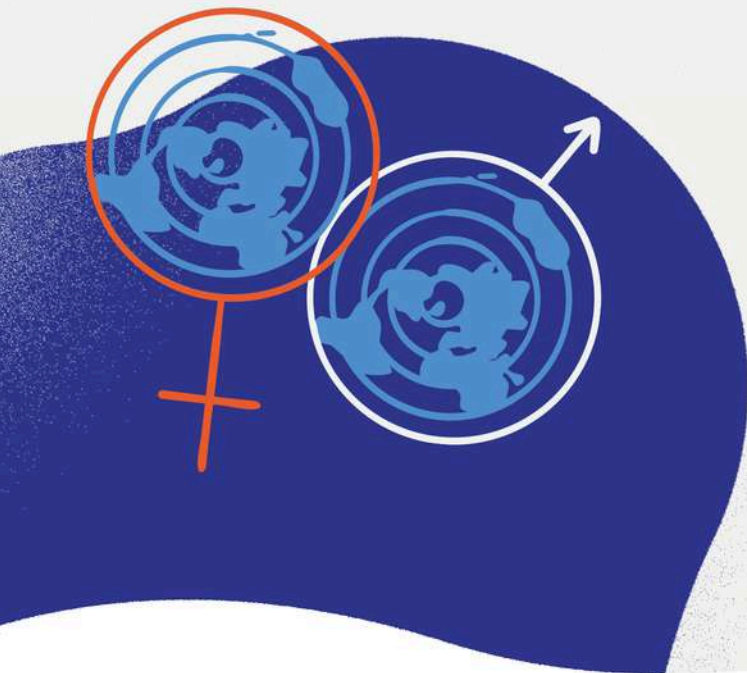


Rethinking UN leadership in a fragmented world: A Bangladesh-centred perspective



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ABSTRACT

This policy brief explores the kind of UN leadership the future deserves in a context of geopolitical fragmentation and humanitarian crises. Adopting Bangladesh as an analytical lens, it examines patterns of gender underrepresentation. Drawing on direct consultations with civil society organisations (CSOs) in Bangladesh, the paper reassesses leadership expectations by documenting stakeholder perspectives on the next Secretary-General. It argues that future reform should focus not only on creating opportunities to appoint a woman as Secretary-General, but also on fostering the conditions that support the emergence of capable, inclusive, and effective leadership.



Introduction

The United Nations (UN) emerged from the post–Second World War geopolitical order as a multilateral institution designed to promote international peace and security, encourage friendly relations among nations based on equality and self-determination, and foster international cooperation in solving economic, social, cultural, and humanitarian problems.

The next UNSG should have the ability to bring countries together and the capacity to address global challenges such as war and conflict, climate change, and global instability.

While the organisation is widely recognised for its roles in peacekeeping, peacebuilding, conflict prevention, and humanitarian assistance, its mandate and activities extend far beyond crisis response. Through its extensive system of funds, programmes, specialised agencies, related organisations, and autonomous bodies, the UN operates across an exceptionally broad global agenda.

In the current global context, however, the UN faces mounting structural and operational pressures. Recent reductions in United States funding have reportedly led to layoffs of UN personnel, further constraining institutional capacity at a moment when global humanitarian and development needs are expanding (Ellmers, 2026). At the same time, increasing obstacles to delivering humanitarian assistance to civilians in conflict-affected areas such as Gaza and Sudan illustrate the severe operational strain confronting the organisation (Humanitarian Action, 2025).

The functioning of the Security Council has likewise come under intensified scrutiny. The repeated use of the veto has contributed to institutional paralysis, deepened mistrust among major powers, and fostered an environment in which interventionism with impunity is more readily pursued and international law increasingly disregarded (International Crisis Group, 2025).

Concurrently, the number and complexity of crises demanding UN engagement continue to grow even as available resources diminish. Climate change further exacerbates these dynamics by acting as a threat multiplier, amplifying pre-existing vulnerabilities and conflict risks (Zamir, 2023).

Together, these advancements emphasise the type of leadership the UN needs in the modern era, a leader who is visionary, able to form broad alliances, and capable of successfully coordinating across sectors, institutions, and stakeholders to address global issues that are becoming more interconnected and systemic.

The study adopts a Bangladesh-centred approach to evaluate emerging leadership expectations within the UN system.

Situating global leadership debates within a Global South context, it critically examines patterns of gender underrepresentation within both the UN and Bangladesh, with particular attention to the limited presence of women in senior decision-making roles.

The study reassesses future expectations of UN leadership by incorporating perspectives gathered through direct consultation with relevant civil society organisations in Bangladesh.

Drawing on these engagements, the paper systematically documents stakeholder views regarding the role, attributes, and priorities of the UN Secretary-General (UNSG). In doing so, it expands leadership criteria beyond state-centric frameworks and integrates principles of participatory and inclusive governance into the broader debate on multilateral reform.

This policy paper aims to explore the kind of UN leadership the future deserves.

Bangladesh as an Analytical Lens

Through a slow, non-linear process fuelled by persistent advocacy, norm-building, and institutional reform, gender equality went from being a minor concern to a formalised and institutionalised part of UN policy.

While not central to the UN's original agenda, it gained prominence from the mid-1970s onward, beginning with the First World Conference on Women, and was progressively embedded through decades of global conferences, international treaties such as the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, and sustained advocacy, ultimately becoming firmly established as a core area of global politics and human rights (United Nations, 2015).

Women's exclusion from senior leadership in both the UN and Bangladesh is not explained by a lack of merit or qualified candidates.

It notes that early references to women's equality were mostly declarative rather than practical and places them within the UN Charter's post-war human rights framework.

The organisation's policy approach shifted from viewing women primarily as a vulnerable group requiring protection to addressing them as equal rights-bearing actors whose agency, participation, and empowerment must be addressed and supported.

International conferences centered around women and anti-discrimination conventions played a key role.

They translate principles into policy architecture, establish standards, monitoring frameworks, reporting obligations, and channels for policy diffusion across member states.

Foundational human rights principles were first articulated in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), adopted by the UN General Assembly on 10 December 1948, which affirmed equality and non-discrimination in Articles 1 and 2.

This normative framework was further strengthened with the adoption of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) on 18 December 1979, followed by the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action in 1995 at the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing, which built on three earlier global conferences on women and gender equality.

Together, these instruments established comprehensive standards and accountability mechanisms for advancing gender equality (United Nations, n.d.).

The introduction of gender mainstreaming, which sought to incorporate gender issues across all policy domains rather than limiting them to specialised units, was a significant strategic move.

Yet, implementation has been inconsistent between agencies.

Progress has been hampered by fragmented mandates, scarce resources, inadequate accountability systems, and inconsistent political will among member states, despite increased commitments and institutional processes (Haack, 2022).

There is still a disconnect between the UN's internal staffing reality and its normative commitment to gender equality, as evidenced by the proportion of women in its bureaucracy and leadership structure.

Merit or the availability of eligible individuals alone are not sufficient to overcome representation issues: institutional, organisational, and political constraints play a significant role.

This disparity is evident in several areas:

- Since 1946, only five women have served as Presidents of the United Nations General Assembly, compared to seventy-five men.
- Women have held only around 7 per cent of the more than 2,800 positions of Permanent Representative to the United Nations.
- 73 countries have never appointed a woman as Permanent Representative to the United Nations, while 64 countries have done so only once.

These figures highlight the persistent gender imbalance in leadership positions within the UN system (GWL Voices, 2025).

Women continue to be concentrated in junior and mid-level positions, are less visible in upper management, and frequently move more slowly along promotion channels due to a trend of vertical segregation.

Although official gender parity was achieved early in António Guterres' tenure within the UN's Senior Management Group, progress across the broader system has remained uneven.

Upon assuming office, Secretary General António Guterres pledged to "reach gender parity sooner rather than later" and to "respect gender parity from the start," and within a year he fulfilled this commitment, marking a historic milestone as senior leadership reached 50 percent female representation, with the Senior Management Group comprising 23 women and 21 men, or approximately 52 percent women and 48 percent men (Morse, 2018).

However, this progress has largely been concentrated in positions under the direct appointment authority of the Secretary General, while key decision-making areas, particularly in peacekeeping and political affairs, continue to be dominated by men.

In these portfolios, female representation often remains below 30 per cent in senior roles (Lieberman, 2017).

Moreover, many of these influential roles remain occupied by representatives from the Western European and Others Group (WEOG), reflecting deeply rooted geopolitical hierarchies within the UN system.

Despite the United Nations' global commitment to promoting gender equality, women remain significantly underrepresented in executive and senior decision-making roles within the organization, raising concerns about its legitimacy and credibility.

The Western European and Others Group holds disproportionate influence within the United Nations, largely driven by its financial contributions, democratic alignment, and key roles in security and human rights, accounting for roughly 40 percent of assessed dues and with 25 of its 28 full members classified as “Free” (United Nations, 2015).

Taken together, these dynamics suggest that numerical gender parity does not necessarily translate into an equitable distribution of institutional power, as leadership in the most strategic and security oriented portfolios remains concentrated along both gendered and regional lines.

These results are connected to several organisational obstacles, such as hiring and advancement procedures, the impact of unofficial networks and patronage systems, politically negotiated and geographically motivated appointments, and the difficulties in juggling work and family obligations that come with posting abroad.

Member states play an important role as well since senior appointments sometimes mirror national diplomatic institutions that exhibit gender inequalities, perpetuating inequity at the international level.

Although the nomination of women to prominent leadership roles has symbolic importance, it does not result in significant change on its own. Broader reforms like system-wide staffing adjustments, more robust accountability systems, the creation of a leadership pipeline, and more profound organizational culture changes are necessary for meaningful achievement.

The existence of a Senior Leadership Talent Pool and the frequent calls in the General Assembly and other UN forums for Member States to actively encourage qualified women to apply shows an institutional recognition of the pipeline challenge, yet progress remains uneven (United Nations Secretary General, n.d.).

However, the persistence of gender imbalances at the highest levels indicates that such mechanisms alone are insufficient. Therefore, fundamental structural and cultural transformation that goes beyond official pledges to gender parity is necessary to break the glass ceiling in the UN and translate commitments into equitable representation (Haack, 2022).

Institutionalising Gender Equity Beyond Top Positions

Representation at the very top did not consistently translate into broader gender equality across governance structures.

This narrative of limited diversity in leadership positions also resonates in the case of Bangladesh. For an extended period, the country was led by a female head of government, a fact frequently presented as evidence of women's empowerment and gender progress.

However, female leadership at the apex did not systematically trickle down to mid-level administration or grassroots institutions, where women's participation, decision-making authority, and agency often remained constrained.

Bangladesh's CSOs have identified that these leaders emerged primarily as party leaders rather than representatives of a broader women's movement. As a result, their impact on advancing women's empowerment has been mixed and remains subject to debate.

This demonstrates how symbolic representation alone can create a façade of empowerment without necessarily producing substantive structural change in institutions and power relations.

At the same time, the presence of women in top leadership roles should not be conflated with overall governance quality or institutional accountability. Diversity and inclusion in leadership are normatively important, but they do not automatically ensure transparency, effectiveness, or responsiveness.

Bangladesh's political sphere, despite being historically dominated by women leaders at the highest level, has continued to face significant challenges, including macroeconomic instability, corruption concerns, public health pressures, rising inequality and poverty, increasing debt burdens, climate vulnerability, and prolonged humanitarian crises such as the Rohingya refugee situation.

The broader lesson is that while gender representation in leadership is necessary for equity and legitimacy, it is not sufficient on its own. It must be accompanied by deeper institutional reforms, accountability mechanisms, and inclusive governance practices to generate meaningful and sustainable outcomes.

This distinction is important to recognise in the context of the current campaign advocating for a woman UNSG. While supporting a woman for the highest leadership position is both important and timely, gender equity efforts should not end with a single appointment.

Meaningful progress requires institutionalised gender balance across all tiers of the UN system, including senior management, technical bodies, field operations, and decision-making platforms. Ensuring equitable representation, diversity, and inclusion throughout the organisation is essential for strengthening accountability, transparency, and the just protection of human rights worldwide.

Numerical gains do not necessarily translate into meaningful influence.

Governance and Development Experience in Bangladesh

Symbolic or not, Bangladesh has been governed by women for most of the past three decades.

Under their regime, Bangladesh experienced significant infrastructural development and sustained economic growth. Economic reforms encouraged greater private sector participation and foreign investment. Social initiatives were also introduced, including compulsory primary education, the Food for Education programme, and stipends for female secondary students.

Per capita income tripled over the last decade, and the World Bank estimates that more than **25 million people were lifted out of poverty over the past twenty years**. Growth was largely driven by the garment industry, which accounts for the majority of exports (Ethirajan & Wong, 2025).

However, Bangladesh has also experienced persistent corruption, human rights violations, and widening social and structural inequality, limiting just and inclusive growth. Progress toward Sustainable Development Goal 5 – Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls – has been very slow, making it difficult to meet the 2030 target (UN Women, 2021).

At the same time, women’s participation in governance in Bangladesh has remained limited.

For instance, women constituted 21 per cent of parliament in 2018, up from 19 per cent previously (Bangladesh Parliament, n.d.).

However, this figure can be misleading because it does not fully reflect women's direct electoral representation. In Bangladesh's parliamentary system, the Jatiya Sangsad consists of 300 general seats and 50 reserved seats for women.

General seats are filled through direct elections in which candidates compete for votes in constituencies. Reserved seats, however, are allocated to political parties based on the number of general seats they win, and women are then nominated by the parties rather than elected directly by voters (Bangladesh Parliament, 2026).

As a result, although the overall share of women in parliament appears higher, relatively few women win competitive elections.

Furthermore, out of 85 women who contested the 2026 elections, **only 7 were elected, indicating the lowest number of female representatives Bangladesh has observed in 25 years** (Islam, 2026).

These figures highlight that women's representation in Bangladesh's political system remains limited, particularly in terms of direct electoral participation and leadership.

Socio-political norms continue to shape decision-making processes and influence women's access to political participation in Bangladesh. While women's political participation has increased in recent years at both local and national levels, this progress has been uneven.

Several of the highest constitutional and parliamentary leadership positions have been held by women, indicating visible progress in elite-level representation.

In Bangladesh, only 7.3 per cent of MPs were women elected through general seats, with most women occupying reserved positions.

However, this advancement remains concentrated at the upper tiers of the political structure and has not been equally reflected across grassroots levels of political participation (Parvin, 2016).

This disparity suggests that while symbolic representation at the top has improved, structural and societal barriers continue to limit broader, more inclusive participation of women in Bangladesh's governance.

Additionally, some women who actively participate in Bangladesh's political sphere do so primarily as successors to family members, which limits their ability to act according to their own philosophies and practices. It can be asserted that in Bangladesh, the political sphere is significantly patriarchal. Consequently, women's participation is minimal.

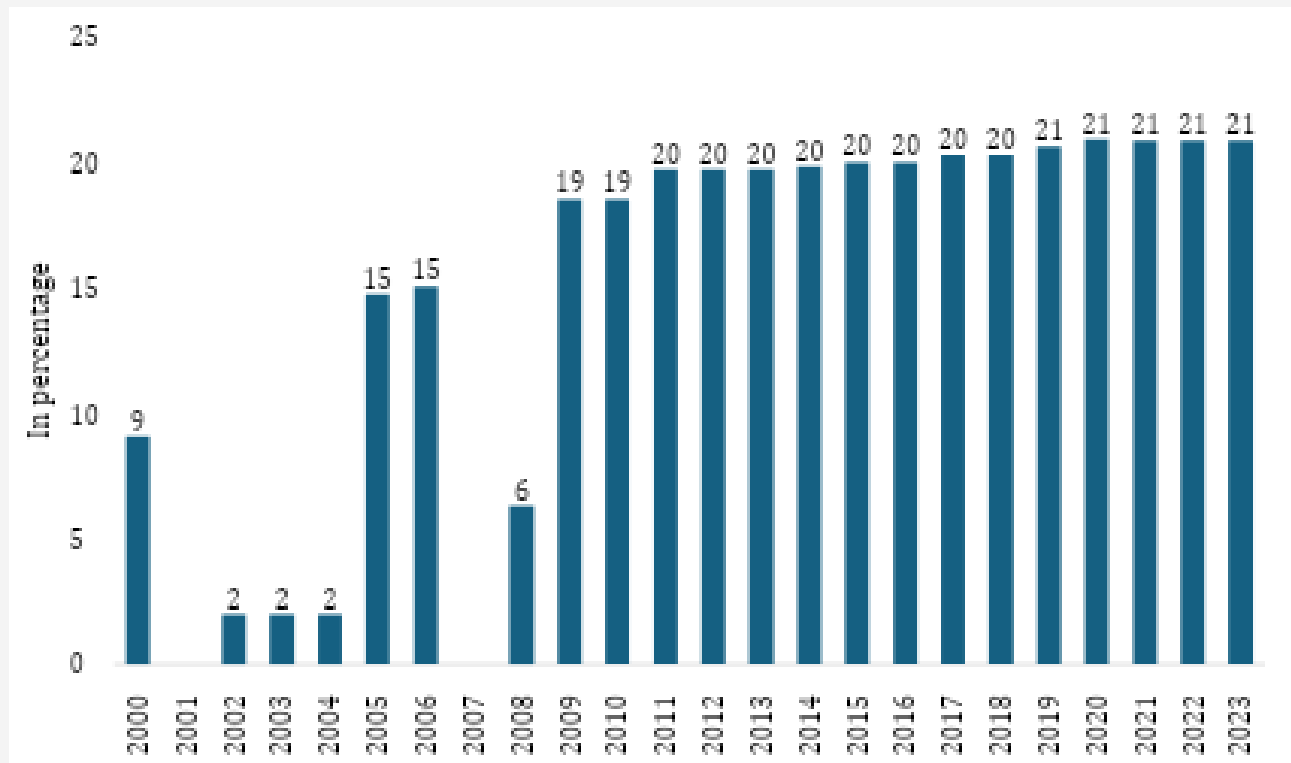
In Bangladesh, women's participation in governance depends on several factors, such as individual experience, wealth, education, religion, gender, and loyalty.

Limited engagement among women themselves and persistent gender-biased perceptions toward women's involvement in politics act as significant barriers to both entry into and continuity within the political arena (Verba et al., 1978).

Culturally, women are perceived to be dependent, moral, and less politically competent. Although women constitute roughly half of Bangladesh's total human resources, persistent negative perceptions of them are reflected in the political agendas of major parties.

As a result, women seeking to enter politics often encounter political, public, cultural, and social environments that are unsupportive and at times overtly hostile. Therefore, ensuring women's meaningful participation in the political process is critically important in contexts such as Bangladesh (Kabeer, 2005).

Figure 1: Proportion of Seats Held by Women in the Bangladesh National Parliament



Source: Author's own illustration from (World Bank, 2026).

In public administration, women held 29 per cent of government jobs in 2024. Among 84 secretaries, only 11 are women. Although representation increases slightly at lower administrative tiers, women remain underrepresented at the highest bureaucratic levels (Daily Sun, 2024).

Similarly, entry into the civil service through the Bangladesh Civil Service (BCS) examinations shows stagnation. Women constituted 55.1 per cent of recommended candidates in the 32nd BCS Special examination, but this declined in subsequent batches to around one quarter of total recruits, stabilising between 24 and 27 per cent in recent years (Dhaka Tribune, 2018; Daily Sun, 2024).

Insights From the Civil Society Organisation in Bangladesh

While situating Bangladesh's experience in leadership representation and governance within a broader comparative perspective, it is useful to draw macro-level parallels with leadership selection and accountability in the UN system. In this context, assessing the future direction of UN leadership requires examining the expectations that Bangladesh's civil society holds toward the institution.

CSO actors in Bangladesh perceive that the leadership structure of the UN has historically been shaped by institutional norms that have favoured male candidates, reflecting a broader pattern of gender imbalance in global governance.

The pool of possible female leaders at the beginning of the selection process is limited because member states frequently nominate male candidates for high positions.

While member states frequently invoke merit and the need for “qualified” women when discussing female candidates, this standard appears to be applied inconsistently. Although merit is essential to any credible selection process, it is noteworthy that such scrutiny is not always imposed with the same intensity on male candidates. In this sense, the nomination process itself can become self-limiting, as it shapes the range of candidates who ultimately enter the selection process.

Addressing this challenge, therefore, requires member states to play a proactive role in nominating women leaders who demonstrate both competence and a commitment to inclusive global governance. An early barrier to achieving greater gender parity in leadership thus lies at the stage of nomination, where member states determine which candidates are put forward.

This pattern is not unique to the UN system and can also be observed in national governance contexts where institutional and political structures have historically demonstrated limited openness to women's leadership.

Overcoming these structural barriers will require a stronger commitment from member states to actively support and promote capable women leaders in international decision-making spaces.

One of the core mandates of the UN is to advance gender equality and promote women's empowerment globally (Ngcuka, 2015). In this regard, the organisation has a responsibility to demonstrate leadership by ensuring greater representation of women in senior decision-making roles.

The appointment of a female Secretary-General would signal the UN's commitment to upholding the principles it advocates internationally. Across the world, numerous women leaders have demonstrated strong leadership capabilities and the capacity to effectively govern institutions and states.

It is important to underscore that, while appointing a female UNSG would send a significant signal regarding the UN's commitment to being gender responsive, it should also be acknowledged that gender alone does not guarantee effective leadership.

Rather, the impact of such representation depends significantly on the type of leadership and values embodied by the individual selected.

This is important to reemphasise because there is a possibility that powerful states may nominate female candidates who primarily reflect the interests and strategic priorities of those states rather than the concerns of marginalised groups or the broader global community.

Although there is no universally agreed framework for defining effective leadership, women's rights organisations and social activist groups in Bangladesh identified several attributes they consider essential for strong and inclusive leadership.

An effective leader needs to represent the interests of a much larger community while communicating a clear vision for mitigating global challenges. Strategic decision-making, accountability, and transparency are critical attributes of such leadership.

In addition, an effective leader should also be able to mobilise resources, develop consensus among different stakeholders, and demonstrate the capacity to exercise difficult judgements when necessary. At the same time, it is equally pertinent to listen to diverse perspectives and respond to dissenting views constructively.

The ability to accept and reflect on feedback, both supportive and critical, is an important element of strong and accountable leadership. Therefore, the focus should remain on identifying highly capable candidates who embody these leadership qualities while also advancing gender parity in global governance.

The persistent absence of women in the role of UNSG is attributed to a combination of structural and political factors. Historically, male candidates have enjoyed greater visibility and credibility in international diplomacy, largely because men have been given more opportunities to hold leadership positions and build international reputations.

Gender stereotypes also contribute as significant barriers. Women leaders often face assumptions that they are overly emotional or less capable of making difficult political decisions.

Such perceptions undermine women's credibility and limit their opportunities to be considered for top leadership roles. Circumventing these barriers requires not only strong female candidates but also deliberate efforts to increase their visibility, credibility, and access to international leadership platforms.

Decision-makers should therefore prioritise candidates who demonstrate a genuine commitment to inclusivity, accountability, and the representation of diverse perspectives.

Experiences from countries such as Bangladesh suggest that the presence of women in top political positions does not automatically lead to substantive progress in advancing inclusive governance. This experience offers an important lesson for the UN. The appointment of a female leader should be accompanied by a genuine commitment to inclusive, accountable, and transformative leadership. At the same time, it should also be noted that female political leadership has contributed to incremental progress in increasing women's participation in decision-making roles.

Efforts to promote women to positions of authority have helped normalise women's presence in leadership spaces and have gradually expanded opportunities for women in Bangladesh's public institutions. Nevertheless, meaningful representation should extend beyond symbolic leadership and ensure that women in positions of authority remain accountable to their constituencies and actively promote gender equality.

Institutional mechanisms such as quotas and reserved seats in Bangladesh are recognised as important tools for increasing women's participation in political institutions. Similar mechanisms could be considered within United Nations bodies to promote greater inclusion of women in leadership positions and strengthen gender parity within the organisation. However, it should be stressed that **representation should not be evaluated solely in numerical terms. Effective representation requires that women leaders have the capacity, autonomy, and institutional support to influence policy decisions.** Strengthening women's participation in administrative structures is also a critical step toward building a more gender-inclusive governance system.

Bangladesh's experience demonstrates that women have the ability to exercise leadership during periods of significant political and social challenges. Despite the challenges women face in the political sphere in Bangladesh, they still participate in parliament, which remains an important achievement. In the current global context, marked by increasing conflicts and humanitarian crises, the UN must adopt a more inclusive and responsive approach to global governance. **The UN should focus on selecting a female candidate who exhibits strength, expertise, and the capability to navigate difficult global challenges.** Particular emphasis should be placed on the protection of vulnerable populations, especially women and children, who are often disproportionately affected by conflict and instability.

In addition, the UN should work toward fostering global systems, including the rapidly evolving digital sphere, that are more humane, ethical, and centred on human well-being. To promote and facilitate female leaders, it is important to build a gender-friendly institutional environment to encourage more women to enter and remain in leadership positions. Such measures could include supportive workplace policies, leadership training, and institutional reforms that address structural barriers faced by women in professional and political settings, both in national and multilateral platforms.

Expectations for the Secretary-General

Looking ahead, the next Secretary-General should make a stronger and more concerted effort to advance global peace and conflict resolution. From the perspective of CSOs in Bangladesh, the expectation is that the next UNSG should prioritise strengthening the institutional credibility and effectiveness of the UN.

The UN continues to play a critical role in addressing humanitarian crises, yet its capacity to intervene is often constrained by the consent of member states.

Bangladesh is one of the largest contributors to UN peacekeeping operations, participating in 54 out of 69 UN peacekeeping missions conducted since 1948. A total of 1,63,887 Bangladeshi peacekeepers have served in 40 countries. At present, 6,582 personnel are deployed in 9 missions across 8 countries (Bangladesh Army, 2026).

Yet, the Rohingya crisis in Bangladesh remains a significant example, where the UN's ability to facilitate safe repatriation has been limited. For displaced Rohingya refugees currently residing in Bangladesh, a sustainable and secure return to Myanmar remains a major challenge.

Since UN peacekeeping forces can only operate with the consent of the host country, meaningful progress will require stronger diplomatic engagement by the United Nations with Myanmar to create the conditions necessary for safe and voluntary repatriation. Strengthening such diplomatic efforts should be a key priority for future UN leadership.

Given the multiple crises facing the organisation, strong and visionary leadership will be essential to preserving the UN's role in upholding international norms, protecting human rights, and addressing global challenges.

The next UNSG should have the ability to bring countries together and the capacity to address global challenges such as war and conflict, climate change, and global instability.

These phenomena are growing challenges for developing countries in the Global South, including Bangladesh. Stronger support and continued cooperation from the UN are needed in Bangladesh to also address gender-based violence and deal with climate change, both of which are important issues for Bangladesh.

Recommendations

20

It is important to realise that advocating for a female UNSG who can make inclusive, responsive, and just decisions requires the concerted effort of the global civil society community. CSOs globally, including those in Bangladesh, have had either zero or limited contribution to the formal selection process of the UNSG. Concurrently, it should also be noted that, given the current growing geopolitical tension around the world, especially in the Middle East, the UN should be led by a leader who can make a real difference in fostering global peace.

In light of this, the following recommendations focus not only on creating opportunities to appoint a female UNSG but also on fostering conditions that support the emergence of a capable and effective leader.

01

CSOs should be involved in constructive dialogue with institutions such as the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The CSOs must play a more prominent role in engaging with the government and pressuring them to nominate qualified female candidates for the position of UNSG. At the same time, CSOs can advocate for governments to support and vote for capable female candidates nominated by other member states, thereby contributing to a more inclusive and merit-based leadership selection process. Such engagement would allow CSOs to better understand the dynamics of the selection process and identify avenues through which they can contribute meaningfully to global governance debates. Strengthening collaboration between CSOs and government institutions could therefore help expand awareness and participation in issues related to UNSG selection.

02

Despite sustained campaigning, previous efforts to secure a woman UNSG have not been successful, reflecting the highly political nature of the UNSG selection process. However, continued advocacy is essential to maintaining momentum and strengthening the argument for gender equality in global leadership.

Recommendations

03

The nomination process for the UNSG should be more transparent and merit-based rather than being political bargaining among powerful states. The UN plays a key role in safeguarding human life and addressing complex global issues. Therefore, transparency in its governance and decision-making processes is imperative.

04

At present, countries with greater political and financial influence often exert a disproportionate impact on key decisions within the organisation. Strengthening the financial independence of the UN could help reduce imbalances and enable more impartial and balanced decision-making. This, in turn, would contribute to a selection process for leadership positions that is more transparent, inclusive, and grounded in merit.

05

Member states must play a more prominent role in nominating women leaders who exhibit both competence and a commitment to inclusive global governance.

Recommendations

06

Selection criteria should focus on the ability to represent diverse perspectives, advance the interests of marginalised communities, and uphold the UN's core values, ensuring that the appointment contributes meaningfully to effective and equitable global governance.

07

The UN member states should actively promote women to senior diplomatic positions and provide them with international exposure, both to advance the prospect of appointing a female Secretary-General and to normalise the presence of women in top leadership roles.

08

The UN should explore institutional mechanisms, such as gender quotas or reserved positions, to enhance women's representation in leadership roles.

Centre for Policy Dialogue

CPD, Bangladesh

The Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD) is an independent think tank based in Dhaka, Bangladesh. It conducts research, policy analysis, and dialogue to support inclusive and evidence-based policymaking. Its work focuses on issues such as economic development, governance, and social inclusion, with a strong emphasis on engaging stakeholders across government, civil society, and the private sector. In this report, CPD contributes a perspective grounded in national experience of development pressures, crisis response, and gender representation, informing how leadership is assessed in practice.

CPD is a member of **Southern Voice**, a network of Global South think tanks working to amplify evidence-based perspectives in global development debates, and participates in the **1 for 8 Billion** campaign as a Campaign Partner, contributing research to inform the selection of the next UN Secretary-General.

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