangladesh
GRB	Gender Responsive Budget
KIIs	Key Informant Interviews
MJF	Manuser Jonno Foundation
NGOs	Non-Governmental Organizations
PUS	Protttoy Unnoyon Songstha
SAC	Social Action Committee
UNW BCO	UN Women Bangladesh Country Office
WE CAN	Amrai Pari Paribarik Nirjaton Protirodh Jot
WEE	Women's Economic Empowerment
WHO	World Health Organization



# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The UN Women Bangladesh's Gender Monitoring Network (GMN) aims to provide its member organizations- that work with women, girls and gender-diverse communities- a united voice to influence government, UN and development partners, and civil society organizations' responses to COVID-19 and beyond. In order to recalibrate and adapt the network's purpose and activities to the present context and current needs of its members, this study reviewed GMN member organizations in terms of their contributions, challenges, and pressing needs in responding to the COVID-19 crisis. The report also assessed the usefulness of GMN to its member organizations, including feedback on the engagement so far, as well as proposing a roadmap and strategic engagement plan for GMN in response to the socio-economic impact of COVID-19 crisis.

The report is based on the analysis of primary and secondary data: information was collected from 41 participants from 21 GMN member organizations and related participants associated with GMN, using both quantitative and qualitative research methods such as surveys, key informant interviews (KIIs), focus group discussions (FGDs), and consultations. To allow for a detailed gender analysis of the findings, all data was disaggregated and triangulated to build robust evidence against each of the research tools.

## KEY FINDINGS

The majority (over 60%) of GMN member organizations are currently involved in various programs in response to the COVID-19 pandemic's socio-economic consequences, such as awareness-raising initiatives, advocacy/campaigning/lobbying, GBV prevention and training, networking/alliance-building, GBV responses and leadership development. Some of them are also assisting the local government in compiling an emergency relief assistance distribution list, as they recognize that women, children, and gender diverse people are disproportionately impacted by various socio-cultural and economic factors and should not be left out of the services. Others, on the other hand, provide online legal aid services as well as direct contact with vulnerable people through cell phones to lodge grievances and request redress.

They have, however, faced multiple challenges in carrying out their operations in the face of considerable uncertainty and tremendous stress in order to respond adequately to this crisis. Lack of funding and limited resources, restricted field accessibility, and technological barriers (such as access to IT and online communication resources, as well as required skills for using them) are the main challenges faced by GMN member organizations during the COVID-19 crisis. Furthermore, smaller, locally based GMN organisations have encountered more challenges in their operations than larger organizations due to difficulties in paying staff salaries, office rent, and regular operating costs because of lack of funds and less access to financial sources, putting their operations in jeopardy. Large organisations, on the other

hand, continue to operate using a range of interactive resources such as online meetings, webinars, and trainings. The study also shows that despite working for a vulnerable and diverse group of people in a crisis response, some grassroots level organizations were seldom included in national coordinated crisis responses, and their contributions and achievements were often overlooked by the local government officials.

The analysis of the survey found GMN's joint advocacy and knowledge and resources sharing among network members organizations to be more useful than peer support in assisting women and girls in recovering from the effects of COVID-19. The network's knowledge flow, up-to-date reports and information access and sharing were found to be effective to its member organizations. Some participants proposed that the information can be more precise and organized by thematic areas. This could benefit them from improved knowledge and advocacy role in addressing gender issues and gaps, as well as the ability to tailor gender-targeted initiatives using GMN's data and resources. Overall, the study reveals GMN as a very beneficial initiative to help member organizations improve their individual and collective efforts in responding to the COVID-19 crisis while also supporting gender equality and empowerment of women (GEEW).

In terms of GMN to build synergies, the study finds that GMN has the scope to build synergies with other organizations and platforms with similar mandates. This, however, requires identifying GMN's mission, policy strategy and action plan, distinction, and similarities with other networks' priorities. Its member organizations may be able to identify such networks, and that GMN may be able to collaborate with them if GMN's priorities and objectives align with those networks. This could be one of GMN's strengths and could add value of the network in monitoring and oversight of COVID-19 responses. Collaboration with other well-established networks and CSOs is also important for a number of reasons, including tapping into their thematic areas/priority areas, local expertise, leveraging experience, and obtaining different perspectives to overcome these challenges.

In regards to **GEEW's policy-oriented initiatives**, the analysis of the findings reveals that GMN could take the lead on some particular GEEW policy implementation issues such as gender responsive budget (GRB), gender responsive social protection in response to COVID-19, domestic violence prevention act, labor law, unpaid care work, etc., and could play a critical role in lobbying and advocacy for government bodies implementing these issues. For instance, through GMN, member organizations could be facilitated to engage in governance processes to strengthen and monitor GRB for social safety net programs for women and most marginalized and gender diverse communities. Likewise, GMN could address international instruments concerning GEEW policy implementation issues (such as CEDAW, SDG5, etc.) through a number of different strategies or modalities, including: supporting member organizations to take a role in CEDAW processes, advocacy, and strengthening their capacity and confidence in order to assist the government in implementing and advancing CEDAW commitments.

In terms of **GEEW's thematic focus initiatives**, it is possible to determine what GEEW-related activities are being carried out by GMN member organizations, especially those thematic oriented policies such as decent work, unpaid care work under Women's Economic

Empowerment (WEE) thematic areas. In addition to continuing to serve as a platform for knowledge sharing, GMN can promote collaboration among member organizations by identifying these thematic areas/focus areas.

Furthermore, given Bangladesh's diverse social, economic, and ethnic (in some areas) marginalization patterns, a consistent definition of the types of marginalization being targeted would aid people in understanding how this issue fits into the country's overall GEEW strategy. In this regard, member organizations could improve their knowledge of systemic monitoring of disaggregation by social groups, and their advocacy role in addressing policies that take an intersectional approach through the network.

In terms of GMN's possible scope of work, the study shows that member organizations can identify some specific issues and rank to determine which ones to prioritize over the next five years. For instance, unpaid care work was one of the most prominent issues raised by participants. UN Women is actively involved in raising awareness and supporting the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS) for the "Time Use Survey" Member organizations can monitor this issue through GMN.

According to the analysis of the findings, GMN should operate on a systematic and regular basis rather than as a one-off project initiative to ensure its long-term viability. They all agree that good communication and transparency about the network's coordination process among its member organizations is critical. They believe that if GMN can be institutionalized it would be successful in the long run. To achieve this, GMN will need a development strategy, either short or long term. If the network is sustained, any development interventions and policies related to GEEW would benefit.

## CONCLUSION

The report revealed that Gender Monitoring Network has the potential to have a profound impact on state-level COVID-19 response and national development programs and policies. GMN could make any development intervention and policies related to GEEW strong and dynamic. However, in order to strengthen GMN and bring important issues to the attention of government and policymakers, it requires a strong commitment and active involvement of its member organizations. Some strategic guidance, a solid structure, a dynamic strategy, and a committed and active committee responsible with carrying out the network's mission are needed to ensure GMN's long-term viability and sustainability as an independent platform.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

### Advocacy

1. The advocacy/call for action needs to be revisited to follow up and take stock of actions which have been taken into account by Government and relevant entities.
2. Conduct a mapping to identify key focus areas for Policy advocacy.

3. Member organizations can be facilitated to engage in governance processes in order to strengthen and monitor GEEW's policy driven initiatives, such as GRB, gender responsive social protection in response to COVID-19 etc.
4. GMN can develop thematic papers for Policy advocacy on pressing issues that call for urgent action.
5. GMN can work to gather specific gender statistics from the field related to COVID-19 for monitoring the situation of women in those situations.

### **Knowledge Management**

6. GMN needs to build on it's Knowledge repository by more coordinated knowledge management/ e.g. the repository can be organized by thematic areas with brief summary for easy tracking and reference.

### **Capacity Building**

7. With support from UN Women, GMN can facilitate capacity development of CSOs/ Women's rights organizations focusing on grassroots particularly on management, leadership capacity in this dominant digital space following COVID-19.

### **GMN structure**

8. The GMN should have meetings on a quarterly basis with a regular plan of action.
9. UN Women can consider having communication in Bengali for majority's language convenience.
10. Spell out the roles and responsibilities of the members of GMN for more clarity.
11. GMN can conduct a mapping of existing networks and have a representative from each network to be part of GMN. Building synergies with other existing networks with similar mandates could be a value addition to GMN.
12. GMN can be made the platform for regular exchange of field experience, best practices, and advocacy positions.
13. GMN is required to have dedicated resources (time and person) to smoothly run GMN and have a structure in place with members roles explicitly spelled out.

# 1

## INTRODUCTION

# 1. INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 BACKGROUND

Gender Monitoring Network (GMN) is a virtual network established by UN Women Bangladesh in late March 2020, shortly after the country was hit by COVID19, which primarily consist of women's CSOs, CBOs and gender-issue focused NGOs, and research institutions. The network's goal is to ensure that women, children, and gender-diverse people's needs are adequately recognized and addressed in the country's national prevention and response efforts. Women's and girls' voices are essential to understanding the impact of the epidemic and meeting the needs of affected populations effectively. During emergencies, however, the engagement of women's organizations and networks in the frontline that continue to provide services to women and girls in need are often overlooked in planning, delivering and monitoring of national response plans and policies measures that are increasingly being introduced. UN Women's Gender Monitoring Network aims to help women's organizations, networks, and organizations that work with women and gender-diverse populations have a collective voice to influence the government's, UN and development partners', and civil society organizations' response plans and initiatives.<sup>1</sup>

The objective of GMN is to facilitate exchange of information and tools among GMN members and to encourage peer support and build joint advocacy efforts by them to ensure best support to women, girls, and gender diverse communities in responding to COVID19 crisis and beyond. GMN aims that its members' collective voice can be channeled to policy makers to ensure that the response plans and initiatives of the government, UN, development partners and civil society organizations are gender responsive.

The network currently has thirty (30) organizations around the country that work with the most vulnerable populations of women, children, and gender diverse citizens, including community-based women's organizations, CSOs, and gender-issue oriented NGOs. The key vision of all GMN member organizations is to work for the advancement of women's rights and entitlements, as well as to build resistance against violence, inequality, and injustice. Among the thirty (30) GMN organizations, some are engaged in legal and political activism, such as lobbying and advocacy campaigns on issues of gender equality, women's empowerment, and justice, while others are centered on economic development through micro-credit programs. There are also organizations that have taken a grassroots approach and undertaken developmental programs at the village level to help with women's empowerment and justice. On a number of socioeconomic issues, such as violence against women and girls (VAWG), dowry, child marriage migration, trafficking, health, displacement, disability, unequal employment, work place exploitation, access to credit, and unequal political and social rights, they have built unique programs in identifying, promoting, and addressing the needs of women, girls, and gender diverse people. They also played

---

1 From "Gender Monitoring Network Terms of reference"

an important role in raising awareness and serving as platforms for women's leadership development as well as channels for bringing women's voices to the forefront.<sup>2</sup> Some large organizations have been active in ensuring women's and children's rights, and act as a driving force for governments and international organizations to include women and children at the forefront of their work.

In Bangladesh, the COVID-19 pandemic has had an overwhelmingly negative effect on women, children, and gender diverse people. Millions of women's livelihoods have also been shattered. According to a UN Women report, women in informal work are losing their jobs and those in formal work are working less hours as a result of COVID-19.<sup>3</sup> Thousands of women migrant workers have also been forced to return to Bangladesh without compensation, where they face stigma and ostracization as well as financial difficulties.<sup>4</sup> Many women workers, from RMG workers to those employed in micro, small, and medium-sized enterprises, to domestic workers, daily wage workers, and sex workers, have lost their income from one day to the next due to stay-at-home orders and factory and business closures. Lockdowns and social isolation have increased the burden of unpaid domestic and childcare work, especially among mothers and daughters. Female single parents are particularly affected by the increased amount of household chores as a result of the lockdown, especially since they are also responsible for their family's food security, health care of children and elderly household members. COVID-19 is wreaking havoc on the Hijra transgender and other gender diverse community members, many of whom depend on sex workers and small businesses for a living and are experiencing food shortages. Because of the increased uncertainty of wages, food security, and access to services such as health and hygiene, as well as the increased care work burden, mental health is a particular concern for women.<sup>5</sup>

In terms of access to information, resources to cope with the pandemic, and its socioeconomic effects, the COVID-19 pandemic has intensified existing gender inequality between women, men, children, boys, and gender diverse citizens. There is some evidence that family desperation may increase the risk of young girls being forced into child marriage.<sup>6</sup> CSOs, Women's rights organizations, Community-based women's organizations, and gender-issue focused NGOs play a critical role in meeting the immediate needs of women, girls and gender diverse communities. Since the outbreak of COVID19, they are engaged in several activities with their target groups and shifting priorities to meet emergent needs that help combat the spread of coronavirus such as: producing protective face masks, distributing hygienic and food packages to vulnerable groups, raising public awareness; assisting local

---

2 'Women'(undated), Asiatic Society of Bangladesh, Banglapedia website, [http://banglapedia.search.com.bd/ht/w\\_0067.htm](http://banglapedia.search.com.bd/ht/w_0067.htm).

3 UN Women, Preliminary findings: Gender-Differentiated Consequences of COVID-19 on women's and men's economic empowerment in Bangladesh (April 2020)

4 BNSK report

5 UN Women: Call for Action for Gender-Responsive COVID 19: Relief and Response; Brief, Gender Monitoring Network, 2020. Available at: <https://asiapacific.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2020/06/call-for-action-on-gender-responsive-covid19-relief-and-response#view>

6 Girls not Brides, COVID-19 and Child, Early and Forced Marriage: An Agenda for Action (April 2020)

governments on identifying and distributing food packages for people in need; providing online free counselling services, etc.<sup>7</sup>

Civil society-led support networks are serving as first responders to COVID19, according to a rapid evaluation undertaken by the UN Trust Fund in March 2020. They are filling gaps where governments are unable or unwilling to provide services.<sup>8</sup> On top of these, they are responding to pre-existing gender inequalities, whilst facing new operational challenges arising from the pandemic. Increased violence against women, as a result of emerging risk factors combined with evidence and/or data collection adhering to certain ethical and safety standards, was one of the most important implications of the COVID-19 pandemic. UN Women, in partnership with UNFPA, provided a basic orientation on GBV Data Collection to GMN organizations, with the aim of discussing how those principles can be implemented alongside COVID-19 protection measures and other alternative evidence collection methods to better understand the needs for programs, risk communication, and awareness for prevention of Violence against women.

The aim of this review is to assess the needs of the organizations in Gender Monitoring network in order to recalibrate and adjust the network's mission and activities to current needs of its members. The purpose is to create a more collaborative and demand-driven online community that assists member organizations in meeting their goals to support women, girls and gender diverse communities.

## 1.2 OBJECTIVES OF THE REVIEW

The specific objectives of this review are to:

- (1) assess current interests/priorities, challenges and needs of GMN organizations in responding to the socio-economic impacts of COVID-19 pandemic;
- (2) evaluate the usefulness of GMN to its member organizations, including online dialogue and consultations through GMN on broader gender equality and women's empowerment policy implementation issues as well as the strategic plans and programs of the UN and UN Women.

## 1.3 METHODOLOGY

The study set out to be fully gender responsive in purpose, approach and method: it used a consultative and collaborative approach, applied a participatory methodology wherever

---

7 "COVID-19 and women's rights organizations: Bridging response gaps and demanding a more just future", Policy Brief No.22, UN Women, 2021; Available at: <https://www.unwomen.org/-/media/headquarters/attachments/sections/library/publications/2021/policy-brief-covid-19-and-womens-rights-organizations-en.pdf?la=en&vs=2200>

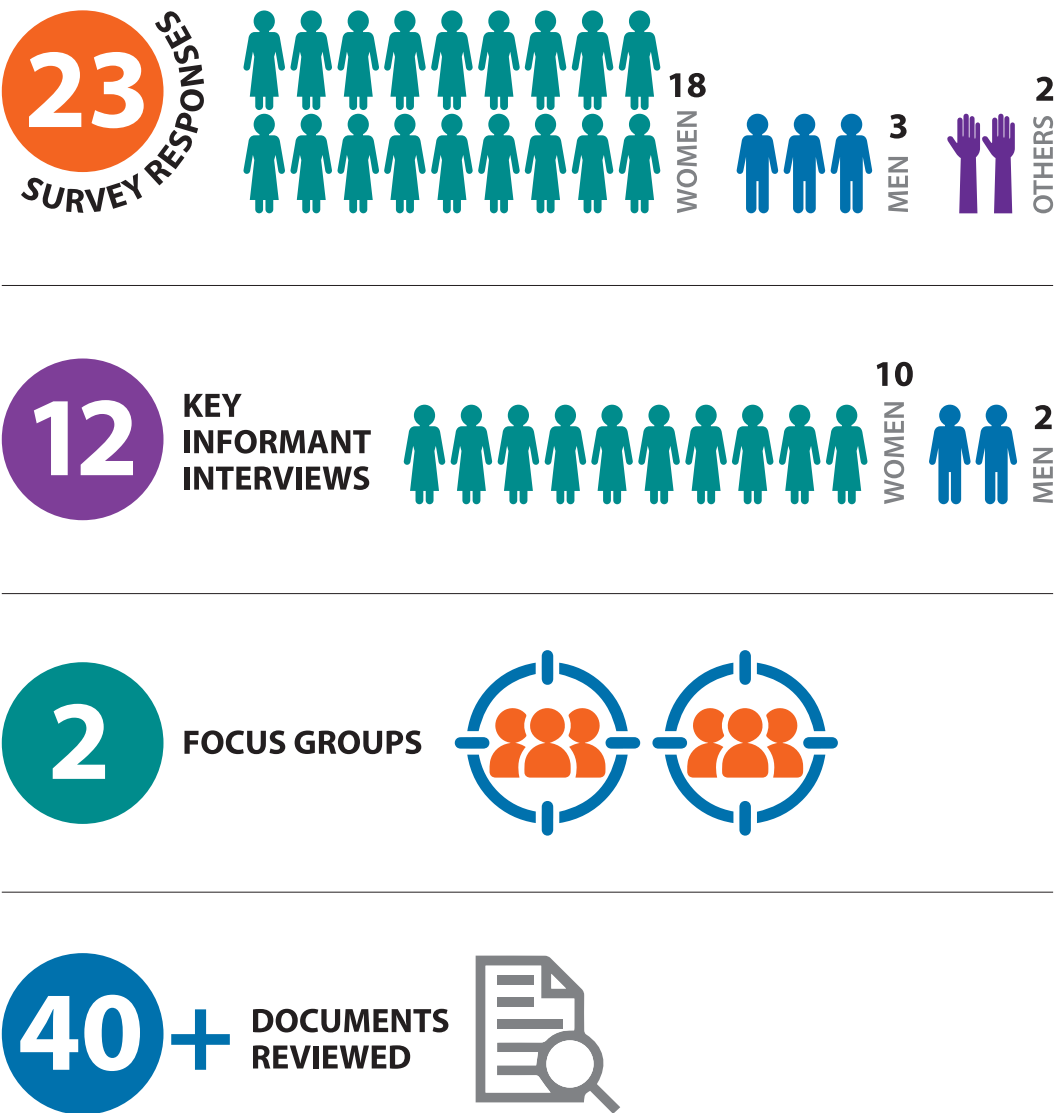
8 UN Trust Fund (2020) "COVID-19 and the impact on civil society organizations (CSOs) working to end Violence against Women and Girls", UN Trust Fund, September 2020. Available at: [https://www2.unwomen.org/-/media/field%20office%20un/fund/publications/2020/external%20brief%20/un%20trust%20fund%20brief%20on%20impact%20of%20covid-19%20on%20csos%20and%20vawg\\_2-compressed.pdf?la=en&vs=1726](https://www2.unwomen.org/-/media/field%20office%20un/fund/publications/2020/external%20brief%20/un%20trust%20fund%20brief%20on%20impact%20of%20covid-19%20on%20csos%20and%20vawg_2-compressed.pdf?la=en&vs=1726)



possible, and systematically applied gender analysis in all steps of the analytic process: from design to interpretation of data and the articulation of findings and recommendations.

The assessment is based on both primary and secondary data. In terms of primary data, both quantitative and qualitative research techniques was applied to the collection of information from representatives of GMN organizations and related participants to both elaborate and triangulate available documentary evidence, and to build robust evidence against each of the research tools. This included surveys, key informant interviews, focus group discussions & consultations, and from literature review related to GMN and its members organizations. The secondary data from desk review included analysis of key documents against the study objectives. All data was disaggregated (to obtain the perspective of both women and men stakeholders) to allow for a thorough gender analysis of the findings.

**Figure 1: Overview of Data Sources and Participants**



A total 41 participants participated virtually from 21 GMN organizations during the data collection process, giving a response rate of 70%. The participants of this assessment were representatives of GMN organizations including president, executive directors, executive coordinator/coordinator/assistant coordinator, country manager, gender advisor, gender program officer, manager for women's rights & gender equity, members, gender expert/academician and researcher. Majority of them are women (78.3%), 13% are men and 4.3% are transwomen and non-confirming / non binary respectively. Also, the study emphasized the relative differences between large and small organizations. The sampling details of the study is provided in Annex 1.

Under **quantitative** research techniques, **an online survey** is used to obtain data and information from both female and male participants in 21 listed organizations of GMN provided by UN Women. The survey captured their feedback on the usefulness of GMN activities; current interests, needs and challenges, good practices that has been useful for GMN organizations, and the kind of online support they require to better respond to the socioeconomic impact of COVID19. The organizations were divided into two groups: large and small/medium organizations, based on their number of employees and beneficiaries/ number of women reach out on COVID-19 information and services, and geographical locations/areas reach out. The list of GMN organizations and survey questionnaire are provided in Annex 2.

On the other hand, under **qualitative research techniques**, online based key informant interviews, focus group discussions and consultation tools were used to obtain data and information from participants based on their particular area of expertise and thematic areas. The list of Key Informants, FGDs and questionnaire are provided in Annex 3 and 4.

The analysis entailed triangulating information obtained from the desk review, primary data and other documentation. Analysis was also draw on feedback from UN Women personnel from the debrief of KIIs and consultations. This session helped to facilitate dialogue around key elements of the evidence, inviting reflection and further analysis/synthesis, and to generate agreement on key lessons.

## **Ethical consideration:**

The consultant followed and incorporated the principles of the established ethical protocols, especially those done by WHO. The data collection, analysis and reporting process respect the rights of the participants involved in the review, considering different cultural settings, privacy and time. All participants were informed of the goals and objectives of the assessment.

# 2

## KEY FINDINGS

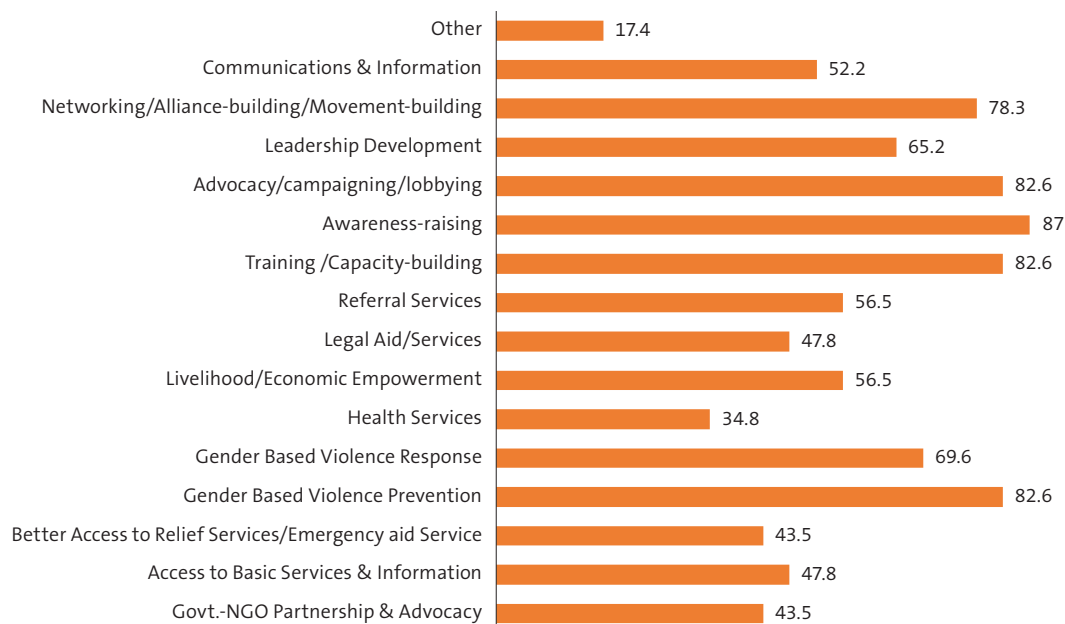
## 2. KEY FINDINGS

### 2.1 THE CURRENT STATE OF THE GMN MEMBER ORGANIZATIONS IN COVID-19 PANDEMIC

#### 2.1.1 GMN Member Organizations' Interests/Priorities and Engagement in Response to COVID-19

The role of CSOs has become both more important and more tenuous since the outbreak of COVID-19 and the subsequent emergency measures. Through online survey, participants were asked what their organization's current interests/priorities are in responding to the socio-economic impact of COVID19. The study reveals that majority of organizations are engaged in various programs in response to COVID 19 pandemic. According to the study in Figure 2, the highest response was awareness-raising program (87 percent). Advocacy/campaigning/lobbying, GBV prevention, and training/capacity-building came in second and third, respectively (82.6 percent). Over 60% of the organizations are working on networking/alliance-building/movement-building, GBV responses, and leadership growth (65.2 percent).

**Figure 2: Areas of Focus of the GMN Organizations in Response to COVID-19 Crisis (%)**



More than 40% of organizations also provide basic relief/emergency assistance services and information, as well as support for livelihoods/economic empowerment, legal aid/services, referral services, communications and information, and so on (Figure 2).

Furthermore, the study shows almost equivalent results for different initiatives undertaken by both small and large organizations studied.

### Specific Initiatives undertaken by GMN Organizations



**Hygiene kits and protective measures:** Hygiene kits, detergent powders, disinfectant sprays, personal protective equipment, and hand sanitizers, soap, and re-usable masks were distributed to raise awareness and prevent the Corona virus from spreading.



**Communication and awareness:** Posters, microphones, public awareness messaging through mosque imams, social media initiatives were organized for COVID awareness sessions among mass people.



**Assistance to local government:** in compiling a food assistance distribution list.



**Life Skills training:** provided a variety of skill-based trainings to COVID-19-affected local women.



**Helpline services:** Hotline services to communicate with staff and beneficiaries to track health related concerns and provide assistance and referral service in regards to critical issues like in early marriage, domestic abuse, sexual violence, rape etc.

Similarly, *Nijera Kori*, a leading GMN member organization working on rural social mobilization at the field level to raise awareness and unite the rural poor, reported that because of the lockdown, their field level workers were unable to reach their target community directly during the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020. They started “hotline services” and used to track how many phone calls were coming in, what concerns were being raised, and so on. The reason for establishing the hotline is so that they can communicate with the people with whom they work and learn more about what is going on with their target groups, especially in regard to early marriage, domestic abuse, sexual harassment, other forms of violence (such as work place harassment, verbal abuse) and health-related issues. They also discussed the government’s response to the COVID-19 pandemic, including whether or not people are getting emergency aid and whether or not there is any corruption. They began returning to the field in September 2020, when things began to

“ Every member of our team contributed to an emergency fund by foregoing one month’s pay. We also partnered with a local radio station, Nalta, to disseminate information and relevant guidelines to a broad variety of audiences. We assisted in the creation of the ‘Corona Expert Team’, a grassroots network comprised of local men, women, youth social workers, and community journalists. During COVID-19, the network collaborated with the local government to hold training sessions for local youth volunteers on emergency response strategies and to raise awareness about the need to end all forms of gender-based violence. ”

— Executive Director of **BINDU**

normalize, and worked for the people while maintaining social distances, wearing masks, and making face-to-face contact with the people. However, they continue to use hotlines and have their staff communicate with individuals, but not as often as they did prior to the Covid era. Since COVID-19 pandemic has returned, they are considering resuming their hotline operation.

Other organizations publish monthly bulletins, provide community information at the grassroots level, provide virtual legal aid, have organizational COVID-19 response team, and mobilize resources on a regular basis. During the lockdown, Ain-O-Shalish Kendro expanded helpline numbers to provide online legal and other related support resources, as well as raising awareness about the GBVs Social Media initiative and advocating with relevant government agencies. Some organizations helped organize COVID awareness sessions and provided hygiene kits, detergent powders, disinfectant sprays, personal protective equipment, and hand sanitizers, among other things. For example, Islamic Relief Bangladesh, in collaboration with UN Women, has enlisted Imams to reach out via mosque megaphones, sharing life-saving information in the fight against COVID-19. Islamic Relief Bangladesh planned main public health messages, which were disseminated by the Imams. In different slums, the Bangladesh Nari Shramik Kendra (BNSK), which works for women migrant workers, distributed free masks, hot meals, and safety measures. In addition, BNSK recruited a few workers for their UN-funded mask creation. These workers had been able to support their families with that income.

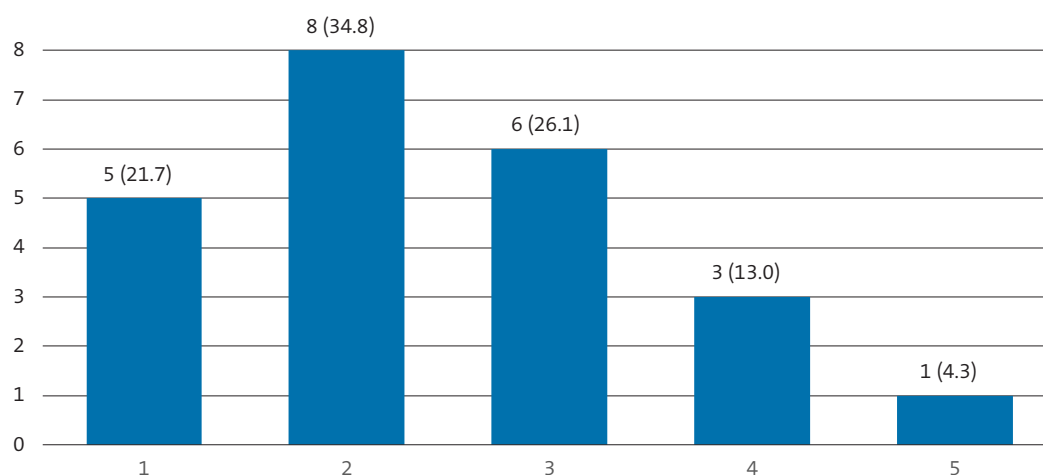
Some organizations maintained direct communication by offering mobile phones to group leaders and local offices as support lines, which all marginalized people could use to lodge complaints and request redress. According to them, during the pandemic, people's economic, social, and legal rights and entitlements were all affected. Apart from the significant rise in violence against women, general health and contraceptive access were seriously harmed.

### **2.1.2 Challenges and Needs of GMN Organizations in responding to COVID-19 Crisis**

During the COVID-19 crisis, all GMN organizations have indicated extreme difficulties facing differential needs rising from the unprecedented circumstances of COVID19. They, like other CSOs in Bangladesh and around the world, have faced numerous challenges in project execution, and difficulties in operations due to their limited capacity to respond, amid great uncertainty and stress.

This study found that 34.8 percent of participants think the intensity of challenges caused by COVID-19 was high. The second-highest number of participants (26.1%) reported moderate-to-high intensity challenges, while 21.7 percent reported extreme-to-high intensity challenges as a result of COVID-19 (Figure 3). In comparison to large organizations, more small organizations reported high intensity challenges in responding to the Covid crisis, according to the analysis.

**Figure 3: Intensity of challenges faced by GMN Organizations due to COVID19**



GMN member organizations have made a significant contribution in responding to and continuing to provide services for COVID-19 affected women, children, and gender diverse populations, despite the fact that they were motivated by self-initiative. Nevertheless, the COVID-19 pandemic presented a number of challenges for GMN organizations to mitigate their activities and goals in order to respond adequately in this crisis.

### Key challenges

When asked what the key challenges of GMN organizations in the COVID-19 crisis are, the majority of small organizations (80%) surveyed mentioned lack of funding, restricted field accessibility due to the country's social distancing laws, and a lack of resources (for example, GBV response services). The second-highest percentage of participants (53.3%) stated technical obstacles (such as access to IT and online communication resources, as well as using them) as a challenge they had to overcome.

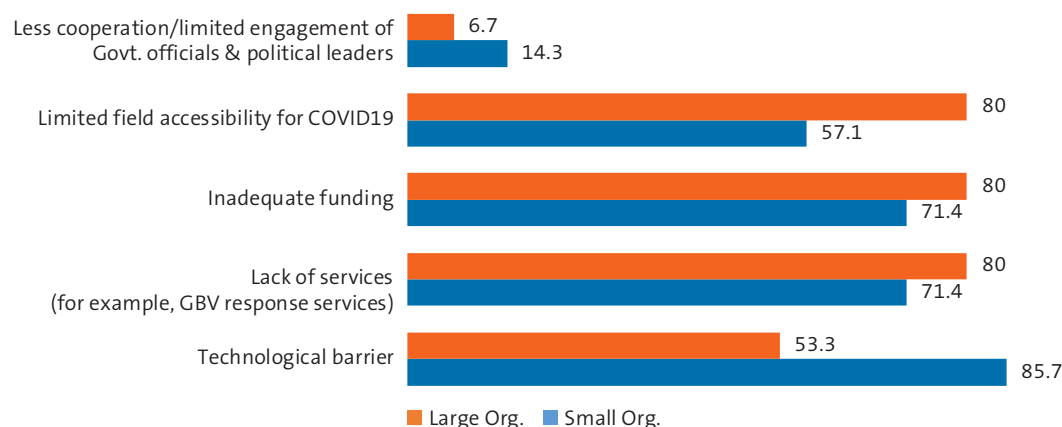
For large organizations, however, technical obstacles (such as access to IT and online communication resources, as well as using them) are the most difficult to overcome (85.7 percent), followed by insufficient support and a shortage of facilities (for example, GBV response services) (71.4 percent), and restricted field connectivity due to COVID19 (57.1 percent).

A few organizations have noted that local government officials and political leaders were not as cooperative as they should be (Figure 4).

Based on interaction with key informants and FGDs and consultations, the study also finds that since the outbreak of COVID19, the majority of smaller, locally based GMN organizations have faced more obstacles than large organizations in continuing their operating activities

due to difficulties in covering wages, office rent, and daily administrative costs, placing the continuation of their operations in jeopardy. Two such GMN organizations had completely ceased operations as a result of financial management issues, as well as issues related to a possible shortage of funds, according to this review.

**Figure 4: Percentage distribution of organizations reported pressing needs in their operations in COVID 19 crisis**



All small sized organization representatives interviewed identified a variety of negative effects on their operations, including a lack of resources, being forced to curtail their activities, the need to reduce staff involvement, being unable to completely provide field/grassroots level services (for example, for survivors of violence), and closing their field offices. Grameen Alo<sup>9</sup>, working for the poor in Bogra District, reported that due to ‘isolation measures’, they have been forced to halt project operations, and funds for project execution have also been cut off by their donors. They also added because the government expects Bangladesh to become a middle-income country soon, donors no longer support them generously as they believe there are more deserving candidates in other parts of Asia and Africa who should receive more aid and assistance.

Prottoy Unnoyon Songstha (PUS), on the other hand, which works to inspire youth groups through educational training and counselling, was unable to provided their services at a large scale as they had done in the pre-Covid era. They were also unable to provide emergency assistance to vulnerable groups, especially elderly and disabled women, as well as the people who worked with them, who had hoped that their organizations would provide relief. Prottoy, however, as a small organization, was unable to meet the challenge.

9 Grameen Alo works to raise awareness about health, education, agriculture, and social safety-net programs, as well as provide funding to increase government transparency and accountability and improve committees in various sectors,



Centre for Disability in Development (CDD), which works with disabled people, stated that they are developing alternative solutions to overcome the covid pandemic's challenges. They are prioritizing their campaigns and programs in order to serve the most disadvantaged and disabled people. With their limited financial resources, they are also supporting their female employees' participation and leadership – from volunteer to decision-making levels. However, they believe that there are challenges in ensuring its long-term sustainability, and that institutional support from the government and other non-governmental organizations is crucial in bolstering their efforts.

Large organizations, on the other hand, have steered their efforts toward assisting the most vulnerable groups of people in the communities they represent, who are disproportionately impacted throughout this period. They have largely postponed their field operations during the lock down time due to the corona crisis. With restricted access at the time, telephone contact was the most common mode of communication for them. Later, they reorganized their resources and moved their work online, using different platforms to connect and collaborate with their stakeholders, donors, and target audience (such as mobile, email, Skype video conference, and Zoom platform). Naripokkho, ASK, WE CAN, and other organizations use a variety of digital tools such as online meetings, webinars, and trainings to achieve their goals. During focus groups discussion and consultations, an ASK representative stated that communication through helpline and information exchange was one of the primary ways they could reach out to the target community and their partners since their shelter house was closed due to lockdown. They were also able to keep publishing, tracking, and advocating with government and other institutional entities on a regular basis.

Nonetheless, the study shows that both small and large GMN member organizations have been changing their activities and adapting their work, both in person and online. Despite working for a vulnerable and diverse group of people in a crisis response, some grassroots level organizations were seldom included in national organized crisis responses, and their contributions and achievements were often overlooked by local government officials.<sup>10</sup>

“Donors are not interested to sponsor us, and these funding cuts have had a negative impact on our staff salaries, office rent, and administrative costs. By reducing the number of field staff and closing sub-offices, we were able to change our operations and goals. We're looking for new sources and solutions to deal with this situation while still juggling the funding and support available from the government and national and foreign donors.”

— Grameen Alo

10 Interviews and FGDs GMN member organizations –Dalit Women Forum and Protttoy Unnayan Sangstha.

## 2.2 FEEDBACK ON GENDER MONITORING NETWORK

The inception of Gender Monitoring Network happened after the outbreak of COVID-19 in March 2020. With the aim to support CSOs and capture needs of the marginal community, the immediate focus of the network was on sharing knowledge and resources among network members organizations, situation monitoring and data collection, peer support, and joint advocacy. The purpose of GMN was to share information that would benefit women, girls, and the gender-diverse population, as well as collecting situation reports and information on the various support services on COVID-19 that are available for these people. This involves exchanging tools and resources, as well as gathering data to supplement existing surveys to identify gender-specific protection risks, gendered needs, and gaps, especially for the most vulnerable women.

### Merits of having a gender monitoring network

The Gender Monitoring Network was born at a time when the country was struggling in responding to the pandemic, with lockdowns and strict travel measures making it far more challenging to exchange information and format evidence of the actual situation faced by women, girls specially in marginalized communities. The GMN became a singular platform with regular information sharing related to COVID-19. Around 80% of the member organizations accessed and used knowledge products /resource and information circulated by UN Women and found it useful, as found from the GMN rapid review survey. The network has been useful to gather information and produce uniform advocacy messaging targeted to Policy Makers to recognize women human rights and integrate an intersectional gender equality approach in the COVID 19 Response to ensure everyone has access to necessary information and supports and resources. The GMN developed two advocacy briefs reflecting the immediate challenges faced by women, girls and gender diverse people and a [Call for Action on Gender Responsive COVID19 Relief and Response](#) representing the voices of women and other vulnerable groups who are most affected by the pandemic. These documents were critical for several advocacy efforts and referenced as a vital source of information in developing UN's Socio-Economic Response Plan for COVID-19 and was also critical to provide evidence-based input in revising GOB's 8th Five Year Plan.

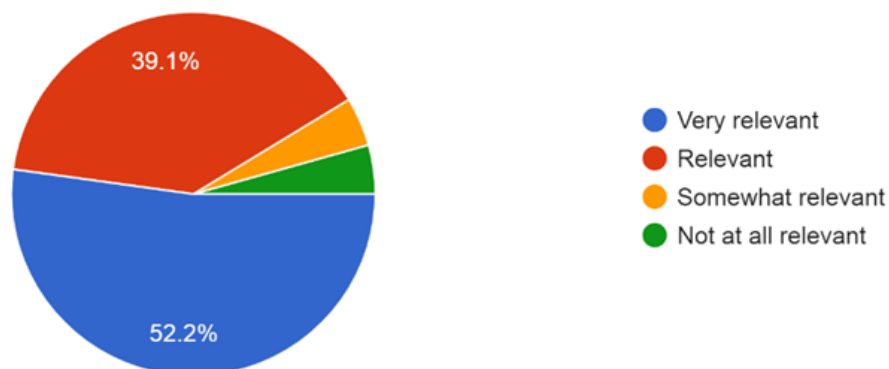
### 2.2.1 Usefulness of GMN Activities to Member Organizations

The GMN survey participants were asked how closely GMN activities align with their organizations focus area/target group's priorities. 52.2 percent of GMN member organizations believe the activities are very important to their focus areas, while 39.1% believe they are somewhat relevant (Figure 5).

In terms of GMN's usefulness, the majority of surveyed participants said that all GMN activities, such as online consultation among member organizations, knowledge sharing from UN Women, exchange of information and resources among network members, peer-

support and joint advocacy are very or somewhat useful for them and their organizations, according to the online survey (Figure 6).

**Figure 5:** How far do you feel GMN activities are in line with the priorities of your organization/your focus area/target group?



According to the report, some of these organizations were able to use the data and resources provided by GMN despite their limited scope in advocacy role. The analysis of the survey shows that GMN's joint advocacy and sharing knowledge and resources among network members organizations found to be more useful than peer support (such as to provide inputs and support to each other's initiative when requested) in assisting women and girls in recovering from the effects of COVID-19 (Figure 6). They also opined that instead of contacting a specific individual within the GMN organization, communications should be directed to the organization's name, as the person might not be available to respond to the email. The network's member organizations will benefit from improved knowledge and advocacy role in addressing gender issues and gaps, as well as the ability to tailor gender-targeted initiatives using data and resources. Transgender people, for instance, are victims of abuse on a daily basis, and organizations that support them may be able to use this network to share knowledge about this gender diverse group and their circumstances.

In addition, the network has developed and published one advocacy brief - Voices of Women from the Ground - and one Call for Action for Gender-Responsive COVID 19: Relief and Response for the same, as well as Orientation on GBV Data Collection and the GMN Social Protection Webinar report to GMN member organizations as part of its advocacy initiatives. 73.8 percent of GMN member organizations had accessed and used these knowledge products, according to the survey, and 21.7 percent had used them to some extent (Figure 7, in Annex 5). Similarly, the study discovered that 56.5 percent of surveyed participants indicated that their organizations had used advocacy brief and orientation on GBV Data collection, while few participants had not used these knowledge products as these were unrelated to their various thematic areas (Figure 8 and 9, in Annex 5).

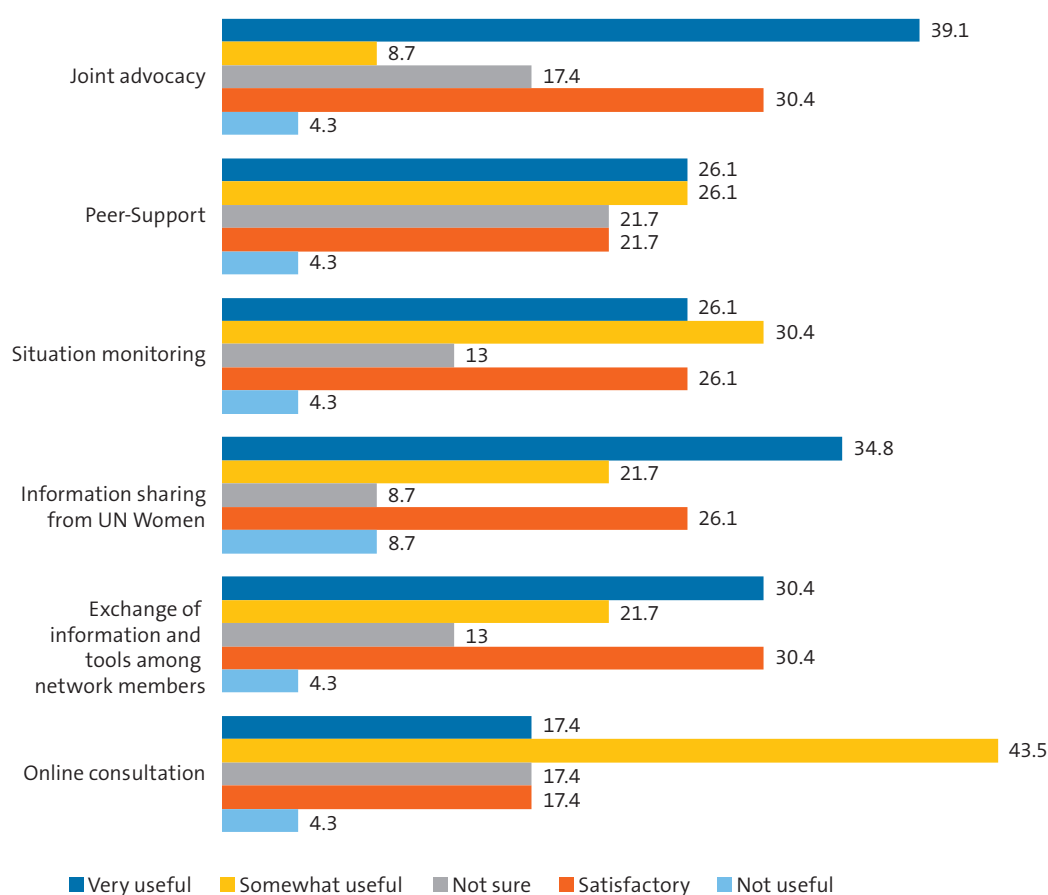
Following key informants' interviews and FGDs and consultations, the study also discovered that in case of small organizations, the local government office has now prioritized their work, which had previously been difficult. When they visit local government offices with a gender-related issue and identify themselves as GMN members, they are now enthusiastically welcomed, which was not the case previously.

“ We recently began a study on the prevalence of GBV among transgender people, and we’re using some of the GMN’s GBV brief’s recommendations. It is extremely beneficial for us. ”

— Executive Director, **Bandhu**

According to the analysis of the findings, the network’s knowledge flow, information access and up-to-date report sharing are all valuable to its member organizations. The majority of the surveyed participants (over 60%) prefer to access GMN’s information and knowledge products and meetings regularly (Figure 10, in Annex 5). However, some participants suggested to make the information precise and more user friendly. Some further suggested to make it by thematic areas and indicated that GMN could go beyond COVID19 (Figure 11, in Annex 5).

**Figure 6: Percentage distribution of GMN organizations regarding their feedback on usefulness of GMN activities**



According to KIIs, formats for knowledge dissemination could be summarized, more accessible, and dissemination strategy could be more specific. For instance, some participants brought up the topic of information dissemination, suggesting that it would be more effective if the dissemination strategy was carried out by organizations’ contacts

rather than individual representatives of their organizations. Interaction with FGDs and consultations further suggests a need for simple communication material which is clear on strategies for improving gender equality in a Bangladesh context as well as knowledge and communications products should be in Bangla. The study, however, reveals that GMN is a very beneficial initiative that can assist member organizations in strengthening their individual and collective efforts in responding to the COVID19 crisis, as well as promoting gender equality and women's empowerment (GEEW).

In addition, the network has developed and published one advocacy brief - Voices of Women from the Ground - and one Call for Action for Gender-Responsive COVID 19: Relief and Response for the same, as well as Orientation on GBV Data Collection and the GMN Social Protection Webinar report to GMN member organizations as part of its advocacy initiatives. 73.8 percent of GMN member organizations had accessed and used these knowledge products, according to the survey, and 21.7 percent had used them to some extent (Figure 7, in Annex 5). Similarly, the study discovered that 56.5 percent of surveyed participants indicated that their organizations had used advocacy brief and orientation on GBV Data collection, while few participants had not used these knowledge products as these were unrelated to their various thematic areas (Figure 8 and 9, in Annex 5).

Following key informants' interviews and FGDs and consultations, the study also discovered that in case of small organizations, the local government office has now prioritized their work, which had previously been difficult. When they visit local government offices with a gender-related issue and identify themselves as GMN members, they are now enthusiastically welcomed, which was not the case previously.<sup>11</sup>

According to the analysis of the findings, the network's knowledge flow, information access and up-to-date report sharing are all valuable to its member organizations. The majority of the surveyed participants (over 60%) prefer to access GMN's information and knowledge products and meetings regularly (Figure 10, in Annex 5). However, some participants suggested to make the information precise and more user friendly. Some further suggested to make it by thematic areas and indicated that GMN could go beyond COVID19 (Figure 11, in Annex 5).

According to KIIs, formats for knowledge dissemination could be summarized, more accessible, and dissemination strategy could be more specific. For instance, some participants brought up the topic of information dissemination, suggesting that it would be more effective if the dissemination strategy was carried out by organizations' contacts rather than individual representatives of their organizations. Interaction with FGDs and consultations further suggests a need for simple communication material which is clear on strategies for improving gender equality in a Bangladesh context as well as knowledge and communications products should be in Bangla. The study, however, reveals that GMN is a very beneficial initiative that can assist member organizations in strengthening their individual and collective efforts in responding to the COVID19 crisis, as well as promoting gender equality and women's empowerment (GEEW).

---

11 Interviews GMN member organizations - BINDU and Grameen Alo.

## 2.2.2 Building Synergy with relevant networks

GMN has the potential to create synergy with other well-established networks and CSOs which could add the value of GMN in monitoring and oversight of Covid-19 responses, according to all participants. The study reveals that the majority of GMN member organizations collaborate with a variety of networks. Some participants indicated that GMN member organizations might be able to identify those networks and GMN would be able to align their priorities and objectives with those networks, and this might be one of GMN's strengths. According to a representative of Manusher Jonno Foundation (MJF), the Citizens Initiatives to End Domestic Violence (CIDV), Citizens' Initiatives on CEDAW, Bangladesh (CIC-BD/CEDAW Platform), Social Action Committee (SAC), etc. are some of the country's powerful networks. GMN could collaborate with these networks which could strengthen GMN in monitoring and oversight of Covid-19 responses.

Similarly, some participants proposed that GMN could explore which organizations are taking part in GEEW policy implementation issues. GMN has the scope for collaboration with other organizations with similar mandates. This requires identifying -GMN's mission, policy strategy and action plan, distinction, and similarities with other networks' priorities. The study found that many participants are unaware of GMN's mission, policy strategy and action plan and scope of work. This is due to the fact that the network was launched just last year (March 2020) and was initially started providing resources and information to the member organizations mainly.

Building synergy with other well-established networks and CSOs is critical for a variety of reasons, including tapping their thematic areas/priority areas, local knowledge, building on experience, and gaining diverse perspectives to address these challenges. Furthermore, these networks and organizations are said to have the ability to respond to changing circumstances, taking into account local conditions, which has proven especially useful during the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.

## 2.3 EXPECTATION AND SUGGESTION

### 2.3.1 GMN's Prospective Pathways

#### **Gender Equality and Empowerment of Women (GEEW) Policy Driven Initiatives**

For the past two decades, civil society organizations have been attempting to persuade the government to include gender concerns in all facets of all relevant agencies. However, they feel there is still some reluctance from the government in this regard. The network may conduct a mapping exercise to determine national laws and regulations surrounding gender issues that still need to be reviewed through a gender lens, as well as what is already in place. Participants expressed that GMN could take the lead on some particular GEEW policy

implementation issues such as gender responsive budget (GRB), gender responsive social protection in response to COVID-19, domestic violence prevention act, labor law, unpaid care work, etc. and could play a critical role in lobbying and advocacy for government bodies implementing these issues. For example in their opinion, the labor law could be reviewed through a gender lens, and GMN can play a role in advocating for this.

Concerning **Gender responsive budgeting (GRB)**, the study reveals that shows that the government has a large budget for 40-45 departments, but due to a lack of appropriate indicators for gender budget analysis, its ministries are unsure how to budget for gender equality. It also essential close monitoring. GMN could be the driving force behind this, as well as speaking out in support of GRB, especially for strengthening the M&E mechanism for GRB across ministries.

Similarly, in terms of **gender responsive social security** in response to the pandemic, the study found that the government has substantially increased the portion of the FY 2020-21 budget allocated to social safety net programs to benefit the COVID-19-affected population. More specifically, BDT 955.74 billion–16.83% of the total budget and 3.01% of GDP–has been allocated towards the social security sector. However, there is no visible budget allocation for women, especially those in the informal sector who have lost their jobs as a result of the pandemic. It is also revealed that there is no current social safety net to help RMG employees, MSMEs workers, daily wage workers, domestic workers, and sex workers. The government also declared a BDT 20,000 crore (BDT 200 billion = USD 2.6 million) economic stimulus as a Special Working Capital to fund Cottage, Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (CMSME). Women entrepreneurs will be eligible for 5% of the loan. Despite this, the majority of women entrepreneurs do not know where or how to apply for this loan, according to a rapid evaluation conducted by the Centre for Policy Dialogue on the stimulus package.<sup>12</sup> Through GMN, member organizations can be facilitated to engage in governance processes to strengthen and monitor GRB for social safety net programs for women and most marginalized and gender diver communities.

In terms of **international instruments concerning GEEW policy implementation** issues (such as CEDAW, SDG5, etc.), GMN organizations' respondents feel it is vital to address how closely the government is implementing these (despite some reservations), and how they are addressing areas reporting and monitoring obligations. In addition, the study reveals that UN Women's significant contribution to state party reporting on CEDAW is acknowledged, as is support for inter-ministerial cooperation involving seven ministries, which has set a precedent for a broad-based approach to reporting on CEDAW. As there appears to be a gap in this regard, GMN can play a critical role here in promoting government ownership of this process and leveraging the outcomes as a means for advocacy. Moreover, during interviews, a number of key informants stated that UN Women has the greatest potential to strengthen policy advocacy on the removal of Bangladesh reservations to CEDAW. Consultations with member organizations revealed a desire for increased engagement in contributing to GEEW

---

12 Gender Responsive Social Protection in Light of COVID-19 and Budget 2020-21 – webinar report. UN Women, 24 June 2020.



policy implementing process as well. GMN can address these issues through a number of different strategies or modalities, including: supporting member organizations to take a role in CEDAW processes, advocacy, and strengthening their capacity and confidence to support government to implement and push forward with CEDAW commitments.

## Gender Equality and Empowerment of Women (GEEW) Thematic Focus Initiatives

According to the findings, through GMN, it is possible to determine what GEEW-related activities are being carried out by its member organizations, especially those policies that they are attempting to enforce, in order to address GEEW policy implementation issues. Some organizations, for example, deal with decent work, while others work with WEE, such as unpaid care work. GMN can promote collaboration among member organizations by defining these thematic areas/focus areas, in addition to continuing to serve as a forum for knowledge sharing.

“ We have no specific idea how many indigenous people live in Bangladesh, or how many people are socially deprived and marginalized. We don't have enough gender-disaggregated data in general, so we just concentrate on men and women. ”

— **Christian Aid** representative

The thematic focus of work of the member organizations is intrinsically focused on women who are likely to be marginalized. Working on migration, for example, was designed to help marginalized women because women who choose migration are more likely to be socially and economically marginalized, as migrant work is not seen as a desirable choice for women, particularly international migration. Women are more likely to consider it as a result of adversity, such as extreme poverty, separation from their spouse, divorce, or widowhood. Through GMN, member organizations could be able to reach out to these marginalized and disadvantaged communities

through the network's various initiatives, such as skill development program, where women workers learn to be economically independent at a large scale.

## Inclusiveness

The study reveals that most CSOs and NGOs in Bangladesh aim for gender equality, but are unaware of the need to reach and address the needs of vulnerable groups. They do not include strong, consistent analysis of the intersections of different kinds of inequality, which might support strategic targeting of issues affecting the most marginalized women and girls.

Furthermore, given the various forms of social, economic, and ethnic (in some areas) marginalization trends in Bangladesh, a clear clarification on the types of marginalization being targeted will help people understand how this problem fits into the country's overall GEEW strategy. In order to ensure that no one is left behind, future programming would need to identify approaches that can engage a smaller target group of marginalized people based on an awareness of intersecting inequalities. Women from dalit, ethnic, and excluded



minorities communities, as well as disabled women, need comprehensive social protection policies that include an intersectional approach to ensure no one is left behind. In this regard, GMN's consideration of gender diverse populations is important, and its member organizations could improve their knowledge of systemic monitoring or disaggregation by social group, as well as their advocacy role in addressing policies that take an intersectional approach.

“ Research-based studies must be conducted through the GMN. We lack documentation, and through GMN, we can learn from one another. ”

— **WE CAN** representative

## 2.3.2 GMN's Possible Scope of Work and Sustainability

### Possible Scope of Work

Many of the member organizations are unaware of the GMN's scope of operation, and view the network primarily as a forum for exchanging knowledge. This is because the network was primarily set up specifically for COVID response and did not intend to extend its scope beyond COVID-19 pandemic. To make the network active and efficient, it must develop a strategic plan of action, and its member organizations must be kept accountable for the network's success. UN Women however feels that the idea of having an action plan gives GMN a project implementing role, that comes with certain accountability and operational functions. UN Women is already coordinating the Gender in Humanitarian Action (GIHA) working group that aims to ensure integration of gender equality into humanitarian actions and some of the organizations of GMN are also part of the GIHA WG. In this situation, it is crucial to chalk out the scope of GMN as opposed to an already functioning network at the national level.

Some participants suggested that the GMN member organizations can come together through this network to influence state-level response plans and initiatives for the COVID crisis and beyond. Some participants also raised the possibility of risk of joint work as the network consists of both small and large sized organizations. GMN can create strategies to minimize this risk by charting out the scope of work for both kinds of organizations. Nonetheless, participants in the study agree that GMN has the potential to play a significant role in the same since the network's name is strong and efficient. Some participants opined that because of GMN's diversity, member organizations have a variety of options for streamlining their operations. They propose they could meet every two months to discuss and share their activities, or they could use social media to express

“ This was an excellent initiative. My organization has always supported such initiatives, and we have taken part in them ourselves. This kind of activity should be continued, with our thoughts and views taken into account. It's a team-oriented approach to working. ”

— **Naripkkho** representative

“ We all have gender policies but very few of us are aware of that. We even don't know what gender policy means. We can learn from other organizations through GMN. ”

— Prottoy

their views and thoughts on current issues. The Call for Action Memo was a source of inspiration, reported by a few of them.

Some participants further mentioned the Call for Action for Gender-Responsive COVID and expressed support for a collaborative work environment that acknowledges their input and opinions. Referring to this memorandum, they emphasized the importance of gender issue in COVID19 crisis. They were, however, unaware

of the current status of this memorandum. It was most likely sent to the government's ministerial office, according to them.

Concerning GMN's possible scope of work, based on interaction of KIIs and FGDs and consultations, the study concludes that GMN could be used in a number of ways:

- **Contribute to the government's shadow report:** GMN will be able to contribute to the government's shadow report which is prepared every four years. For instance, the network could focus on the implementation of the domestic violence prevention act, which is yet to be done.
- **Research based initiatives:** According to participants in FGDs and consultations, GMN can be used to gather the work of organizations that work on women's issues, make their work research-based, documentation-based, and conduct methodological review.
- **Focal point at district level:** Some participants proposed that a focal point can be established at the district level for monitoring and reporting indicators, collecting gender disaggregated data for an evidence-based advocacy.
- **Share field experience, best practices, and advocacy positions:** to help GMN carry out its mission in terms of member organizations' contributions to GMN's future scope of work.

“ If this network provides a space and the opportunity for everyone to share their experiences and learn from one another. We can do things like share our experiences and learn from others. ”

— Nijera Kori

Through GMN, member organizations can identify some specific issues and prioritize them by ranking and decide to work on within the next five years. Some participants further indicated about the top line research and implementation of SDG (5) others suggested unpaid care work as one of the most highlighted issue. UN Women is actively involve raising voice for this and supporting Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS) for the time use survey on this issue. UN Women is actively involved in raising awareness and supporting the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS) for

the “Time Use Survey” and GMN Member organizations can monitor this issue through GMN. Other priority issues include gender responsive budget for gender sensitive social protection in response to the pandemic, implementation of domestic violence prevention act, development of disability act among others.

## **GMN's Effectiveness and Sustainability**

To ensure GMN's long-term viability, it should work on a systemic and routine basis rather than as a one-off project initiative. Some participants believe that in order for GMN to be active and dynamic, its member organizations must demonstrate a strong commitment. If they are willing, they may function as a team by ensuring everyone's active involvement and commitment. They would be able to remain transparent and accountable for the long-term sustainability of GMN.

Some participants suggested that GMN should be more than just coordinating meetings and should work on a more in-depth basis. They opined that the GMN could have dialogue with a select group of member organizations (3-7) (experts in their fields) to establish recommendations for mainstreaming the network and policy proposals that could be introduced effectively in a year and then widely repeated.

GMN member organizations emphasized the importance of good communication and clarity about the network's coordination process among its member organizations is critical. UN Women may form small groups to carry out some of the GMN's tasks, depending on their capacity and availability. However, it is important to assess the GMN member organizations' capacity and strength and determine how and in what ways the organization should be involved, based on their background, skill, and knowledge. It's also crucial to understand how their contribution would be ensured and valued.

Participants believe that if GMN would be successful in the long run if it can be institutionalized. To achieve this, GMN will need a development strategy, either short or long term. For example, a mutual understanding, or a common platform, by which its member organizations may collaborate on certain issues, is critical.

The study further reveals the importance of transparency and ownership in order for GMN to be sustainable. Transparency, accountability, and ownership are essential for making the most of their contribution, emphasized by some participants. They do agree, however, that if the network is sustained, any development interventions and policies would benefit.



# 3

## **CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

## 3. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### 3.1 CONCLUSION

Gender Monitoring Network has the potential to have a profound impact on state-level response plans and programs for the COVID-19 crisis and beyond. GMN could make any development intervention and policies strong and dynamic. However, in order to strengthen GMN and bring important issues to the attention of government and policymakers, it requires a strong commitment and active involvement of its member organizations. Some strategic guidance, a solid structure, a dynamic strategy, and a committed and active committee responsible with carrying out the network's mission are needed to ensure GMN's long-term viability and sustainability as an independent platform. The study suggests that, GMN's effective coordination with its member organizations as well as building synergies with other established networks is key to open up new spaces for influencing policy transformations on GEEW.

### 3.2 RECOMMENDATIONS

#### Advocacy

1. The advocacy/call for action needs to be revisited to follow up and take stock of actions which have been taken into account by Government and relevant entities.
2. Conduct a mapping to identify key focus areas for Policy advocacy.
3. Member organizations can be facilitated to engage in governance processes in order to strengthen and monitor GEEW's policy driven initiatives, such as GRB, gender responsive social protection in response to COVID-19 etc.
4. GMN can develop thematic papers for Policy advocacy on pressing issues that call for urgent action.
5. GMN can work to gather specific gender statistics from the field related to COVID-19 for monitoring the situation of women in those situations.

#### Knowledge Management

6. GMN needs to build on its Knowledge repository by more coordinated knowledge management/ e.g. the repository can be organized by thematic areas with brief summary for easy tracking and reference.

### **Capacity Building**

7. With support from UN Women, GMN can facilitate capacity development of CSOs/ Women's rights organizations focusing on grassroots particularly on management, leadership capacity in this dominant digital space following COVID-19.

### **GMN structure**

8. The GMN should have meetings on a quarterly basis with a regular plan of action.
9. UN Women can consider having communication in Bengali for majority's language convenience.
10. Spell out the roles and responsibilities of the members of GMN for more clarity.
11. GMN can conduct a mapping of existing networks and have a representative from each network to be part of GMN. Building synergies with other existing networks with similar mandates could be a value addition to GMN.
12. GMN can be made the platform for regular exchange of field experience, best practices, and advocacy positions.
13. GMN is required to have dedicated resources (time and person) to smoothly run GMN and have a structure in place with members roles explicitly spelled out.





**ANNEX**



## Annex 1

### Sampling details for the study

Data Collection Tools	Sample size	Participants	Groups
Questionnaire Survey	30	GMN Organizations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• GMN Members of Large Org. (15)</li> <li>• GMN Members of Small Org. (15)</li> </ul>
Focus Group Discussion (FGDs) & Consultations*	6	Based on organizations (large and small)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• FGD 1: Large Organizations – 4 large Orgs.</li> <li>• FGD 2: Large Organizations – 2 small org.</li> </ul>
Key Informant Interviews (KIIs)**	12	Engaged with GMN/UN Women	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Representatives of both large and small org.</li> <li>• Gender Experts/Academician</li> <li>• UN Women-GMN members</li> <li>• UN Partner Org</li> </ul>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>48</b>		

Note: \* **Focus Group Discussion:** Each group constitute of at least 3-5 members.

\*\* List of **Key Informants** is provided in Annex 3.

## Annex 2

### LIST OF GMN MEMBER ORGANIZATIONS FOR ONLINE SURVEY

No.	Large Organizations	No.	Small Organizations
1	ActionAid Bangladesh	1	BINDU
2	Ain o Shalish Kendra (ASK)	2	Centre for Disability in Development (CDD)
3	Bandhu Social Welfare Society	3	Dalit Women Forum
4	Bangladesh Mahila parishad (BMP)	4	Grameen Alo
5	Bangladesh Nari Shramik Kendra (BNSK)	5	Protttoy Unayan Sangstha
6	Bangladesh Legal Aid and Services Trust (BLAST)	6	Somporker Noya Setu
7	Christian Aid	7	Women with Disabilities Development Foundation (WDDF)
8	Islamic Relief Bangladesh		
9	Light House		
10	Manusher Jonno Foundation (MJF)		
11	Naripokkho		
12	Nijera Kori		
13	Amrai Pari Paribarik Nirjaton Protirodh Jot (WE CAN)		
14	UNAIDS		

**Note:** The selection of large and small organizations was based on their number of employees and beneficiaries/number of women/girls/gender diverse person reach out on COVID-19 information and services, and geographical locations/areas reach out. For instance, for large organization, the minimum number of employees and beneficiaries are 100 and 10,000 respectively and the at least 2 divisions reached out. Likewise, for small organization, the minimum number of employees and beneficiaries are 10 and 100 respectively and the at least 1 district reached out.

## GMN: Online Survey

### Introduction

**Dear Participant,**

Greetings!

The UN Women Bangladesh Country Office is currently conducting a Rapid Review of Gender Monitoring Network (GMN). The purpose of the review is to assess the needs of the organizations in Gender Monitoring network and to develop a plan to adapt GMN to the current needs of members in responding to COVID19 crisis and beyond to provide best support to women, girls, and gender diverse communities. In this regard, an online survey will be conducted to obtain data and information from representatives of GMN member organizations. The online survey focuses on the usefulness of GMN activities; current interests, existing needs and challenges, including on engaging with an online community; good practices that has been useful for GMN organizations, and kind of online support they require to better respond to COVID19 crisis.

Thank you for participating and responding to this survey. We request that you respond to questions where possible. Your responses will be analyzed separately. The survey will take approximately 10 - 15 minutes to complete. In case you have any technical problems, please contact me ([jbhossain@ait.asia](mailto:jbhossain@ait.asia)).

Data collected from the survey will be held confidentially and will be accessible to only the consultant and UNW GMN team. Information you provide will only be reported in analyzed and aggregate form, meaning that no individual will be identifiable from reported information.

**The deadline for responding to the online survey is 12<sup>th</sup> of March 2021.**

Thank you.

Julaikha B Hossain (Consultant)

## Survey Questionnaire

### **Basic Information**

Your Organization's Name: .....

What is your gender?    Female                      Male                      Other

Your Role/Position:

Location:

How long have you worked in your organization? .....

Which following areas does your organization focus on?

### **Current Situation: interests, needs and challenges**

1.    What are your organization's current interests in responding to the socio-economic impact of COVID19? Please mark all that apply.
  - a)   Gov-NGO Partnership and Advocacy
  - b)   Access to Basic Services and information
  - c)   Better Access to Relief Services/Emergency aid service
  - d)   GBV prevention
  - e)   GBV responses
  - f)   Health services
  - g)   Livelihood/economic empowerment
  - h)   Legal aid/services
  - i)   Referral services
  - j)   Training /capacity-building
  - k)   Awareness-raising
  - l)   Advocacy/campaigning/lobbying
  - m)   Leadership development
  - n)   Networking /Alliance-building/Movement-building and women's organizing
  - o)   Communications & information
  - p)   Other (please specify)
  
2.    What new activities has your organization been involved due to COVID-19 since May 2020?

**Note:** This is following up of the question that had asked to GMN members to respond in last April 2020 and the question was: "How many women would you be able to reach out to with COVID-19 related information/services/awareness raising through your organization – particularly to your programme participants/beneficiaries/ frontline workers/networks members, focusing on the marginalized section of the community?"

3. What is the intensity of challenges that you are facing in supporting women/girls/ gender diverse communities?
  - 1 - Extremely high
  - 2 – High
  - 3 - Moderate high
  - 4 - Moderate low
  - 5 – Low
4. What kind of evolving needs are you facing due to the impact of COVID-19 in your operations?? Please mark all that apply.
  - a) Technological barrier (please specify)
  - b) Lack of services (for example, GBV response services)
  - c) Inadequate funding
  - d) Limited field accessibility for COVID19
  - e) Others
5. Please share any good practices that your organization has been involved in while responding to the COVID19 crisis and your focus area/target group. ....
6. Are you engaged with an online community like GMN (for example, to respond to COVID19 crisis)? If so, please specify which.

#### **Feedback on Evaluation of GMN Activities**

7. In your opinion, which of the following GMN activities are useful for your organization?
  - a) Online consultation and other UN Women thematic consultations that GMN members were invited to join among network members:
 

Not useful	Satisfactory	Not sure	Somewhat useful	Very useful
------------	--------------	----------	-----------------	-------------
  - b) Exchange of information and tools among network members:
 

Not useful	Satisfactory	Not sure	Somewhat useful	Very useful
------------	--------------	----------	-----------------	-------------
  - c) Information sharing from UN Women about new documents, training opportunities, funding opportunities, etc.
 

Not useful	Satisfactory	Not sure	Somewhat useful	Very useful
------------	--------------	----------	-----------------	-------------

d) Situation monitoring and orientation on data collection methodology:

Not useful      Satisfactory      Not sure      Somewhat useful      Very useful

e) Peer-Support:

Not useful      Satisfactory      Not sure      Somewhat useful      Very useful

f) Joint advocacy

Not useful      Satisfactory      Not sure      Somewhat useful      Very useful

8. Did you make use of the advocacy brief produced by GMN in your response efforts?

Yes      To Some extent      No

9. Did you make use of the Orientation on GBV Data collection during pandemic?

Yes      To Some extent      No

10. How far do you feel GMN activities is in line with the priorities of your organization / your focus area / target group?

- Very relevant
- Somewhat relevant
- Insufficiently relevant
- Not at all relevant

11. Please share any good practices (example/story) when GMN has been directly useful in your work to support women, girls and gender diverse people.

12. Have you accessed and used knowledge products /resource and information circulated by UN Women to GMN?

Yes      No      To some extent

13. What do you think about the resource and information that you have received from GMN?

- a) Information is helpful and clear to me
- b) I don't find the information relevant for our organization
- c) information overload
- d) Some information is not clear

If you have responded c and d, what suggestions do you have in this regard.



### **Expectations and Recommendations**

14. Will you be interested in the continuation of an online network like GMN?
- a) Yes on COVID
  - b) Yes going beyond COVID
  - c) No

If you have responded a and b, please respond the following questions.

15. What kind of online GMN activities would be useful for your organization as you support women and girls' recovery from the impact of COVID? Mark all that apply.
- a) Capacity development
  - b) Thematic dialogues
  - c) Resource and Information
  - d) Advocacy
  - e) Support in connection to Psycho-social/mental health support services
  - f) Other (please specify)
16. How often would you like to receive information from GMN?
- Biweekly   Fortnightly   Monthly   Quarterly
17. Do you propose to have meetings with GMN in intervals?
- Yes   No   Email communication is sufficient
18. Are there other key areas/issues that should be addressed in a more proactive way in GMN? If so, please specify.
19. What recommendations do you have for GMN to be a more interactive and demand driven online community that could be beneficial for your organization and to support women, girls and gender diverse communities. Please specify

## Annex 3

### LIST OF KEY INFORMANTS

No.	Name and Position	Affiliation
1	Ms. Banasree	Manusher Jonno Foundation
2	Ms. Farhana Afroze	Christian Aid
3	Ms. Ferdousi Begum	Grameen Alo
4	Mr. Harun ur Rashid	Light House
5	Ms. Jannatul Mouwa	BINDU
6	Ms. Kamrun Nahar	Naripokkho
7	Ms. Khushi Kabir	Nijera Kori
8	Ms. Morium Nesa, Gender- Programme Officer	ActionAid
9	Mr. Shale Ahmed	Bandhu
10	Ms. Sumaiya Islam	Bangladesh Nari Sramik Kendra
11	Ms. Tamanna Singh Baraik	Dalit Women Forum
12	Ms. Taslima Yasmin	Gender Expert and Academician

### GMN: Key Informant Interview question set (DRAFT) (Will adapt to focus areas)

#### Personal Information

Role/Position

Location

How long have you worked in your organization/institute?

Which thematic areas have you/your organization focused on?

1. What are your organization's current priorities, and why, in responding to the socio-economic impact of COVID19?
2. In your perspective, why GMN is effective to you and your organization? Would you mind to share any good practices that you/your organization has adopted as a result of participating in GMN?

3. How far do you think GMN aligns with the needs, priorities, challenges, capacity building and support of your organization's thematic areas/target groups?
4. How far do you think GMN aligned with government priorities / NAP/CEDAW/SDGS?
5. Please share your thoughts on GMN's collaboration possibilities with other established networks and CSOs for offline and online.
6. Please also share your thoughts on key strategic support for GMN's members in terms of fund, collaboration, and learning for making GMN as sustainable and independent platform.
7. In your perspective, how GMN can contribute in GEEW policies and advocacy role to initiates, collaboration strategy with other activists' networks and platform?
8. How can the GEEW policy implementation issues be better integrated into the GMN work more broadly?
9. How can you/your organization contribute to GMN's scope of work?
10. Are you interested in participating in any online discussions or consultations on wider gender equality and women's empowerment policy implementation issues through GMN?
11. What suggestions do you have for UN Women's GMN work in the future?

## Annex 4

### LIST OF Organizations for FGDs and Consultations

No.	Large Organizations	No.	Small Organizations
1	<b>Ain o Shalish Kendra</b> Ms. Tamanna Haque Riti	1	<b>Centre for Disability in Development (CDD)</b> Mr. Subir Kumar Saha
2	<b>AWAJ Foundation</b> Ms. Nazma Akhter	2	<b>Prottoy Unnayan Sangstha</b> Ms. Mahmoda Akter
3	<b>Bangladseh Mahila Parishad</b> Ms. Maleka Banu	3	<b>Women with Disabilities Development Foundation</b> Ms. Ashrafun Nahar Misti*
4	<b>We Can Alliance</b> Ms. Zinat		

Note: \*Was agreed to join but later could not make it due to illness.

### GMN: Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) question set (DRAFT) (Will adapt to focus areas)

#### Personal Information

Organization's Name:

Role/Position

Location

How long have you worked in your organization/institute?

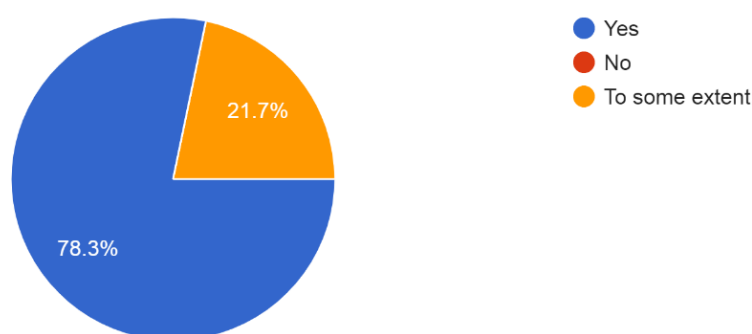
Which thematic areas have you/your organization focused on?

1. In your perspective, what are the most pressing needs and priorities for women, girls and gender diverse people impacted by COVID-19? What is your organization currently doing to support them?
2. Since COVID, what kind of changes have your organization made in addressing and responding to the COVID19 crisis and your focus area/target group? In your observation/experience, in implementing these changes, what have been the main challenges and what are the cause of the challenges?
3. Has your thematic area developed any knowledge products/research information that are useful in your work to support women, girls and gender diverse people? If so, how was it disseminated and used?

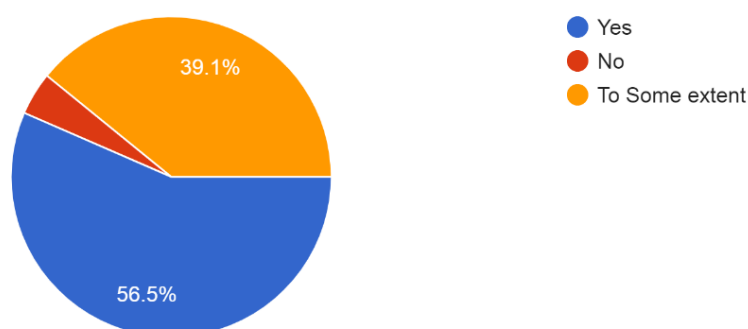
4. What are your thoughts on GMN's scope of work?
5. How far do you think GMN aligns with the needs, priorities, challenges, capacity building and support of your organization's thematic areas/target groups?
6. In your perspective, what are GMN's particular strengths, and what are the areas of work in which these strengths are especially important?
7. What are the remaining opportunities or gaps in GMN?
8. Please share your thoughts on GMN's collaboration possibilities with other established networks and CSOs for offline and online.
9. How can you/your organization contribute to GMN's mission?
10. What recommendations do you have for GMN's coordination mechanisms? Do you suggest more frequent/less frequent communication with GMN members?
11. Suggest ways in which GMN organizations' engagement can be enhanced (e.g. regular interval meetings, more dialogues, consultations, capacity building initiatives, etc.)

## Annex 5

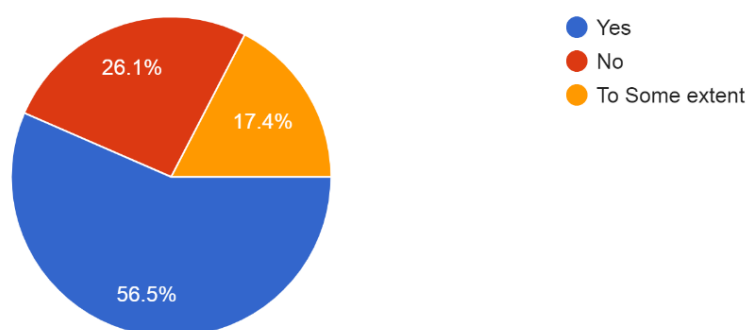
**Figure 7:** Have you accessed and used knowledge products/resource and information circulated by UN Women to GMN?



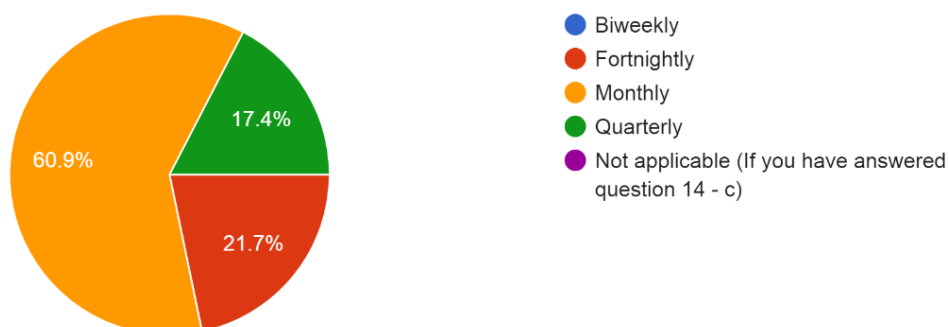
**Figure 8:** Did you make use of the advocacy brief produced by GMN in your response efforts?



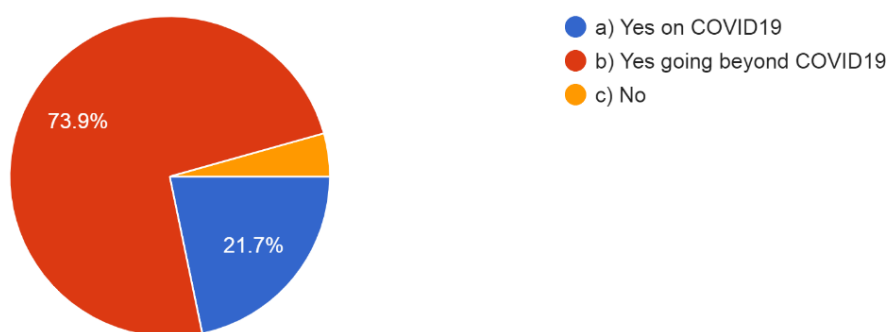
**Figure 9:** Did you make use of the Orientation on GBV Data collection during pandemic?



**Figure 10: How often would you like to receive information from GMN?**



**Figure 11: Participants opinion on continuation of GMN**









**UN Women Bangladesh Country Office**

Road: 43, House: 39, Gulshan 2, Dhaka - 1212, Bangladesh

Tel: +88 02 988 3828, 985 6641 Fax: +88 02 985 8593

[www.unwomen.org](http://www.unwomen.org)

