SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOAL

16

PEACE, JUSTICE AND STRONG INSTITUTIONS

UNIVERSITY OF DHAKA
Sustainability Progress Report 2025

SDG 16: Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions

1. Executive Summary

Strong institutions are essential to sustainable development. Universities contribute to this goal not only through teaching and research but also through transparent administration, inclusive decision-making, protection of rights, and the promotion of justice and accountability. As a major public university, the University of Dhaka has an important responsibility to maintain an institutional environment where students, faculty members, employees, and other stakeholders can participate meaningfully in university affairs and access services through fair and accountable processes.

During 2025, several initiatives at the University of Dhaka contributed to the objectives of Sustainable Development Goal 16 (SDG 16). The available institutional records, covering July to December 2025, demonstrate progress across four interconnected areas: democratic student representation, administrative transparency and accountability, campus safety and protection of rights, and social inclusion and civic engagement.

A major development was the successful organization of the Dhaka University Central Students' Union (DUCSU) and Hall Council Elections on 11 September 2025. The elections provided a formal platform for student representation, subsequently strengthened through the nomination of five elected student representatives to the University Senate. The university also introduced improvements to its central information and grievance-support arrangements, including dedicated student service facilitators, physical feedback boxes, and direct communication channels for complaints and service-related concerns.

Institutional accountability was further supported through the formation of statutory committees for preventing sexual harassment, abuse, bullying, and ragging. Campus safety received attention through fire safety training, emergency response exercises, and technical structural assessments of residential halls following regional seismic activity. The university also strengthened its commitment to transparency in public expenditure through procurement procedures under the Public Procurement Rules and the publication of its Annual Procurement Plan on the national e-Government Procurement platform.

Alongside these governance measures, the university undertook initiatives to support vulnerable students, promote non-discrimination, and encourage civic awareness. These included a targeted educational grant for a visually impaired student, the provision of wheelchairs in a residential hall, commemorations recognizing student participation in democratic movements, and educational programmes on democracy and constitutional reform.

Collectively, these initiatives demonstrate the university's efforts to translate the principles of SDG 16 into institutional practices. They also provide a foundation for further progress through stronger monitoring systems, accessible grievance mechanisms, transparent reporting, and sustained participation by the university community.

2. Institutional Approach and Alignment with SDG 16

SDG 16 seeks to promote peaceful and inclusive societies, provide access to justice for all, and build effective, accountable, and inclusive institutions. Within a university setting, these objectives are reflected in the quality of institutional governance, the protection of students and employees, the accessibility of administrative services, and the participation of different stakeholder groups in decision-making.

The University of Dhaka's available 2025 initiatives demonstrate an approach that connects these principles with its internal governance and broader educational responsibilities. Rather than treating institutional sustainability solely as an environmental or operational concern, the university's activities recognize that a sustainable campus also requires fairness, safety, transparency, and meaningful representation.

The initiatives documented during the reporting period can be organized around the following SDG 16 priorities:

- **Inclusive and participatory governance (Target 16.7):** Strengthening democratic student representation through DUCSU and Hall Council Elections, student participation in the University Senate, and structured engagement with elected representatives.
- **Transparency and accountability (Target 16.6):** Improving access to administrative information, introducing grievance-support arrangements, strengthening quality assurance, and making institutional information publicly accessible.
- **Reducing corruption and strengthening integrity (Target 16.5):** Promoting anti-corruption awareness and ensuring compliance with public procurement and financial accountability requirements.
- **Protection from violence and abuse (Targets 16.1 and 16.2):** Establishing statutory committees to address sexual harassment, abuse, bullying, and ragging, alongside initiatives to improve campus safety.
- **Institutional capacity and partnerships (Target 16.a):** Strengthening emergency preparedness, technical safety assessments, and collaboration with external institutions.
- **Non-discrimination and inclusion (Target 16.b):** Providing targeted educational and mobility support to students with disabilities and promoting civic and interfaith awareness.

These priorities demonstrate how university governance can contribute to the broader SDG agenda while responding to the practical needs of its campus community.

3. Democratic Participation and Inclusive University Governance

3.1 Re-establishing Democratic Student Representation

Meaningful student participation is an important component of accountable university governance. Students are among the principal stakeholders of a university, and their representation in institutional decision-making can help ensure that academic, administrative, and residential concerns receive appropriate attention.

In 2025, the University of Dhaka undertook a series of administrative preparations for the DUCSU and Hall Council Elections. On 10 July, the Chief Returning Officer issued a directive to academic departments, institutes, residential halls, and administrative offices requiring formally admitted students to complete their registration and update their institutional identification cards by 15 July. The measure was intended to support accurate voter-list preparation and ensure that eligible students could participate in the electoral process.

The election authorities also consulted student representatives from different campus bus route committees on 10 July. Discussions focused on polling logistics, security arrangements, administrative coordination, and maintaining a peaceful voting environment across campus transportation routes.

To reduce potential conflicts between academic responsibilities and electoral participation, the university subsequently announced the rescheduling of examinations that had been scheduled between 8 and 10 September 2025.

These preparations culminated in the DUCSU and Hall Council Elections on 11 September 2025. Voting took place across eight designated polling centres, comprising 810 voting booths, from 8:00 AM to 4:00 PM. At the Physical Education Centre polling facility, separate entry and exit routes were arranged for voters from Jagannath Hall, Shahid Sergeant Jahurul Huq Hall, and Salimullah Muslim Hall to manage movement and reduce congestion.

The administration also took immediate action when a polling officer at Amar Ekushey Hall inadvertently issued two ballot papers to one student. The officer was relieved of electoral duties on the day of the election. This response demonstrated the importance placed on procedural compliance and electoral oversight.

The election represented an important institutional development because it restored a formal mechanism through which students could elect representatives and participate in university affairs. The preparatory measures, polling arrangements, and response to procedural irregularities collectively illustrate the administrative requirements involved in organizing an inclusive and accountable electoral process.

3.2 Integrating Student Leadership into Statutory Governance

The significance of the elections extended beyond the voting process. On 18 September 2025, the newly elected DUCSU Executive Council held its inaugural meeting under the chairmanship of the Vice-Chancellor. During the meeting, the council adopted a resolution under Article 20(1)(m) of the University of Dhaka Order, 1973, nominating five elected student representatives to the University Senate.

This development created a formal connection between elected student leadership and the university's highest statutory governing body. It provided a channel through which student representatives could participate in institutional deliberations and contribute to discussions concerning university governance and development.

The university continued this engagement through the DUCSU and Hall Council Representative Conference 2025, held on 20 November at the Nawab Ali Chowdhury Senate Bhaban. Chaired by the Vice-Chancellor, the conference brought together elected student

representatives and university administrators to discuss long-term governance, budget planning, and institutional development priorities.

These initiatives demonstrate a progression from electoral participation to formal representation and institutional dialogue. By connecting elected student leadership with statutory governance structures, the university strengthened the institutional basis for more inclusive decision-making.

3.3 Promoting Public Debate and Youth Participation in Policy Formulation

Democratic governance requires more than the election of representatives. It also depends on informed public discussion, the ability to question leadership, and opportunities for citizens to engage with policy issues.

In this context, the DU Debate Society, in collaboration with the DUCSU Election Commission, organized the DUCSU Electoral Debate 2025 for candidates contesting the positions of Vice-President and General Secretary. The debate, reported on 11 September 2025, was structured around four segments: introductory remarks, specialized policy questioning, rebuttal, and town hall interaction.

The format provided candidates with an opportunity to explain their positions and respond to questions in a public setting. It also enabled students to assess candidates based on their ideas and proposed priorities rather than relying solely on campaign messages.

The university further supported youth participation in policy discussions through the ActionAid-DUDS Inter-University Debate Festival, which concluded on 9 October 2025 at the Teacher-Student Centre Auditorium. Organized around the theme *"Proposing Policies for Social Inclusivity,"* the festival engaged university debaters in developing policy recommendations relating to social inclusion and public and higher education governance.

Together, these initiatives helped create spaces for civic discussion, policy scrutiny, and youth-led advocacy. They demonstrate the university's contribution to developing a culture in which participation is supported by debate, evidence, and the exchange of ideas.

4. Institutional Integrity, Transparency and Accountability

4.1 Improving Administrative Services and Grievance Redressal

Accessible administrative services are an essential part of institutional accountability. Students and members of the public need clear channels through which they can obtain information, seek assistance, and communicate concerns.

On 14 August 2025, the University of Dhaka introduced several improvements to its central Information Center. Two student service facilitators were integrated into the centre under the operational oversight of the Public Relations Office. Their responsibilities included coordinating between service seekers, the Controller of Examinations Office, and relevant central administrative divisions.

The university also installed physical suggestion and grievance feedback boxes at the Information Center to collect comments and complaints from students and members of the public.

In addition, Deputy Registrar Aminul Islam from the Office of the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Administration) was designated as the central officer responsible for urgent grievance handling. Direct communication channels were established through a dedicated email address and a text-only WhatsApp helpline.

The designated channels were:

- Email: servicesupport@du.ac.bd
- WhatsApp: 01797-490575

These arrangements were intended to make administrative assistance more accessible and improve coordination between service users and university offices. The introduction of designated personnel and identifiable communication channels also provides a clearer institutional route for raising service-related concerns.

The next step in strengthening this system would be to monitor the number and types of complaints received, the time taken to resolve them, and the satisfaction of service users. Such information would help the university assess whether the mechanisms are delivering timely and effective responses.

4.2 Promoting Anti-Corruption Awareness and Institutional Integrity

A culture of integrity is essential for building public confidence in educational institutions. Universities can contribute to this objective by promoting ethical conduct, encouraging critical discussion of corruption, and engaging students and the wider community in accountability-related activities.

On 11 December 2025, the University of Dhaka partnered with Transparency International Bangladesh (TIB) to organize the Anti-Corruption Cartoon Competition, Awards Giving Ceremony, and Exhibition 2025. The programme was held at Bokultola and Zainul Gallery 1 and 2 within the Faculty of Fine Arts.

The initiative used cartoons and visual satire to communicate concerns relating to corruption, ethical conduct, and public accountability. By using creative expression as a medium for public engagement, the programme made anti-corruption advocacy accessible to a wider university audience.

The collaboration with TIB also connected the university's educational and cultural environment with a national organization working on transparency and accountability. Such partnerships can help strengthen awareness of corruption as a governance challenge and encourage students to consider their own roles in promoting ethical institutional practices.

4.3 Strengthening Quality Assurance and Public Access to Information

Institutional quality assurance is closely connected to SDG 16 because effective institutions require clear standards, continuous evaluation, and public accountability for performance.

On 13 November 2025, the Institutional Quality Assurance Cell (IQAC) of the University of Dhaka convened a national conference titled *"Progress of Quality Assurance in Higher Education: Experience of IQAC Leadership in Various Universities of Bangladesh."* The programme began at the Prof. Abdul Matin Chowdhury Virtual Classroom and continued at the Senate Bhaban. Academic leaders from public and private universities participated in discussions on institutional accreditation, quality assurance, and the standardization of higher education practices.

The conference provided a platform for sharing institutional experiences and discussing how universities could strengthen their quality assurance systems. It also positioned the University of Dhaka within a broader national dialogue on institutional effectiveness and accountability.

A further step was taken on 18 December 2025, when IQAC established a dedicated digital transparency portal through the university's official social media platform. The portal was designed to archive and publicly disseminate information on peer-reviewed research publications, national and international awards, research grants, technological innovations, and conference outcomes across faculties, institutes, and research centres.

This initiative can improve public visibility of the university's academic activities and make institutional achievements easier to access. It also provides a foundation for more systematic communication of research and innovation outcomes.

For the portal to become a stronger accountability instrument, its effectiveness will depend on regular updates, consistent coverage across academic units, and the availability of information in formats that are easy for different stakeholders to access and understand.

4.4 Ensuring Transparency in Public Procurement and Institutional Development

Large public infrastructure projects require strong financial controls, transparent procurement, and compliance with national regulations. These safeguards are particularly important when public funds are allocated to long-term institutional development.

In November 2025, the University of Dhaka reported progress in the administrative and procurement arrangements for its BDT 2,841 crore Further Development Project. The university published the Annual Procurement Plan on the national e-Government Procurement (e-GP) portal and appointed a dedicated Project Director on 12 October 2025.

The university also secured consent from the Ministry of Education for an initial allocation of BDT 60 crore under the Annual Development Programme. Procurement of architectural and structural design consultants was initiated for 31 proposed capital construction projects planned through 2030.

These activities were undertaken within the framework of the Public Procurement Rules, public planning guidelines, and financial audit requirements.

Publishing the procurement plan through the national e-GP platform supports transparency by making procurement information accessible through an established public system. Compliance with procurement rules also provides an important safeguard for the appropriate use of public resources.

The significance of these measures extends beyond the immediate procurement process. As the university proceeds with a major infrastructure development programme, consistent disclosure, competitive procurement, audit compliance, and public reporting will remain essential to maintaining institutional trust.

5. Human Rights Protection, Campus Safety and Emergency Preparedness

5.1 Establishing Institutional Mechanisms to Prevent Harassment and Abuse

A safe and inclusive university environment requires formal mechanisms to prevent and respond to sexual harassment, abuse, bullying, and ragging. Students and employees must be able to raise concerns through accessible procedures and receive appropriate institutional attention.

In October 2025, following decisions of the University Syndicate, the administration formally constituted two specialized committees:

1. Investigation Committee for Prevention of Sexual Harassment and Abuse, chaired by Prof. Dr. Upama Kabir, Dean of the Faculty of Engineering and Technology.
2. Anti-Bullying and Anti-Ragging Committee, chaired by Prof. Dr. Shahnaz Huda of the Department of Law.

To support the implementation of these arrangements, the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Administration) issued a directive to Deans, Institute Directors, Department Chairmen, Hall Provosts, Hostel Wardens, and the Proctor. The directive required the installation of dedicated physical complaint boxes in academic buildings, institutes, residential halls, hostels, and the Proctor's Office.

Administrators were instructed to collect complaints on a mandatory weekly basis and forward them to the respective committee conveners.

The implementation of this directive was reflected in residential halls. Kabi Sufia Kamal Hall installed separate complaint boxes on 9 October 2025, while Bangladesh-Kuwait Maitree Hall installed dual complaint boxes on 13 November 2025 for reporting anti-ragging and sexual harassment concerns.

The formation of these committees and the introduction of structured complaint collection procedures represent an important institutional step. They establish designated bodies and reporting channels for addressing sensitive concerns rather than leaving students dependent on informal or uncertain processes.

However, the effectiveness of these mechanisms will depend on confidentiality, protection against retaliation, impartial investigation, timely resolution, and awareness among students about how to submit complaints. Regular reporting on the operation of the committees, while protecting the identities and privacy of complainants, would further strengthen institutional accountability.

5.2 Improving Fire Safety and Emergency Response Capacity

Physical safety is another important dimension of a peaceful and secure university environment. Academic buildings and residential halls must have appropriate emergency procedures, and members of the university community need practical knowledge of how to respond to incidents.

On 14 August 2025, Kabi Sufia Kamal Hall organized fire safety training for students alongside an infrastructure safety audit of residential facilities. The combined approach addressed both individual preparedness and the physical conditions of the residential environment.

A further practical exercise took place on 9 October 2025, when the Fire Service and Civil Defense Department conducted a fire safety, prevention, and rescue drill for officers and staff at the Social Sciences Faculty Building.

The exercise provided an opportunity for university personnel to become familiar with emergency response procedures and practical rescue arrangements.

These activities demonstrate the importance of combining institutional safety assessments with training and practical exercises. Their long-term contribution would be strengthened through regular drills, documented risk assessments, updated evacuation procedures, and systematic follow-up on identified safety concerns.

5.3 Assessing Structural Safety Following Seismic Activity

The safety of university buildings is particularly important in a dense campus environment where large numbers of students and employees use academic and residential facilities every day.

Following regional seismic activity, the University of Dhaka established a Central Coordination Committee led by the University Treasurer. The committee worked with structural engineering experts from the Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology (BUET) to conduct technical evaluations of selected residential halls.

The inspections, reported on 11 December 2025, covered:

- Shamsun Nahar Hall;
- Kabi Jasimuddin Hall;
- Haji Muhammad Mohsin Hall;
- Surya Sen Hall; and
- Bijoy Ekattor Hall.

The university administration committed to making the technical sub-committee reports publicly available. The Engineering Office was also assigned responsibility for supervising short-, medium-, and long-term structural repair activities.

The involvement of external engineering expertise is important because structural safety assessments require specialized technical knowledge. Public disclosure of findings can further strengthen confidence in the university's approach to risk management.

The available records document the inspections and the administrative commitments that followed. They do not establish that all identified structural risks had been resolved by the end of 2025. Continued monitoring, completion of recommended repairs, and publication of follow-up information will therefore be important for assessing progress.

6. Social Inclusion, Equal Access and Protection of Rights

6.1 Supporting Students with Disabilities and Financial Vulnerabilities

An inclusive institution must ensure that students can participate in education without being excluded by financial hardship or physical barriers. This requires both targeted financial assistance and practical arrangements that support mobility and access.

On 9 October 2025, the University of Dhaka administration approved a specialized educational support grant for Abdullah Al Nayeem, a visually impaired first-year undergraduate student in the Department of Political Science, from the 2023–2024 session. The grant amounted to BDT 60,000, to be disbursed at BDT 5,000 per month over one year.

The support was intended to help maintain the student's educational continuity and provide financial security.

The university also addressed mobility needs within its residential facilities. On 13 November 2025, Kabi Jasimuddin Hall procured and deployed dedicated wheelchairs to assist injured and differently-abled residential students.

These measures illustrate two complementary dimensions of inclusion: reducing financial barriers and improving practical access to residential facilities. Although the documented initiatives relate to specific forms of support, they provide a useful foundation for developing more comprehensive disability-inclusive services across the university.

Future efforts could include accessibility assessments of academic and residential buildings, accessible learning materials, assistive technologies, and systematic consultation with students with disabilities.

6.2 Preserving Civic Memory and Recognizing Student Participation

Universities play an important role in preserving historical memory and encouraging students to understand the development of democratic institutions and civic freedoms.

In July 2025, the University of Dhaka launched a series of commemorative programmes marking the first anniversary of the July People's Uprising. The university formally recognized

the contribution of students, including women students, to civic resistance and democratic participation.

As part of this initiative, the Vice-Chancellor declared 14 July as Women Student Day (Nari Shiksharthi Dibosh) in recognition of the role of female students in civic movements. The university also declared 17 July as Anti-Terrorism Day (Santras Protirodh Dibosh). Both observances were incorporated into the official academic calendar.

The university also established physical spaces to preserve the history of civic movements. These included:

- **July Smriti Udyan**, inaugurated at Bijoy Ekattor Hall on 15 July 2025;
- **July Protirodh Prangon**, inaugurated at Dr. Muhammad Shahidullah Hall on 15 July 2025; and
- **July Corner**, established in the guest room of Kabi Jasimuddin Hall, featuring curated bookshelves with historical literature covering democratic movements of 1947, 1971, and 2024.

These initiatives connect historical remembrance with the university's educational and institutional environment. By incorporating commemorative observances into the academic calendar and establishing dedicated spaces for historical materials, the university provides opportunities for students to engage with civic history as part of campus life.

6.3 Promoting Democracy and Constitutional Awareness

A strong democratic culture depends on citizens' understanding of constitutional principles, institutional responsibilities, and the processes through which public decisions are made.

On 17 July 2025, the DU Applied Democracy Lab, in partnership with International IDEA, organized a special lecture titled *"Democracy and Constitutional Reform"* under the Students of Youth Democracy Academy programme.

The lecture was delivered by the Vice-Chancellor and engaged 90 student leaders representing 25 academic departments. The programme provided an opportunity for student leaders to examine democratic institutions and discuss constitutional reform.

The initiative is significant because it connects university-based civic education with the broader development of democratic understanding. Engaging student leaders from different departments also creates opportunities for the discussion of governance and constitutional issues across academic disciplines.

6.4 Encouraging Interfaith Understanding and a Non-Discriminatory Society

Social inclusion also requires respect for religious and cultural diversity. Universities can contribute by creating spaces for dialogue, encouraging mutual understanding, and examining the ethical foundations of non-discrimination.

On 18 September 2025, the Centre for Interreligious and Intercultural Dialogue, together with the Department of World Religions and Culture, co-hosted an international seminar titled *"Muhammad's (PBUH) Teachings in Building a Discrimination-free Society."*

The seminar examined ethical principles relating to equality and the creation of a society free from discrimination. Through this initiative, the university provided an academic platform for discussing the relationship between religious teachings, social responsibility, and inclusive coexistence.

Such programmes can contribute to a campus culture in which differences are addressed through dialogue, knowledge, and mutual respect.

6.5 Extending Humanitarian Solidarity Beyond the Campus

The principles of peace and justice also extend beyond institutional boundaries. Universities can contribute to global solidarity by encouraging humanitarian awareness and supporting initiatives that respond to human suffering.

On 13 November 2025, the Master of Professional Banking Alumni Association of the Department of Banking and Insurance formally transferred financial relief funds collected for war-affected children in Gaza, Palestine, to Palestinian Ambassador Yousuf Ramadan. The transfer took place under the direct supervision of the University Treasurer.

This initiative reflected the university community's engagement with an international humanitarian concern. It also demonstrated how alumni networks and academic departments can contribute to solidarity beyond the university campus.

7. Summary of Key SDG 16 Initiatives in 2025

The following table summarizes the principal activities documented in the available institutional records.

Governance area	Key initiative	Date / period	Contribution
Democratic governance	DUCSU and Hall Council Elections	11 September 2025	Voting conducted at 8 polling centres with 810 booths
Student representation	Nomination of elected student representatives to the Senate	18 September 2025	Five elected student representatives nominated under Article 20(1)(m)
Participatory governance	DUCSU and Hall Council Representative Conference	20 November 2025	Dialogue between elected student representatives and university administration

Civic participation	DUCSU Electoral Debate	September 2025	Public debate and scrutiny of VP and GS candidates
Youth policy engagement	Inter-University Debate Festival	9 October 2025	Youth debate on policies for social inclusivity
Administrative services	Central Information Center improvements	14 August 2025	Two student service facilitators, feedback boxes, and designated grievance officer
Anti-corruption	Anti-Corruption Cartoon Competition and Exhibition with TIB	11 December 2025	Public awareness and creative engagement on corruption and integrity
Quality assurance	National IQAC conference	13 November 2025	National dialogue on higher education quality assurance
Digital transparency	IQAC digital information portal	18 December 2025	Public dissemination of research, grants, awards, and innovations
Procurement accountability	Further Development Project procurement arrangements	October–November 2025	Annual Procurement Plan published on e-GP; procurement initiated under PPR
Protection from harassment	Statutory sexual harassment and anti-ragging committees	October 2025	Designated committees and campus-wide complaint-box requirements
Emergency preparedness	Fire safety training and rescue drills	August–October 2025	Practical safety and emergency response exercises
Structural safety	Post-earthquake engineering assessments	December 2025	Technical inspections of five residential halls with follow-up commitments
Disability inclusion	Educational grant for a visually impaired student	9 October 2025	BDT 60,000 grant, disbursed at BDT 5,000 per month for one year
Mobility support	Wheelchair deployment	13 November 2025	Dedicated wheelchairs provided at Kabi Jasimuddin Hall
Civic memory	Women Student Day and Anti-Terrorism Day	July 2025	Two observances incorporated into the academic calendar

Democratic education	Democracy and Constitutional Reform lecture	17 July 2025	90 student leaders from 25 departments engaged
Non-discrimination	Interfaith and intercultural dialogue seminar	18 September 2025	Academic discussion on building a discrimination-free society
Humanitarian solidarity	Relief fund transfer for children in Gaza	13 November 2025	Financial relief funds transferred to the Palestinian Ambassador

8. Conclusion

The University of Dhaka's documented activities in 2025 demonstrate an institutional commitment to strengthening democratic participation, administrative accountability, human rights protection, campus safety, and social inclusion. The DUCSU and Hall Council Elections and the subsequent integration of elected student representatives into the University Senate represent important developments in participatory governance. Improvements to grievance-support arrangements, quality assurance, digital transparency, and public procurement procedures further reflect efforts to strengthen institutional accountability.

At the same time, the establishment of statutory anti-harassment committees, campus safety training, structural assessments, and targeted support for students with disabilities demonstrate that strong institutions must also protect the rights, safety, and dignity of their communities.

These initiatives provide a foundation for the university's continued contribution to SDG 16. Sustaining this progress will require consistent implementation, effective monitoring, transparent communication, and meaningful engagement with students and other stakeholders. By strengthening these institutional practices, the University of Dhaka can continue to advance its role as an accountable, inclusive, and socially responsible public university.