

2023

EVOLVING PARTNERSHIPS
AND GROWTH

2024



ANNUAL REPORT

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About Bonhishikha - unlearn gender



Bonhishikha - unlearn gender is a Bangladesh-based feminist organisation committed to ensuring equality and justice across all spectrums. All our work promotes uniform access to opportunities. Bonhishikha's work has focussed on conducting training, studies, and research, developing feminist strategies and results based frameworks, and in the development of feminist leadership in Bangladesh. We aim to facilitate safe spaces to advocate for gender equality, eliminating GBV, and sexuality rights. Through our research work and analysis, we uncover the subterranean structures of gender inequality, advancing the comprehensive struggle for equality and gender justice. Our focus is on capturing diverse experiences, crafting counter-narratives that challenge societal norms and stereotypes. By shedding light on the prevalence and impact of gender-based violence, we raise awareness and advocate for systemic change in both public and private spheres. Our evidence-based approach empowers us to design inclusive programmes and initiatives, ensuring uniform access for all and promoting gender transformative interventions.

Our Women Gaining Ground programme and newly launched SheRAA - Women's Climate Resilience and Adaptation Alliance are platforms for building collaborations across diverse movement spaces, to engage in reflection and discourse about collective movement building, solidarity, and most importantly collective care.

Recent socio-political changes in Bangladesh have also made it clear that socially-excluded communities and activists have an integral need for support and care within the broader feminist movement to enable a stronger, united front. Through internal team reflections, assessments and discussions within feminist networks, and intersectional and intergenerational conversations, our focus has been to identify and recognise specific strategies to build a collaborative feminist movement.

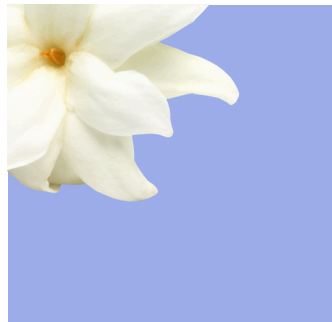
Over the past 2 years, Bonhishikha has been building connections and networks, focussing on building pleasure and care into our work, space and way forward. The recent years have been a testament to fostering these elements through reflection, constructive criticism and planning small concrete steps that we could take within our own organisational space. We have learnt to allow space in recognising trauma, managing crisis situations, and also ensure support needed within our own networks for processing and releasing these experiences. We try to practise rest and restoration by making time for entertainment, learning, and sharing for our own growth and as a means to foster team building.

Moving forward, we will build on these learnings, highlight the need for intentional collaboration, and foster a space where we can enable the movement space to shift from resilience building to intentional joy.

Our Specific Expertise



Focussing on youth and gender issues, and developing cross-movement alliances on a variety of gender equality and womxn's empowerment issues



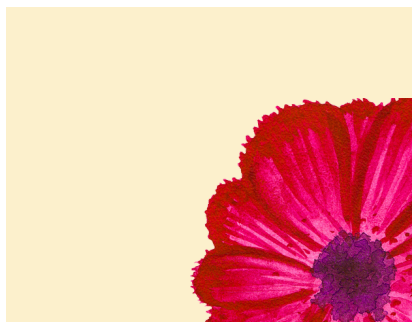
Developing capacity-building initiatives on feminist leadership, specifically for gender mainstreaming in womxn's empowerment, and climate and gender justice across South Asia

Conducting Gender Analyses and Gender Action Plans (GAP) for different projects and institutions

Application of a transformative lens in programme strategies and promoting a gender transformative approach in development organisations



Awareness campaigns to lessen inequalities and gender-based violence, amplify voices, and promote political participation of all in decision-making spaces



Engaging with national and regional partners to strengthen movements for systemic change for gender equality and access to justice



Our Work in 2023 & 2024

Sexual and Reproductive Health and Pleasure



No Shame In My Pleasure Campaign

Bonhishikha launched the “No Shame in my Pleasure” campaign to challenge the shame and guilt women face in prioritising their own pleasure. This campaign celebrates all forms of pleasure: from the simple joys like evening strolls to the more deeper, personal desires of women.

Recognising the pressure women feel to prioritise others over themselves, we explored how pleasure has been politicised. Inspired by Adrienne Marie Brown's view of pleasure as "happiness, joy, contentment, and satisfaction," we collected and shared stories from women of all backgrounds in an engaging audio-visual series on social media. The campaign therefore aimed to normalise conversations around pleasure, reclaiming it as essential to wellbeing, sexuality, and equality.

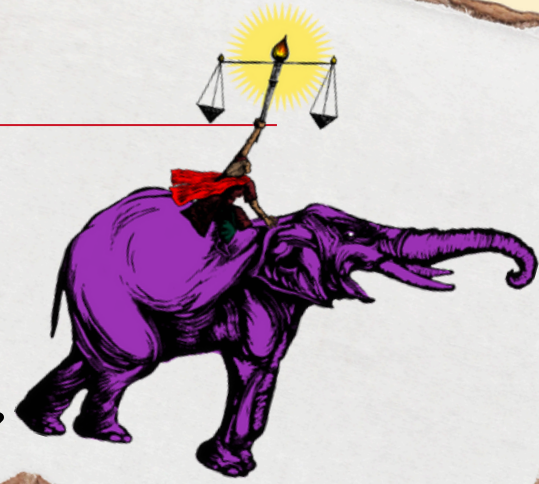


Art for Activism Workshop



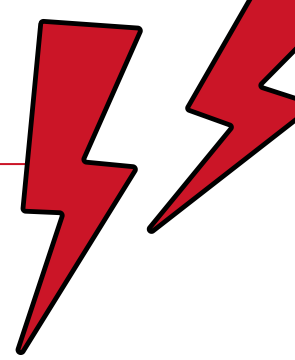
Bonhishikha hosted the "Art for Activism" workshop in December 2023, where participants dove into various art forms to convey important messages about gender and sexuality. The workshop showcased how art can break down language barriers, express complex emotions, and advocate for social justice. We discussed the use of art to create powerful campaign materials that highlight systemic issues and inspire collective action for inclusive policies and equality.

Following this, we also had an internal team building session on "Making Work Fun." This initiative aimed to foster a supportive and enjoyable workplace culture, and recognise that every team member juggles significant responsibilities both at work and in their personal lives. This was in alignment with our commitment to build a culture of care, focussing on individual wellbeing and the ability to bring our best with us.



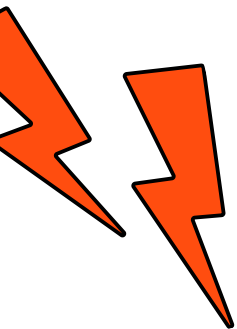
Strengthening Feminist Movements





Strengthening Feminist Movements for Access to Justice Programme

Supported by the Women's Fund Asia, Bonhishikha developed a virtual course to strengthen the feminist movement for access to justice, training grassroots organisations and activists. In the last quarter of 2023, human rights advocates, feminist academics, and community leaders led online sessions for this course. Participants then gathered for a 2-day bootcamp in February 2024, where they networked with experts in their fields and collaborated on envisioning a just feminist future. While the training sessions took place online, Bonhishikha made videos and other resources available on an open-source learning platform, in order to ensure access to the materials for both project participants and anyone else who could benefit from the training.



Strengthening Intergenerational and Inclusive Women's Movements in Bangladesh Programme

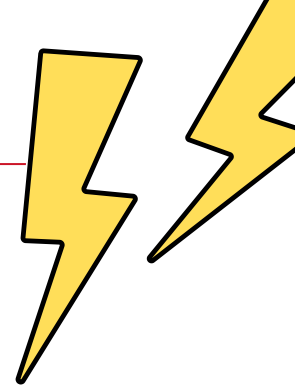
In 2023, Bangladesh Mahila Parishad and Bonhishikha, with support from UN Women Bangladesh, initiated the 'Strengthening Intergenerational and Inclusive Women's Movement in Bangladesh'.



The programme organised four divisional dialogues and validation workshops to develop a Charter of Demands that represents the diverse needs and wants of the women's movement in Bangladesh. The dialogues ensured the participation from intergenerational and intersectional groups to capture the diverse needs within the women's movement. A position paper has been developed to strengthen advocacy efforts with the government and political stakeholders both nationally and globally. This initiative will enhance the capacities, budgets, and access of civil society - especially womxn-led organisations and youth networks - allowing them to engage with government actors and influence policies that promote gender equality, empower womxn, and eliminate violence against womxn.

Link to the Charter of Demands:





Assessment of Safety, Care, and Resilience in Bangladesh's Feminist Movement Space Study

Supported by the Urgent Action Funds' Webs of Safety and Care Grant, we conducted an assessment among activists in the feminist movement in Bangladesh to understand their safety and care needs. Participants included women, gender-diverse individuals, indigenous communities, persons with disabilities, and members from religious and ethnic minority communities. Through this assessment we aimed to understand the safety, health, and wellbeing challenges faced by human rights defenders both in their work and as community members.

The assessment revealed a critical need for dedicated spaces that prioritise care, mental wellbeing, and relationship-building beyond professional roles. Participants highlighted the impact of burnout, anxiety, and stress, compounded by the lack of spaces for genuine connection and healing. Many expressed a desire for environments where they could step away from work demands, build meaningful relationships beyond professionalism, and share experiences in nonjudgmental settings. Our findings emphasise the importance of collective care, promoting mental well-being, and creating opportunities for activists to connect personally, strengthening community ties and resilience in the face of ongoing challenges.



Evaluation of Girls Not Brides' Learning Work 2020-2023

Study

Bonhishikha in collaboration with FPAR Academy conducted this evaluation to understand the relevance, effectiveness, and impact of Girls Not Brides' (GNB) initiatives from 2020 to 2023 in addressing child marriage. The objective was to identify successful strategies, lessons learned, and how stakeholders accessed and applied GNB resources in their contexts. The study aimed to provide recommendations for enhancing GNB's knowledge, evidence, and learning efforts.

Girls Not Brides intended for this evaluation to ensure accountability, gather stakeholder input, and guide its mission to end child marriage and support affected girls worldwide. The findings highlighted GNB's strengths, including networking, unified action, policy briefs, advocacy resources, and capacity-building through training. Thematic priorities included developing stronger movements, organisational strengthening, advocacy, and aligning sexual and reproductive health rights with child marriage issues. Regional priorities emphasised the need for collaboration, building on local frameworks, and providing tailored assistance and capacity building for stakeholders.

Link to the published report:



Designing Sessions on Feminist Leadership Building Capacity Development

Since 2020, Plan International Bangladesh has been working towards integrating a feminist approach and transformative leadership into its framework. To deepen this commitment, the organisation partnered with Bonhishikha in 2023 to design and develop a training module for their own staff and leadership team.

Bonhishikha conducted needs assessments, reviewed existing knowledge, and compiled a comprehensive module on building feminist leadership for PIB staff. The module focused on understanding power dynamics, diverse identities, inclusion, feminist principles, and fostering a culture of care within organisations. This initiative aimed to bridge the gap between theory and practice, promote self-awareness, and challenge both institutional and personal biases related to gender equality, ultimately creating a truly inclusive and transformative work environment.

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Equitable Access to Rights for All





Women Gaining Ground Programme

Women Gaining Ground (WGG) is a 5-year project (2021-2025) led by CREA, IWRAP Asia Pacific, and Akili Dada, funded by the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs' Power of Women grant. WGG aims to eliminate sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) and enhance women's leadership and political participation, focusing on young women, women with disabilities, and marginalised communities. The project is implemented in five countries by 15 strategic partners, including Bonhishikha, Women with Disability Development Foundation, and Naripokkho in Bangladesh.

Bonhishikha focuses on engaging youth-led organisations from various movement spaces across Bangladesh to achieve WGG's goals. Strategies are designed to develop feminist leadership through skills training and mentorship, while promoting cross-movement alliances among young leaders from socially excluded communities. This collaboration aims to create a shared vision and common agenda to rethink civic space, practice self-care, build resilient communities, and advance feminist organising.

In 2023 and 2024, the WGG cohort expanded to 20 youth-led groups across Bangladesh, representing multiple intersectional communities—indigenous, ethnic and religious minority, climate-vulnerable, gender-diverse, rural, and urban young women, as well as women with disabilities. They are collectively strategizing on issues related to ecotourism in the Chittagong Hill Tracts, raising awareness about SGBV, promoting climate resiliency, managing water resources, and addressing discrimination in public and private spaces.



Power of Learning Programme

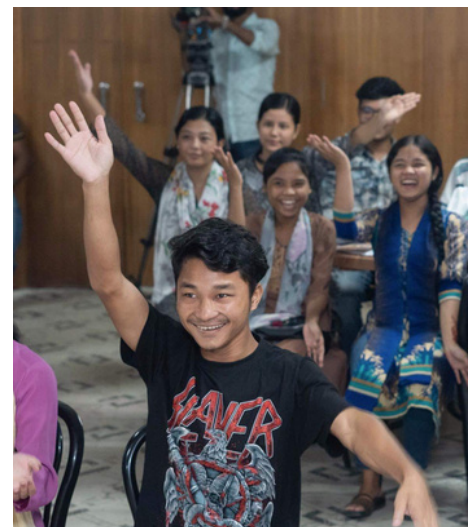


Power of Learning is a three-and-a-half-year programme in partnership with the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA). The purpose of the programme is to encourage and stimulate the linking and learning between Dutch-funded civil society partners in seven countries: Bangladesh, Burundi, Egypt, Lebanon, Niger, Sudan and Uganda. The programme is designed to bring CSOs together, enhance their cross-learning, and strengthen CSOs' ability and capacity to advocate to tackle the most pressing barriers to their work. These are systemic and complex challenges or opportunities CSOs face in the implementation of their work. This approach enhances a culture of continuous learning and empowerment among movement builders within Bangladesh.

Bonhishikha has been an active member in the initiative, engaging in sharing learning from its programmes and movement initiatives, promoting the need for gender transformative approaches in other programmes, and engaging with the research team to ensure a feminist lens in its methodology and analysis.

Informed Opinions for Better Decisions: Empowering Youth Voices Capacity Development

The "Informed Opinions for Better Decisions: Empowering Youth Voices" project, funded by European Union, led by DW Akademie and implemented by Bonhishikha, Kotha, and Article 19, aimed to promote youth participation in democratic processes. Targeting first time voters from Rangpur, Chittagong Hill Tracts, Mymensingh, and Khulna, the programme facilitated discussions with local youth groups on gender issues, citizenship, and rights, highlighting the importance of political awareness and participation of youth in nation building.



Securing Women's Resource Rights Through Gender Transformative Approaches

Gender Action Study

The Global Initiative for Gender Transformative Approaches aims to enhance women's land rights by integrating gender transformative strategies into IFAD's rural development interventions. This initiative focused on sharing insights to improve policies, tools, and practices in Bangladesh and other programme countries.

In Bangladesh, Bonhishikha served as the local consultant with CIFOR-ICRAF, leading and coordinating a study for the Char Development and Settlement Project (CDSP). The Gender Analysis included a socio-legal review of current processes and a qualitative assessment of community members in the Noakhali programme areas. A major focus of the analysis was to address the intergenerational impact of equal land titling of khas lands and understand how this affects women's land and resource rights in the char areas and the surrounding enabling environment. Bonhishikha also developed a toolkit on using the Gender Transformative Approach, co-created with the project team to incorporate a more feminist perspective into their programme design.

Link to the published policy note:



Women of the World Dhaka Event

Mongol Deep Foundation, British Council, and CCD Bangladesh organised the Women of the World (WOW) Festival Dhaka 2023 on February 24 and 25 at Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy. As one of the curators, Bonhishikha hosted two sessions. The panel "Naribadi na Neribadi" featuring experts like Nidhi Chakma, Sudeshna Biswas, Md Muntasir, and Tasnuva Ahmed. The discussion addressed common misconceptions about feminism, such as the belief that feminists hate men or oppose family structures. We also hosted the workshop "How to Access Information About Your Property Rights" in collaboration with Badabon Sangho and UQEEL at Shilpakala Academy. This event aimed to raise awareness about property rights for Bangladeshi citizens, particularly focusing on women's rights to access, inherit, and control property.

Despite international standards advocating for gender equality, many remain unaware of their rights. Our expert panel discussed these issues, empowering participants to navigate the complexities of property rights and advocate for themselves.





Intersectional Lens in Climate Change



Gender and Climate Interventions: Ensuring women-led solutions

Event

In January 2024, Bonhishikha hosted a round-table discussion at the EMK Centre on January 25, 2024, focussing on gender and climate interventions, with an emphasis on women-led solutions. The discussion addressed climate change, gender disparities, and their impact on women's sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR). Key stakeholders from the UN, INGOs, national NGOs, and community-based youth organisations participated in the conversation.

This event was part of the project "Capturing Community-Led Climate Solutions from the Sylhet Region," funded by the IVLP Impact Award 2023. The project also featured a week-long exhibition showcasing photographs of women as frontline activists in the climate crisis in Sylhet and Satkhira.



Accelerating Innovation for Resilience Challenge Fund

Between 2022 and 2023, Bonhishikha participated in the Global Knowledge Initiative's Accelerating Innovation for Resilience (AI4Resilience) Challenge, proposing the development of Feminist Action for Climate Change (FACC). FACC aims to create a collaborative space that avoids duplication and encourages collective thinking and action through a feminist lens, addressing both existing climate interventions and the creation of new ones.

To support the foundation of FACC, Bonhishikha conducted a data and story collection in Shyamnagar, Satkhira, which was used for storytelling for the AI4Resilience Challenge and to raise awareness among relevant stakeholders through print media.

The findings revealed that women in Satkhira have been severely affected by climate change. Rising salinity and sea levels have rendered the land unusable, forcing women to engage in dangerous shrimp fishing as a vital yet limited source of income. Access to drinking water has also been affected, creating more chores for women and girls. Health issues such as stomach, skin, and gynaecological problems are common, largely due to saltwater exposure and limited access to affordable healthcare. Many women suffer in silence, and some are left to lead households alone as husbands abandon them for dowry or relocate for work, significantly increasing their social vulnerability. Individuals of diverse genders face similar challenges, struggling with limited access to livelihoods, shelter, safety, and healthcare. In disaster-prone areas, these issues are further exacerbated by social ostracisation.

SheRAA - Women's Climate Resilience and Adaptation Alliance

Programme

In July 2023, The Asia Foundation in Bangladesh and Bonhishikha - unlearn gender launched SheRAA - Women's Climate Resilience and Adaptation Alliance. The objective of the initiative is simple - to fulfil an existing gap of including women, gender diverse and socially-excluded voices in climate change programming and policies in Bangladesh. Instead of reinventing the wheel or launching a separate new programme, the aim of this coalition is to ensure collaborative action between different stakeholders involved in the ideation, implementation, and communication of comprehensive solutions in the context of climate vulnerable communities.

The coalition undertook a Women's Climate Coalition in Bangladesh programme, supported by The Asia Foundation's innovations fund. This programme broadly focused on building up the alliance and engaging partners to join the platform. In February 2024, Bonhishikha and the International Centre for Climate Change and Development (ICCCAD) organised a training on Women's Leadership in Climate Change for grassroots alliance members, as an ongoing attempt to improve locally-led adaptation practices, and ensure solutions are bottom-up rather than donor-led. The alliance was launched on 27 March, 2024, featuring panel discussions focusing on the impact of climate change on women and vulnerable communities, the need for intersectional approaches, and the importance of feminist leadership in climate action. Key government officials and experts emphasised the importance of collaborative efforts, data-driven policies, and empowering women to lead in climate resilience initiatives.



In September 2024, the coalition hosted a training entitled "Grassroots to Global: Mobilizing Inclusive Climate Action, A Network of Transformative Climate Leaders". The training was led by The Asia Foundation's Women Empowerment Programme, Women's Earth Alliance, and Bonhishikha, and hosted speakers and facilitators from Kotha, Wreetu Health and Wellbeing Foundation, Buriganga Riverkeeper, Youth Negotiators Academy, the Melbourne School of Population and Global Health, the University of Melbourne Law School, and QUNO.

The coalition with the support of The Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands in Bangladesh launched the "Green Voices" project in December 2024. This will be implemented by a consortium of partners including The Asia Foundation in Bangladesh, The Earth, and Bonhishikha. The project aims to address the underrepresentation of women and youth in climate action and decision-making processes, especially in climate-vulnerable areas of Bangladesh. Spanning across 2025 and 2026, the project will include capacity development, knowledge development and dissemination, policy analysis, innovation challenges, and support youth and women-led organisations working at grassroots levels to create sustainable programmes, supported by comprehensive data and diverse funding sources. We aim to address the structural inequalities in climate governance by encouraging and supporting the development of more gender-focused climate change initiatives, increased partnerships and collaborations between stakeholders, and enabling greater representation of the needs of women and other socially excluded communities at the local and national level decision-making platforms.

Financial Overview

	Jul 2023-Jun 2024 (in BDT)		Jul 2022-Jun 2023 (in BDT)	
Income & Expenditure Statement				
Revenue		23,364,397		26,750,635
Expenditure		21,407,444		18,125,963
Income		215,992		6,256,552
Statement of Financial Position				
Assets				
Non-Current Assets	185,842	-	270,126	-
Current Assets	9,237,846	9,423,688	9,447,944	9,718,070
Liabilities				
Current Liabilities	2,270,881	2,270,881	2,781,255	2,781,255
Net Assets		7,152,807		6,936,815
Equity		7,152,807		6,936,815



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