SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOAL

5

GENDER EQUALITY

UNIVERSITY OF DHAKA

Sustainability Progress Report 2025

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SDG 5: Gender Equality

1. Executive Summary

Gender equality is a fundamental prerequisite for inclusive development, social justice, and institutional progress. Sustainable Development Goal 5 (SDG 5) seeks to achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls by addressing discrimination, strengthening institutional protection, expanding access to opportunities, and ensuring meaningful participation in leadership and decision-making.

At the University of Dhaka, gender equality is reflected in initiatives that extend beyond female student enrolment and academic participation. These include institutional mechanisms for preventing harassment and discrimination, investments in female residential infrastructure, financial assistance and scholarships for female students, recognition of women's leadership, and improvements in health and welfare facilities.

During the year 2025, the university undertook several institutional initiatives aligned with SDG 5. The establishment of specialized committees addressing sexual harassment, oppression, bullying, and ragging represented an important step towards strengthening gender protection and accountability. The restructuring of the Centre for Gender and Development Studies also provided an institutional platform for advancing gender-related research and policy engagement.

Infrastructure development remained another major priority. The Bangladesh-China Maitree Hall project, designed to accommodate 1,500 female students, received formal approval from the Chinese government. In addition, the university's Tk 2,841 crore Further Development Project included provisions for four new female residential halls with a planned capacity of 2,600 students. Together, these projects represent a planned expansion of 4,100 female residential seats.

The university also continued to support female students through scholarships, research grants, merit awards, and targeted financial assistance. Notable initiatives included scholarships for 63 female students at Kabi Sufia Kamal Hall, academic awards for outstanding female graduates, and departmental trust fund support across several faculties.

Beyond financial and infrastructural support, the university institutionalized the observance of July 14 as Female Student Day, recognizing women's leadership during the July Mass Uprising. Activities commemorating Begum Rokeya and other female leaders further reinforced the importance of women's historical contributions and contemporary participation.

Health and welfare initiatives included the installation of a sanitary product vending machine, female health awareness activities, and participation in competitive sports and cultural platforms.

This report presents the university's documented initiatives during the year 2025, organized around the relevant SDG 5 targets. It distinguishes between completed interventions, approved

projects, and planned infrastructure development, providing a grounded account of the university's contribution to gender equality.

2. Institutional Governance and Policy Mechanisms for Gender Protection

Strong institutional governance is essential to preventing gender-based discrimination and ensuring that women and girls can participate in academic and institutional life without harassment, intimidation, or violence. SDG Targets 5.1 and 5.c emphasize the elimination of discrimination and the development of effective policies and institutional mechanisms to advance gender equality.

2.1 Establishment of Specialized Committees

An important institutional development took place on 9 October 2025, when the University of Dhaka Syndicate established two specialized committees to address harassment and misconduct across the university.

The committees included:

- **Anti-Sexual Harassment and Oppression Investigation Committee:** Led by Professor Dr. Upama Kabir, Dean of the Faculty of Engineering and Technology. The committee is responsible for investigating allegations of sexual harassment and oppression across academic and administrative settings.
- **Anti-Bullying and Ragging Committee:** Led by Professor Dr. Shahnaz Huda of the Department of Law. The committee is responsible for monitoring and addressing physical, psychological, and verbal bullying and ragging across the university.

These committees provide dedicated institutional structures for receiving and addressing complaints, strengthening accountability, and promoting a safer academic environment.

2.2 Institutional Complaint and Reporting Mechanisms

To operationalize these protective measures, the Office of the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Administration) issued directives requiring faculty deans, hall provosts, hostel wardens, department chairpersons, institute directors, and the university proctor to establish physical complaint boxes across their respective units.

The directives also required administrative heads to submit weekly grievance reports to the conveners of the relevant committees. Departments and institutes were instructed to organize awareness workshops for students and faculty members on sexual harassment, oppression, bullying, and ragging.

At the residential level, dedicated complaint boxes were installed at:

- **Kabi Sufia Kamal Hall:** 9 October 2025.
- **Bangladesh-Kuwait Maitree Hall:** 13 November 2025.

The installations included separate reporting channels for sexual harassment and oppression complaints and for bullying and ragging-related grievances.

These arrangements represent an effort to make reporting mechanisms more accessible and to establish a regular administrative reporting process. Their long-term effectiveness will depend on confidentiality, timely investigation, appropriate follow-up, and transparent institutional accountability.

2.3 Restructuring of the Centre for Gender and Development Studies

On 11 September 2025, the university Syndicate approved a change in the designation of its specialized academic centre to the Centre for Gender and Development Studies. Subsequently, on 18 September 2025, the university issued a formal call for applications from eligible senior faculty members for the position of Director.

The restructured centre provides an institutional foundation for advancing gender-related academic research, curriculum development, and policy-oriented initiatives.

Its continued development can contribute to integrating gender perspectives into teaching, research, institutional planning, and broader development discussions.

3. Female Student Accommodation and Residential Infrastructure

Access to safe, adequate, and affordable accommodation is an important dimension of gender equality in higher education. For female students who relocate from outside Dhaka, residential facilities can directly influence their ability to access and continue university education.

During the year 2025, the University of Dhaka undertook both long-term infrastructure planning and hall-level improvements to strengthen female residential facilities.

3.1 Bangladesh-China Maitree Hall Project

One of the most significant developments was the advancement of the Bangladesh-China Maitree Hall project, a proposed residential facility designed to accommodate 1,500 female students.

The project has an estimated investment of Tk 244 crore and is financed through financial assistance from the Government of China. Following the transmission of the project proposal through the Economic Relations Division and the Chinese Embassy in Dhaka, the Chinese government formally approved the proposal.

On 18 December 2025, a Chinese expert delegation, accompanied by university representatives and diplomatic officials, conducted a site feasibility inspection in the Jagannath Hall area.

The project represents an important institutional commitment to addressing the shortage of female residential accommodation. However, during the reporting period, it remained at the approval and preparatory stage, with construction yet to commence.

3.2 Female Residential Infrastructure under the DU Further Development Project

The university's broader **Tk 2,841 crore DU Further Development Project (2025–2030)** also includes significant provisions for female student accommodation.

The female-focused components include:

- Construction of four new female residential halls.
- Planned accommodation for 2,600 female students.
- Dedicated house tutor residential facilities across the four female halls.

The project received an initial Annual Development Programme allocation of Tk 60 crore in November 2025. When combined with the proposed 1,500-seat Bangladesh-China Maitree Hall, the two projects represent a planned addition of **4,100 female residential seats**.

This planned expansion is particularly relevant to SDG Target 5.b, as it seeks to improve the physical and institutional conditions that enable women's participation in higher education. The planned capacity should not, however, be interpreted as accommodation already delivered during 2025.

3.3 Improvements in Existing Female Residential Halls

Alongside major development projects, the university implemented several hall-level interventions to improve existing residential facilities.

Bangamata Sheikh Fazilatunnesa Mujib Hall

On 13 November 2025, the hall installed six residential refrigerators across its five floors, with five provided by the Hall Union and one by the hall administration. An additional refrigerator was installed in the dining facility. On 11 December 2025, construction of additional residential and office rooms on the third floor of the office block was also documented.

Bangladesh-Kuwait Maitree Hall

The hall received 500 study chairs and 40 double-bunk beds on 18 December 2025 to improve study and residential facilities. Earlier, on 14 August, its main water lines and clean-water storage reservoirs underwent major maintenance. Bathroom, window, and shower facilities were also repaired on 17 July.

Kabi Sufia Kamal Hall

Four heavy-duty drinking water filtration units were installed in the main residential building on 9 October 2025. Ceiling fans were also installed at eight administrative points on 18 September. During the same month, the hall conducted interviews for 450 residential seat applications as part of its room allocation process.

Rokeya Hall

On 14 August 2025, the hall completed deep-cleaning and mosaic restoration in the bathrooms of the Aparajeyo building. Structural and plumbing repairs were also completed across the third and fourth floors of the Chameli building on 17 July.

These interventions addressed practical aspects of residential life, including access to clean water, basic facilities, study infrastructure, and the maintenance of living spaces.

4. Institutional Recognition of Female Leadership and Historical Contributions

Women's participation in leadership and decision-making is a central dimension of SDG Target 5.5. Recognizing women's contributions to institutional and social development can strengthen representation, preserve historical memory, and encourage future generations of female leaders.

4.1 Institutionalization of Female Student Day

An important development during the reporting period was the university's decision to designate **14 July as Female Student Day (Nari Shikkharthi Dibosh)** within its academic calendar.

The observance recognizes the courage, leadership, and participation of female students during the July Mass Uprising. Its inclusion in the academic calendar provides a recurring institutional opportunity to reflect on women's participation in student movements and public life.

On 14 July 2025, female students from different residential halls participated in a central commemorative rally and assembly at the Raju Sculpture. The programme included commemorative addresses, cultural activities, and discussions on civic participation.

4.2 Commemorative Activities at Residential Halls

The university's residential halls organized additional activities to recognize female leadership and preserve the history of women's participation in the July movement.

At Rokeya Hall, a photo exhibition documented female student leadership during the uprising. The hall's Literary Society also published an anthology titled *Rokeyas of July* (July-er Rokeyara), reflecting the experiences and contributions of female students.

The hall also recognized two severely injured female students, Sanjida Ahmed Tonwi and Cynthia Mehreen Sakal, through commemorative crests, certificates, and financial assistance.

Kabi Sufia Kamal Hall organized commemorative programmes titled *July-te Sufia Kamal Hall* and *Smritite July* on 17 July 2025. These events reflected on the role of female residential students in promoting civil rights and student protection.

4.3 Observance of Begum Rokeya Day

On 9 December 2025, Rokeya Hall formally observed Begum Rokeya Day through floral tributes at the portrait of Begum Rokeya. University officers, hall provosts, house tutors, and student union representatives participated in the observance.

The commemoration recognized Begum Rokeya's historical contribution to women's education and empowerment and reinforced the importance of her legacy within the university community.

4.4 Recognition of Women's Contributions to Student Governance

The university also paid formal tribute to Professor Mahfuza Khanam, former Vice-President of the Dhaka University Central Students' Union (DUCSU), following her passing in August 2025.

On 13 August, an official floral wreath was placed at the Central Shaheed Minar on behalf of the Vice-Chancellor, recognizing her contributions to student governance and academic leadership.

Together, these commemorative initiatives strengthened institutional recognition of women's historical and contemporary participation in leadership, civic engagement, and university life.

5. Financial Inclusion, Scholarships and Academic Recognition for Female Students

Financial assistance and merit-based awards are important mechanisms for reducing economic barriers and supporting women's participation in higher education. SDG Targets 5.a and 5.c emphasize women's equal access to economic resources and the development of institutional mechanisms that promote gender equality.

During 2025, the University of Dhaka distributed a range of scholarships, stipends, and research grants to female students through departmental trust funds, alumni contributions, and institutional award programmes.

5.1 Merit-Based Awards and Academic Distinctions

Two notable academic recognitions during the reporting period included:

- **Falguni Biswas, Department of Physics:** Received the Hamim Khan Memorial Award, amounting to Tk 1,47,360, on 11 December 2025 for achieving the highest CGPA among graduating female students in the B.Sc. (Honours) examinations.
- **Lubaba Binte Halim, Department of Economics:** Received the Shah AAMS Kibria Memorial Trust Fund Scholarship of Tk 12,000 on 9 October 2025 for achieving the highest CGPA in the BSS (Honours) examination.

These awards recognize academic excellence and provide financial incentives for outstanding female scholars.

5.2 Kabi Sufia Kamal Hall Trust Fund Scholarships

A major scholarship distribution took place at Kabi Sufia Kamal Hall on 13 November 2025. A total of **63 female students** received financial awards across four categories:

- One Trust Fund Gold Medal for outstanding academic performance.
- 15 Merit Scholarships.
- 40 General Scholarships.
- Eight Co-Curricular Scholarships recognizing achievements in talent and hall governance.

The programme demonstrated the use of residential hall-based trust funds to support academic achievement, financial need, and participation in extracurricular activities.

5.3 Departmental Scholarships and Financial Assistance

Female students also received support through several departmental and institutional trust funds.

Department of Law: On 14 August 2025, the Muhammad Shah Alam Scholarship provided Tk 10,000 each to 50 meritorious and financially constrained students. Female students were among the recipients, reflecting the scholarship's contribution to financial inclusion.

Department of Psychology: On 18 December 2025, seven female students received the Professor Dr. S.H. Mahmud Trust Fund Scholarship, providing Tk 1,000 per month for one year.

Department of Biochemistry and Molecular Biology: Two female scholars, Kaniz Fatima Tanisha and Fatima Siddique Roja, received the Dr. Syed Nurul Alam Memorial Scholarship of Tk 1,000 per month for one year. In addition, Riya Saha received a Tk 15,000 postgraduate research scholarship, while four female undergraduate scholars received Tk 5,000 each through the Dr. Motiur Rahman Memorial Scholarship.

Department of Political Science: Three female students—Mosammat Sadia Khatun, Ritu Rani Saha, and Farhana Parveen—received scholarships of Tk 12,000 each through the Political Science Shohojathri Forum Trust Fund on 11 December 2025.

Department of Educational and Counselling Psychology: Wahida Parveen received a Tk 24,000 MPhil research grant through the Bilqis-Mahbub Trust Fund on 9 October 2025. Undergraduate scholar Ayesha Zaman received the Alhaj Shamsuddin Hafiz and Taiba Begum Trust Fund Scholarship, providing Tk 200 per month for one year.

Department of Pharmacy: Female scholars Raihana Haq Jebin and Fariha Annan Sristi received Tk 18,000 each through the Ashraf Dola Memorial Trust Fund on 11 December 2025.

These programmes illustrate the contribution of departmental trust funds and institutional scholarship arrangements to female students' academic progression and research participation.

6. Health, Well-being and Menstrual Hygiene Support

Gender equality requires attention to women's health and well-being alongside educational and professional opportunities. Access to appropriate health facilities and menstrual hygiene products can help create a more supportive residential and academic environment.

6.1 Access to Menstrual Hygiene Products

On 11 December 2025, Bangamata Sheikh Fazilatunnesa Mujib Hall formally received a sanitary product vending machine donated by the Dhaka University Alumni Association. The installation provides a dedicated facility for accessing menstrual hygiene products within the residential hall. This initiative contributes to improving the availability of essential hygiene supplies and addressing a practical aspect of female student welfare.

6.2 Female Health Awareness and Preventive Healthcare

On 10 July 2025, Bangamata Sheikh Fazilatunnesa Mujib Hall organized a female student health awareness programme in collaboration with Ad-din Mother Care Limited. The hall also supported a continuous free blood-grouping campaign conducted by Badhan, a student volunteer organization. These initiatives provided opportunities for health awareness and access to basic preventive health services within the residential environment.

7. Women's Participation in Sports, Cultural Activities and Co-Curricular Leadership

Women's empowerment extends beyond academic achievement to include participation in sports, cultural activities, creative expression, and student leadership. Such opportunities contribute to confidence, teamwork, representation, and personal development.

7.1 Female Participation in Competitive Sports

The university's inter-hall swimming competition on 10 July 2025 highlighted the participation and achievements of female students in competitive sports.

In the female student division:

- Bangamata Sheikh Fazilatunnesa Mujib Hall emerged as champion.
- Shamsun Nahar Hall secured the runner-up position.
- Juwairiya Ferdous of Shamsun Nahar Hall received recognition as the Best Female Swimmer.

These achievements demonstrate the participation of female residential students in university-level competitive sporting activities.

7.2 International Cultural Recognition

Female students also demonstrated achievement in international cultural activities.

At the 6th International Mime Festival on 10 July 2025, Mashiyat Dihan Bonhi secured first place, while Jannatul Ferdous Snigdha achieved second place.

Their achievements represent female student participation and recognition in an international creative and cultural platform.

7.3 Literary and Creative Capacity Building

On 13 November 2025, the Shamsun Nahar Hall Union organized a specialized professional writing workshop to encourage female students' literary engagement and creative development.

The initiative provided a co-curricular platform for strengthening writing skills and supporting participation in literary activities.

Together, the sports, cultural, and literary initiatives demonstrate the university's contribution to creating opportunities for female students to develop and demonstrate abilities beyond the classroom.

8. Consolidated SDG 5 Progress and Institutional Contributions

The activities documented during 2025 demonstrate the University of Dhaka's contribution to several dimensions of SDG 5.

SDG 5 Target	Documented institutional contributions
Target 5.1 – End all forms of discrimination against women and girls	Establishment of the Anti-Sexual Harassment and Oppression Investigation Committee; complaint reporting mechanisms; improvements in female residential facilities; menstrual hygiene support.
Target 5.2 – Eliminate violence against women and girls	Specialized investigation committee; anti-bullying and ragging committee; dedicated complaint boxes; administrative reporting directives and awareness activities.
Target 5.3 – Eliminate harmful practices	Institutional mechanisms addressing harassment, oppression, bullying, and ragging; awareness activities promoting safer campus environments.
Target 5.4 – Recognize unpaid care and domestic work	No specific measurable initiative directly addressing unpaid care work was documented in the source material.
Target 5.5 – Ensure women's participation and leadership	Institutionalization of Female Student Day; commemorative recognition of women's leadership; recognition of female academic and cultural achievements; student participation in sports and governance-related activities.
Target 5.a – Equal rights to economic resources	Scholarships, trust fund awards, financial assistance, and research grants for female students.

Target 5.b – Promote women's empowerment through technology and enabling infrastructure	Bangladesh-China Maitree Hall project; proposed female residential halls under the Further Development Project; sanitary product vending infrastructure and residential facility improvements.
Target 5.c – Adopt and strengthen policies for gender equality	Establishment of university-level committees; institutional complaint mechanisms; restructuring of the Centre for Gender and Development Studies.

8.1 Selected Quantitative Highlights

The following figures summarize selected documented outputs during the reporting period. They are not intended to represent a complete university-wide annual statistical inventory.

Area	**Selected achievement**
Gender protection	Two specialized university-level committees established
Local complaint mechanisms	Dedicated complaint boxes installed in two female residential halls
Gender research and policy	Centre for Gender and Development Studies formally designated
Proposed female residential expansion	1,500 seats under Bangladesh-China Maitree Hall
Additional planned residential capacity	2,600 seats through four proposed female residential halls
Combined planned female residential capacity	4,100 new seats
Female student scholarships	63 students supported through Kabi Sufia Kamal Hall Trust Fund
Female student academic recognition	Tk 1,47,360 awarded to a top-performing female Physics graduate
Female student hygiene facilities	One sanitary product vending machine installed
Residential study facilities	500 study chairs and 40 double-bunk beds supplied to Bangladesh-Kuwait Maitree Hall
Sports achievement	Female swimming championship at the inter-hall competition
International cultural achievement	First and second place secured by female students at the 6th International Mime Festival

9. Institutional Impact on SDG 5

The university's documented initiatives during the reporting period indicate a multi-dimensional approach to gender equality.

First, the establishment of specialized committees and institutional complaint mechanisms strengthened the formal governance structure for addressing sexual harassment, oppression, bullying, and ragging. These measures provide a foundation for improving accountability and protecting students across academic and residential settings.

Second, planned investments in female residential accommodation demonstrate institutional recognition of the relationship between safe housing and women's access to higher education. The proposed 4,100 additional female residential seats represent a substantial planned expansion, although their actual contribution will depend on implementation and completion.

Third, scholarships, merit awards, and research grants provide financial support for female students at different academic levels. These initiatives can help reduce economic barriers and recognize women's academic and research achievements.

Fourth, the designation of Female Student Day and the commemoration of Begum Rokeya and other female leaders strengthen institutional recognition of women's participation in social, academic, and civic life.

Finally, improvements in menstrual hygiene facilities, health awareness, sports participation, and creative activities demonstrate an understanding of gender equality that extends beyond academic access to the broader student experience.

10. Conclusion

The University of Dhaka's documented activities during the year 2025 demonstrate institutional efforts to advance gender equality through governance reform, residential infrastructure development, financial inclusion, recognition of women's leadership, and student health and welfare initiatives.

The establishment of specialized committees addressing sexual harassment, oppression, bullying, and ragging provided an institutional foundation for strengthening gender protection. The restructuring of the Centre for Gender and Development Studies further demonstrated the university's intention to strengthen academic and policy engagement with gender-related issues.

The planned expansion of female residential accommodation, including Bangladesh-China Maitree Hall and the female halls under the DU Further Development Project, represents an important commitment to improving women's access to higher education. Meanwhile, scholarships, research grants, academic awards, and health-related facilities supported female students across different stages of university life.

The recognition of Female Student Day, observances honoring Begum Rokeya, and achievements in sports and cultural activities also reinforced the importance of women's leadership, participation, and representation.

Moving forward, the university's priority should be to translate these institutional commitments into measurable and sustained improvements in gender equality. Strengthening implementation, improving gender-disaggregated data, ensuring effective complaint resolution, and completing planned residential infrastructure will be essential to assessing and advancing progress.

Through continued institutional commitment, the University of Dhaka can further strengthen an academic environment in which women and girls have equal opportunities to participate, lead, learn, and contribute to sustainable development.