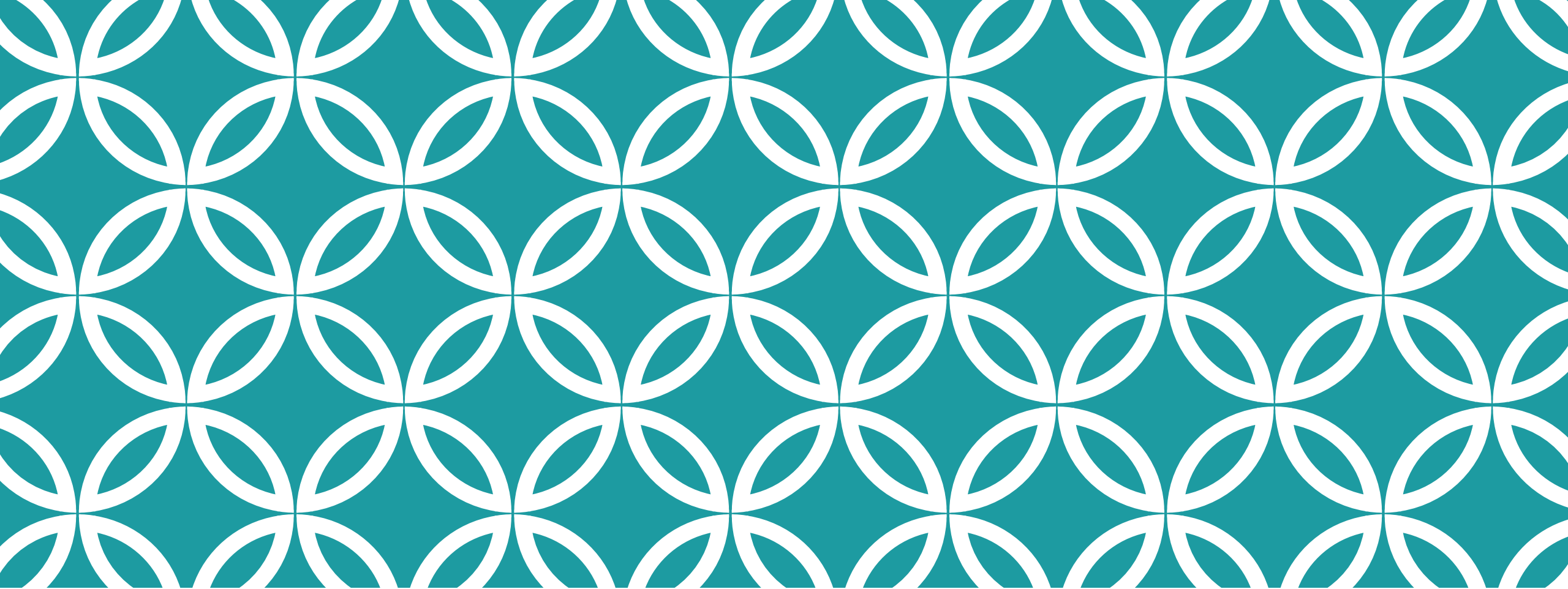


# **BUILDING A GENDER-TRANSFORMATIVE MODEL FOR SDG LOCALISATION IN BANGLADESH: YOUNG WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP FOR INCLUSIVE LOCAL GOVERNANCE**

**Date: 8 July, 2026**

Pan Pacific Sonargaon, Dhaka

**Enhancing Women's Participation and Leadership in Public Life**



# WHAT AND WHY SDG LOCALISATION



# SDG LOCALISATION

The process of **adapting, implementing and monitoring** the Sustainable Development Goals within local contexts

Done through **partnerships** between local governments, civil society, communities, academia and the private sector.

Aims to ensure that **global commitments are translated into locally relevant policies, plans and investments** that respond to community priorities while contributing to national and global development objectives

# THE LOCALIZATION FRAMEWORK

Successful implementation of the SDGs at the local level relies on five main pillars:

- **Multilevel Governance:** Aligning local, regional, and national frameworks so policies are coordinated rather than siloed.
- **Inclusive Stakeholder Engagement:** Using a "whole-of-society" approach to ensure marginalized voices and local businesses are involved in the process.
- **Capacity Building:** Equipping local municipalities and government institutions with the knowledge and tools to manage development and ensure transparency.
- **Local Data Collection:** Gathering granular, localized data to effectively measure progress toward specific SDG targets.
- **Accountability and Learning:** Through monitoring, participation and management.

# EXISTING INITIATIVES FOR SDG LOCALISATION (1)

## 1. Independent Accountability Frameworks

**The Citizen's Platform for SDGs, Bangladesh:** Spearheaded by the Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD), this coalition of over 120 partner organizations leads independent "citizen reviews". (**Naripokkho is a member**). They systematically evaluate government reports, offering a parallel assessment of national progress.

**Bangladesh Reform Watch:** Under recent institutional transitions, CSOs have adapted their tracking to monitor broader state accountability. They directly map how institutional reforms support or stall long-term goals like **SDG 16 (Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions)**. [[1](#), [2](#)]

## 2. Social Audits and Community-Led Tracking

**Social Audit Tools:** CSOs deploy localized evaluation methods to track public services. They review beneficiary selection criteria, evaluate service delivery, and run local grievance systems to identify gaps in resource allocation.

**Ward-Level Mapping:** Micro-level groups use social mapping, well-being metrics, and problem-ranking charts. They monitor local commitments made by Union Parishads to ensure regional budgets match actual village needs.

## EXISTING INITIATIVES FOR SDG LOCALISATION (2)

### 3. Alternative Data Gathering & "Leave No One Behind" (LNOB)

**Gender-Disaggregated Metrics:** CSOs actively push to close official data gaps. By utilizing localized networks like young women's think tanks, they track metrics on political participation and domestic safety that state databases might miss.]

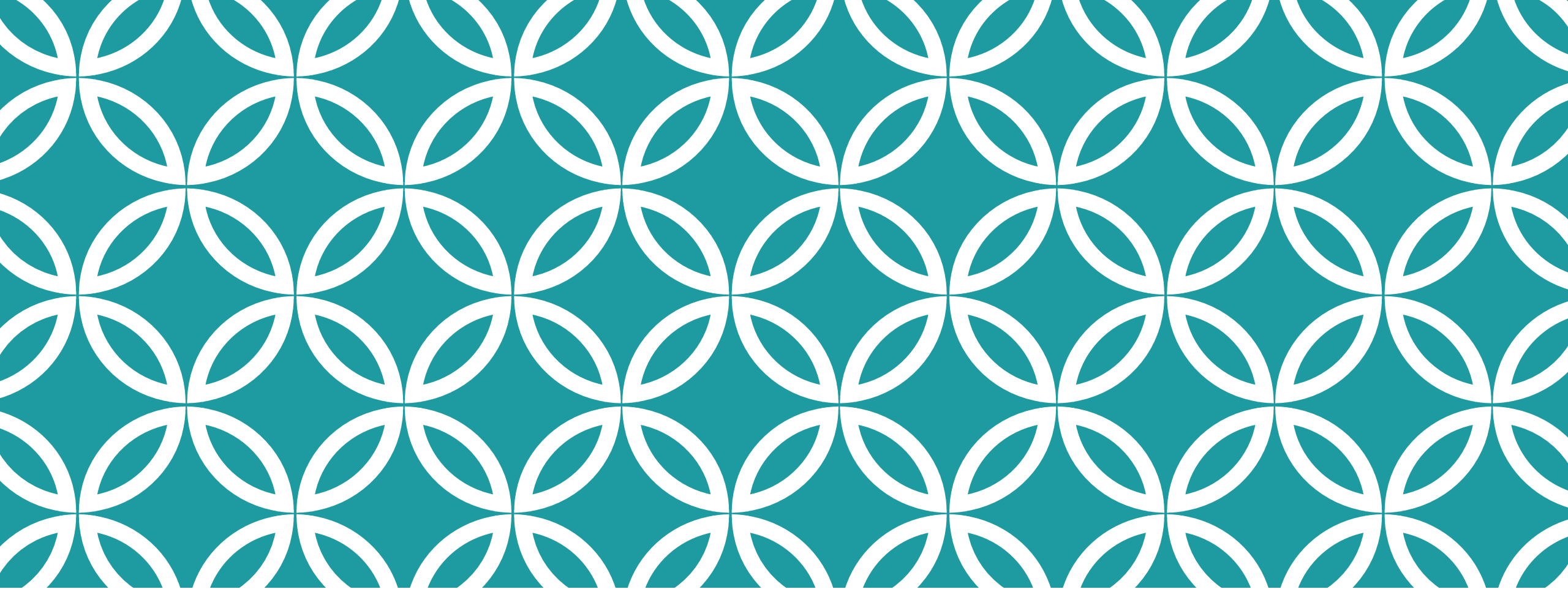
**Marginalized Group Advocacy:** CSOs gather primary data specifically from excluded communities, including ethnic minorities in the Chittagong Hill Tracts, people with disabilities, and extreme low-income urban groups. They present these findings at high-level review forums to influence national planning.

### 4. Direct Institutional Synergy

**Data Harmonization with BBS:** CSOs regularly collaborate with the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS) during validation workshops. They cross-examine data uploaded to the official national **SDG Tracker**, pointing out inconsistencies in regional reporting.

# WHY GENDER MATTERS FOR SDG LOCALISATION

- Gender equality is both an **objective and an enabler** of sustainable development.
- Localisation processes that exclude women from planning and decision-making risk overlooking the priorities of half the population and **weakening the effectiveness** of development interventions.
- Strengthening **women's participation improves institutional responsiveness, accountability and community ownership** while accelerating progress across multiple SDGs.



# **BUILDING A GENDER TRANSFORMATIVE LOCALISATION MODEL**



# OBJECTIVE OF DEVELOPING THIS MODEL

- Moving beyond conventional localisation
- Making **localisation gender-transformative**
- **Young women's leadership** as a driver of localisation
- Leadership, networks and collective action
- **Integrating** institutions and communities

# CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK FOR THE BANGLADESH MODEL

The model therefore integrates three mutually reinforcing dimensions:

**Institutional strengthening**, through support to local government coordination, planning and implementation.

**Leadership development**, by investing in networks of young women leaders supported through mentorship, capacity development and collaborative learning.

**Participatory governance**, through partnerships linking government, civil society, educational institutions and communities to generate evidence, strengthen accountability and improve local decision-making.

**Figure 3.1 Conceptual Framework for Gender-Transformative SDG Localisation**



# CONCEPTUAL FOUNDATIONS

Three conceptual foundations therefore underpin the model

**Global approaches to SDG localisation**, which provide principles for multilevel governance, local ownership and evidence-based planning;

**Feminist leadership and women's alliances**, which demonstrate how collaborative leadership, mentorship and collective action strengthen institutions and expand participation; and

**Bangladesh's experience of participatory governance**, which provides the institutional and social context within which these ideas can be adapted and sustained.

# SEVERAL CHARACTERISTICS DISTINGUISH FEMINIST LEADERSHIP APPROACHES FROM CONVENTIONAL LEADERSHIP MODELS

- **leadership** is distributed rather than hierarchical;
- **collaboration** is valued over competition;
- **diversity and intersectionality** are recognised as sources of strength;
- mentorship supports **leadership across generations**; and
- **institutional change** is pursued through collective action rather than individual achievement.

These principles are particularly relevant to SDG localisation because they strengthen the relationships necessary for collaborative governance.

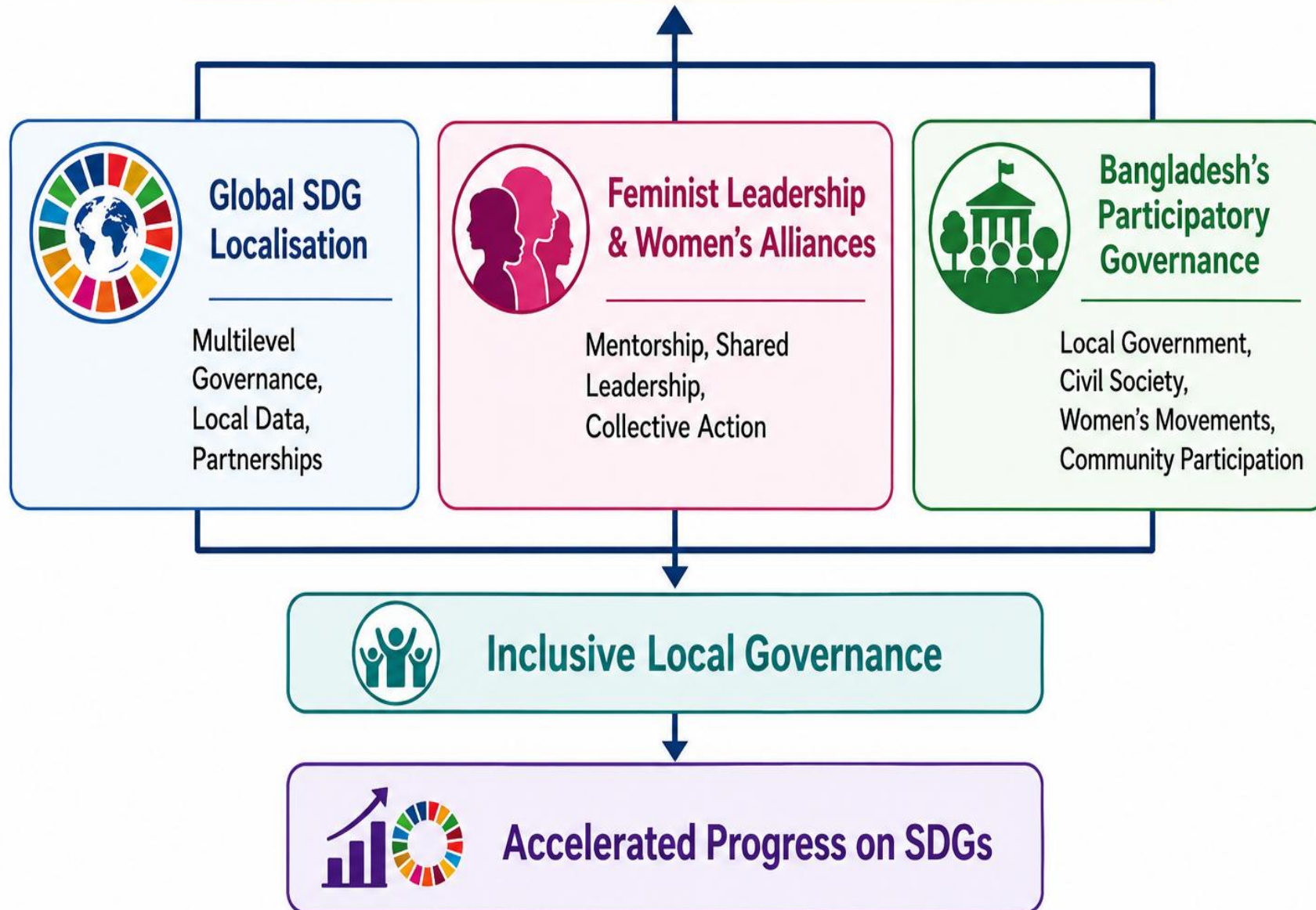
# LESSONS FROM WOMEN'S ALLIANCE APPROACHES (PRINCETON MODEL)

Women's alliance models demonstrate that leadership is strengthened when individuals have access to:

- peer support and collaborative learning;
- mentoring relationships across generations;
- safe spaces for dialogue and reflection;
- opportunities for collective action; and
- networks that connect diverse experiences and institutions.

The Bangladesh Model applies these principles within local governance and educational institutions, linking young women with local government institutions, civil society and communities.

# Bangladesh Model for Gender-Transformative SDG Localisation



# ARCHITECTURE OF THE BANGLADESH MODEL

The six components are:

1. Young Women's Leadership Platforms
2. Mentorship and Leadership Development
3. Institutional Partnerships
4. Community Engagement and Civic Participation
5. Digital Innovation and Knowledge Exchange
6. Evidence-Based Planning and Accountability

Together these components create a governance ecosystem that supports both institutional strengthening and gender equality.

**Figure 5.1**  
**The Bangladesh Model**  
for Gender-Transformative SDG Localisation



# THE BANGLADESH MODEL AT A GLANCE

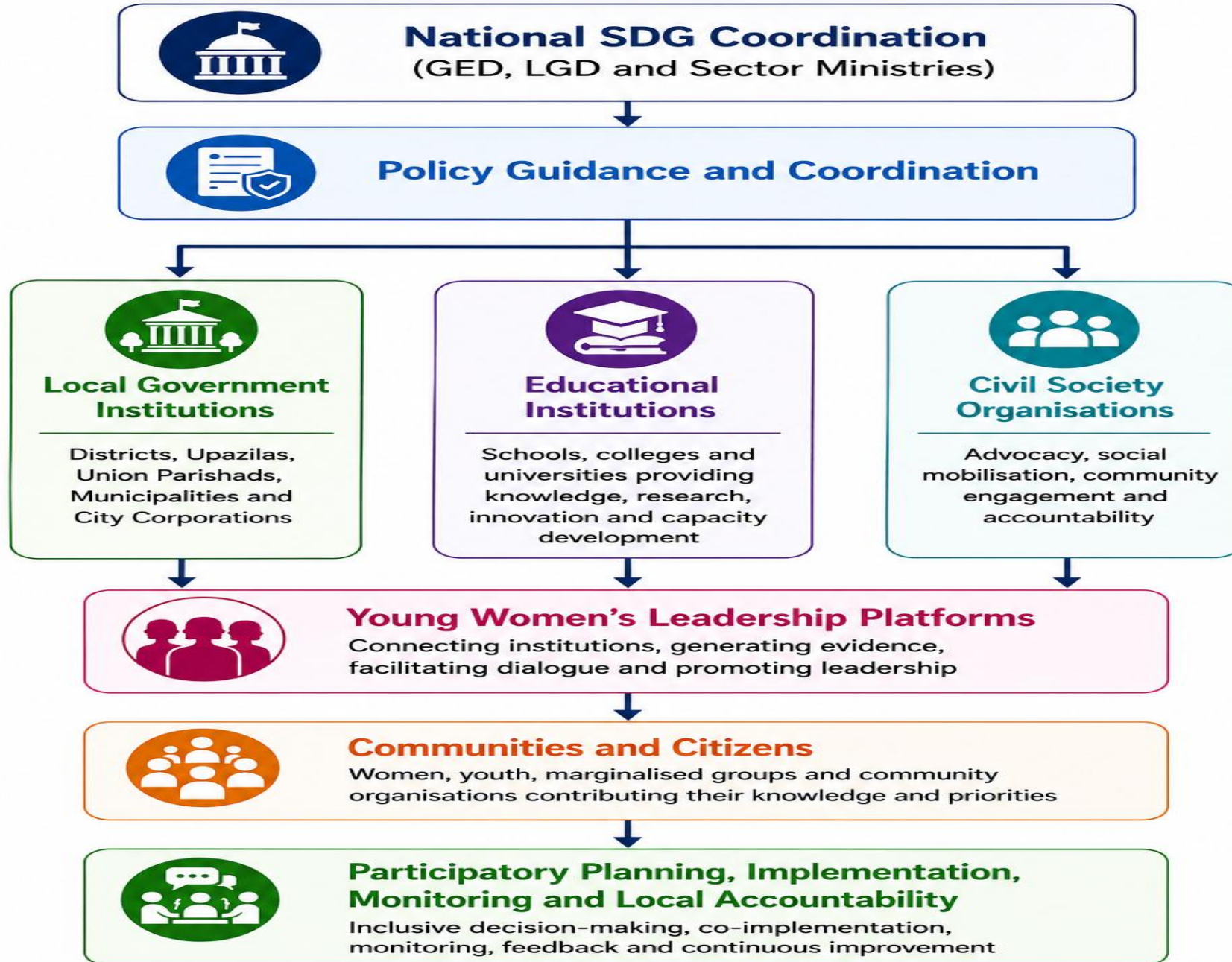
The Bangladesh Model positions **young women as leaders, knowledge producers and institutional partners.**

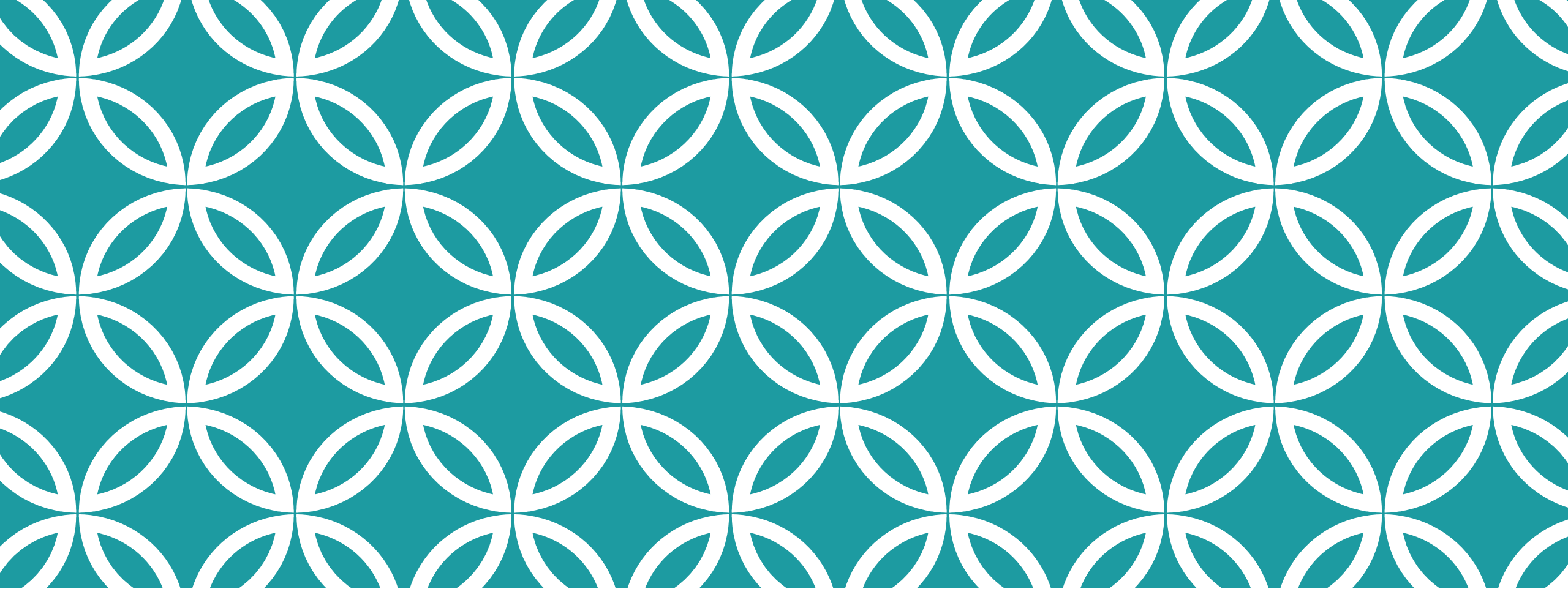
Through **structured partnerships** with local government, educational institutions and civil society, the model strengthens participatory planning, improves evidence-based decision-making and embeds gender equality within local governance processes.

Its distinctive contribution lies not in creating new institutions, but in strengthening existing ones through **collaboration, mentorship and inclusive leadership.**

| Actor                                  | Roles and responsibilities                                                                                                                                                                                           |
|----------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| National institutions                  | providing strategic direction for SDG localisation; ensuring alignment with national development policies;                                                                                                           |
| Local Government Institutions          | integrate gender-responsive priorities into local development plans; facilitate participatory planning processes; strengthen coordination among sectoral agencies                                                    |
| Educational and Knowledge Institutions | create opportunities for experiential learning by enabling students to engage directly with communities and local government institutions.                                                                           |
| Civil Society Organisations            | facilitating community engagement and participatory planning; supporting social accountability and transparency                                                                                                      |
| Young Women's Leadership Platforms     | Function as connectors linking institutions that have traditionally operated independently.<br>Generate evidence, convene dialogue, support participatory planning and encourage civic engagement among young women. |
| Development Partners and the UN        | provide technical assistance, facilitate knowledge exchange and support the development of innovative approaches to localisation.                                                                                    |

**Figure 6.1**  
**Institutional Architecture for the Bangladesh Model**





# OPERATIONALISATION OF THE MODEL



## BUILDING A GENDER-TRANSFORMATIVE MODEL FOR SDG LOCALISATION IN BANGLADESH

### 1. Creating divisional level leadership platforms for young women



- Identification and solidarity building;
- Capacity building;
- Encouraging networking with various stakeholders;
- Orientation on SDG 5 and 16;
- Platform members taking various initiatives to develop their leadership and address SDGs.

# BUILDING A GENDER-TRANSFORMATIVE MODEL FOR SDG LOCALISATION IN BANGLADESH

## 2. Mentorship of young women and cascade mentorship of female school students



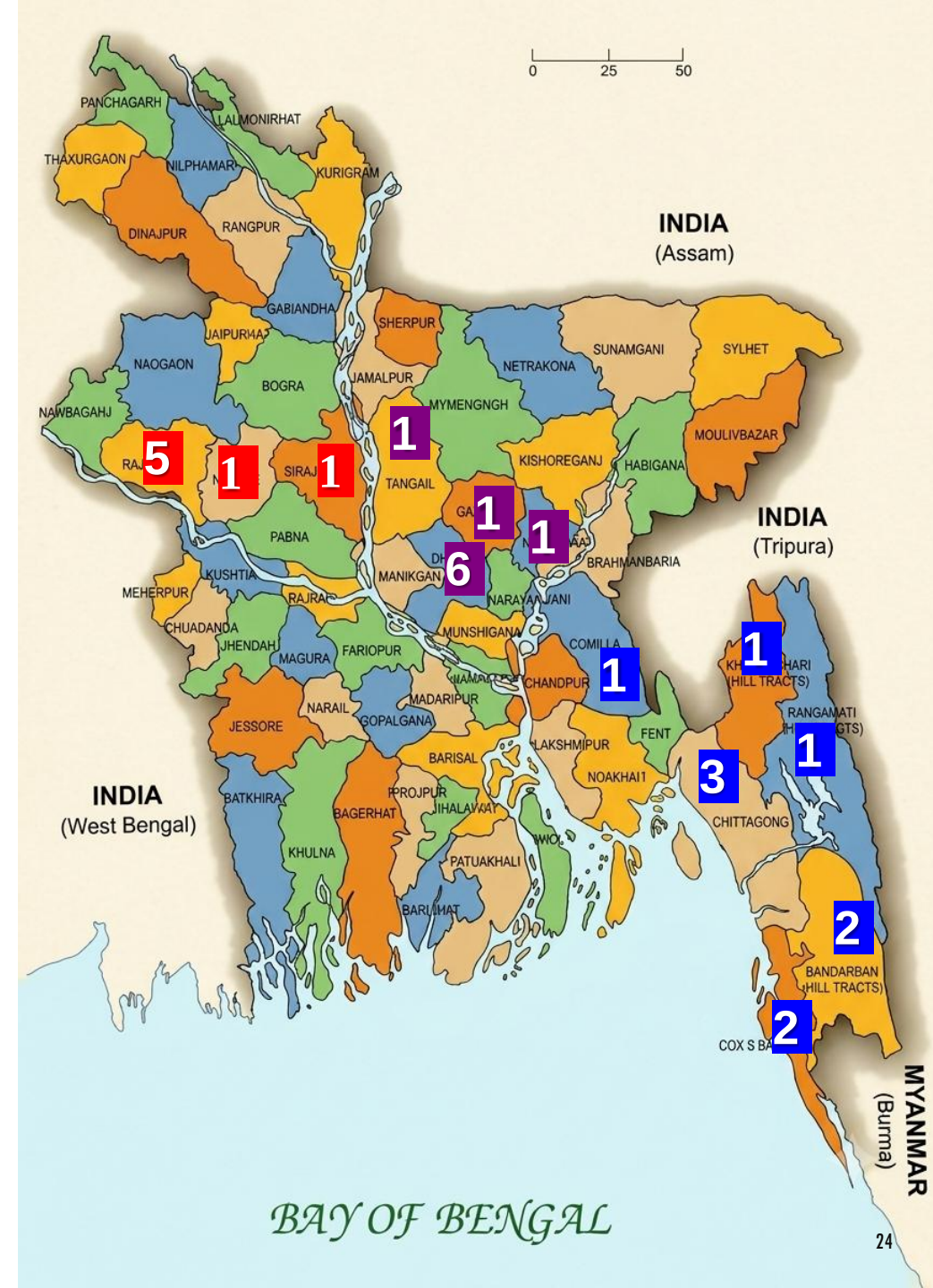
*Mentoring  
Sessions*



*School  
Sessions*

- Identification of 10 mentors per division
- Monthly mentoring sessions of young women leaders to develop their capacity;
- Identification of 27 schools to carry out school level sessions on SDG 5 and 16;
- Two rounds carried out with 900 girls in 27 schools on SDG 5 and 16;
  - ↳ UNOPs numbers and location (6 School, 2 Madrasa, 700 students)
  - ↳ Naripokkho numbers and locations (23 School, 900 students)
- School session participants taking various initiatives to develop their leadership and address SDGs.

# SDG sessions in 28 School Across Three Divisions: From Union Roots to Divisional Young Women's Leadership



## BUILDING A GENDER-TRANSFORMATIVE MODEL FOR SDG LOCALISATION IN BANGLADESH

### 3. Developing Cross-sector alliances (government, civil society, business, academia) with platform members and mentors



- Inception workshops in three divisions brought together government officials, political party members and activists, civil society, women's organizations and academia;
- Joint sessions held with mid-level women political activists from various parties on how they can support and work with young women leaders;
- Joint sessions held with mid-level women political activists from various parties and young women leaders on experiences in addressing SDG 5 and 16 and how to strengthen this work;
- Relationship building with local administration, local government officials and SDG committees in three divisions.

## BUILDING A GENDER-TRANSFORMATIVE MODEL FOR SDG LOCALISATION IN BANGLADESH

### 4/5. Developing Community Dialogue Fora and Collective Advocacy for SDGs

- Divisional level workshops bringing together government officials, political party members and activists, civil society, women's organizations and academia
- Initiatives taken by Platform members (young women leaders) and female school students to take forward SDG 5 and 16 will be highlighted
- Collective recommendations around SDG 5 and 16 localisation and implementation will be highlighted
- Relations to be established between divisional platforms of young women leaders and SDG District committees

# Figure 1. The Logic of the Bangladesh Model for Gender-Transformative SDG Localisation



## CROSS-CUTTING ENABLERS



Gender Equality  
and Social Inclusion



Evidence and  
Data for Action



Multi-stakeholder  
Partnerships



Digital Innovation  
and Knowledge  
Sharing



Learning,  
Adaptation and  
Accountability

## KEY SDGs





## INPUTS



Identification of diverse women leaders



Partnership with educational institutions



Development of mentoring model and capacity building



Coordination with localisation and GEWE initiatives



Alignment with political party commitments



## PROCESSES



Solidarity building among young women



Capacity enhancement through training and networking



Mentoring by women leaders



Relationship development with women political leaders



Relationship building with local administration and local government



Outreach by young leaders to school students to develop civic responsibilities



Coordination / collaboration with other localisation initiatives



## OUTPUTS



Young women's platforms developed



Solidarity between young women and women in politics



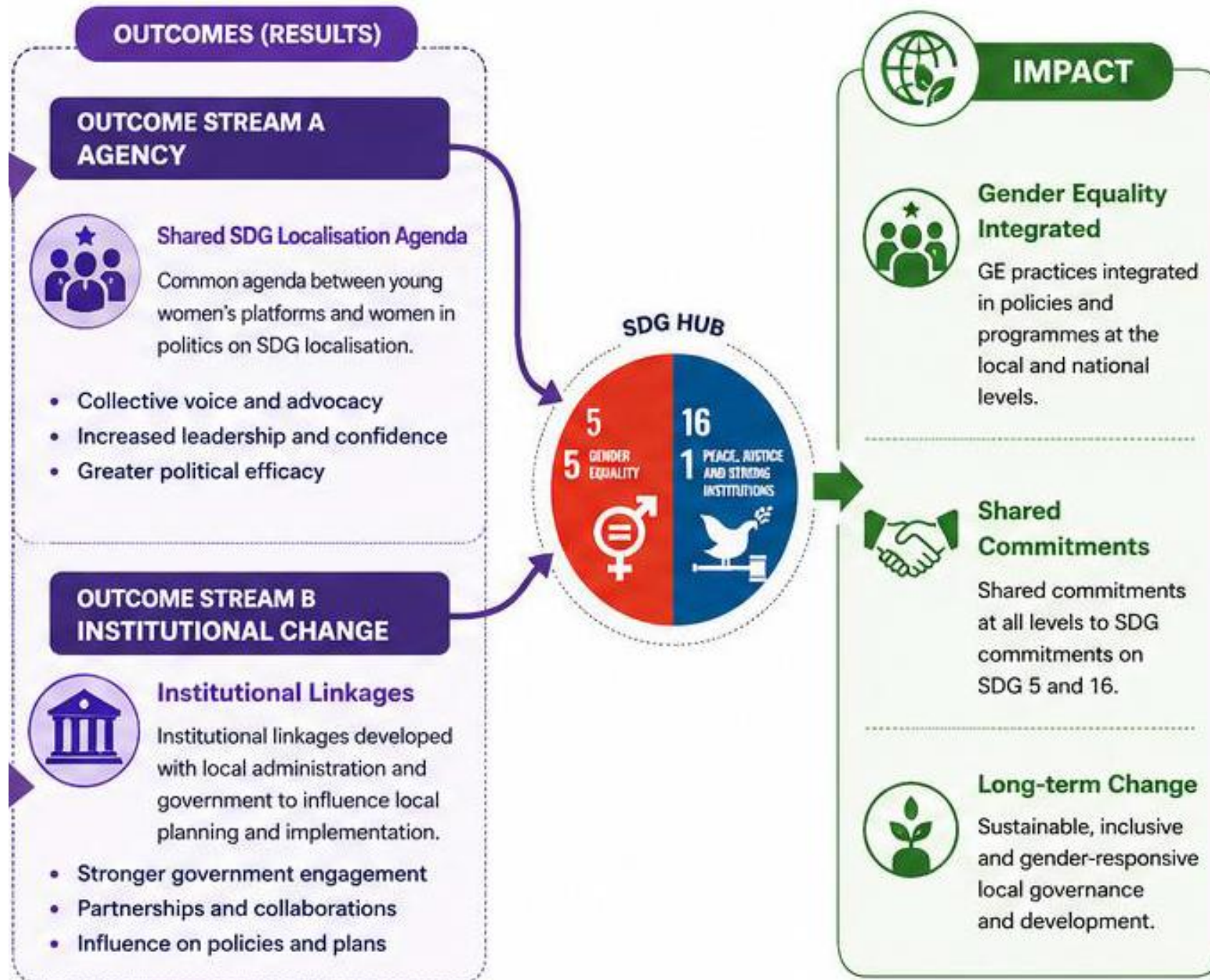
Common advocacy agenda



Mentorship model development

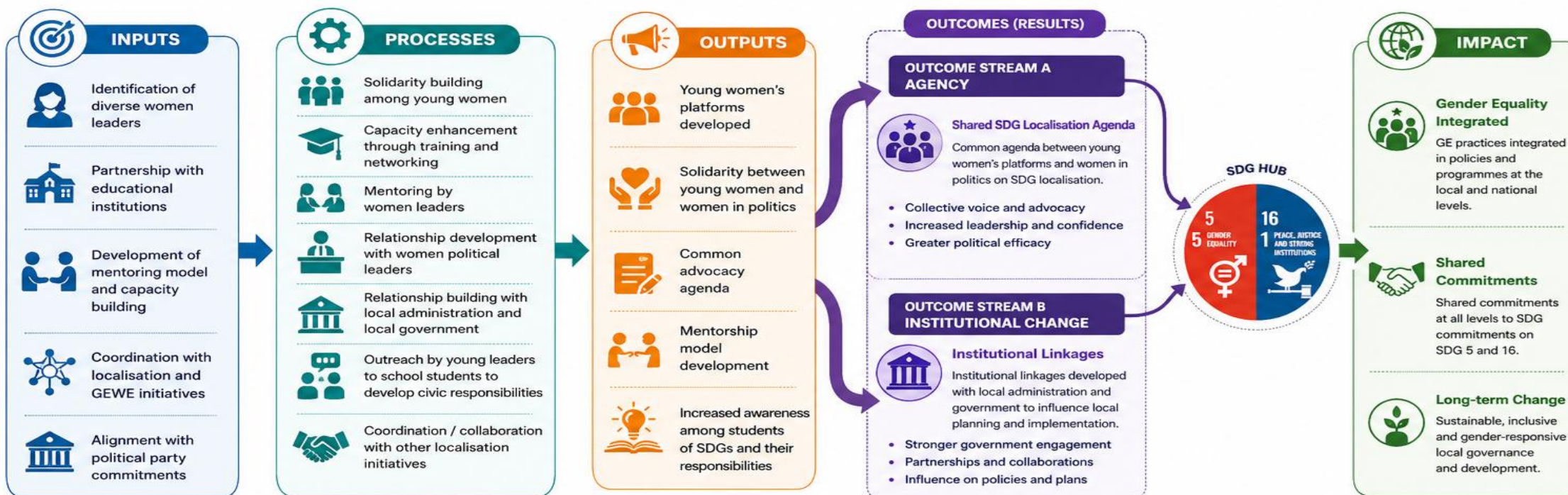


Increased awareness among students of SDGs and their responsibilities



# YOUNG WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP FOR GENDER-RESPONSIVE SDG LOCALISATION

Theory of Change for Strengthening Women's Leadership, Civic Engagement and Local Governance



# RESULTS ACHIEVED

| School level                                                                      | Young women leaders                                                                 | Changes the female youth have contributed to                     |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Increased knowledge and understanding of the SDGs                                 | Strengthened leadership skills, confidence and communication skill at public level. | Increased discussions and awareness on preventing child marriage |
| Enhanced awareness on gender equality and commitment to end gender discrimination | Facilitation skills, skill of accessing institutions, schools                       | More positive attitudes toward girls' education                  |
| Improved self-confidence among adolescent girls                                   | Increased civic engagement and participation                                        | Enhanced awareness of preventing violence against women          |
|                                                                                   |                                                                                     | Increased engagement with public life                            |

# INSTITUTIONALISATION OF THE MODEL: MOVING BEYOND PROJECTS

Institutionalisation can be strengthened through four complementary strategies.

- First, **regular engagement between Young Women's Leadership Platforms and USICCs** should be integrated into local planning cycles.
- Second, **partnerships between educational institutions and local government institutions** should be formalised through collaborative research, internships and knowledge-sharing arrangements.
- Third, **participatory dialogue with civil society organisations** should become a regular component of local development planning and monitoring.
- Finally, **systems for documenting local experience and sharing lessons** across districts should be established to encourage continuous learning and adaptive governance.

# SUSTAINING AND SCALING UP

## Young Women

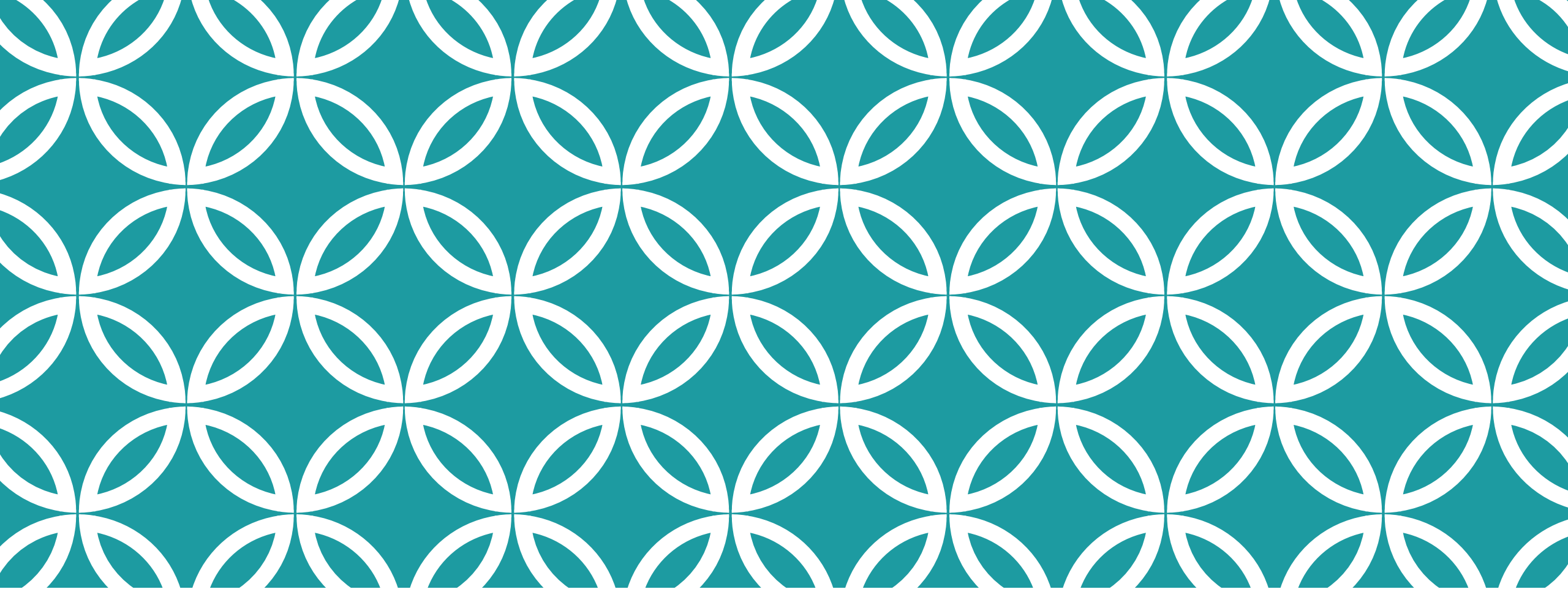
- Action plan to work for leadership in public life, combating GBV and gender discrimination, advocacy for creating safe spaces
- Community for dialogue on challenges like child marriage, harassment, or gender equity.
- Encourage mentorship between senior and junior students
- Linkage and membership in local level committees and sub committees i.e SDG Committees, Youth Committees, CSO Committees and political organizations

## School students

- action plan to work for community,
- establish peer learning circles to combat GBV and gender discrimination,
- advocacy for creating safe spaces for dialogue on challenges like child marriage, harassment, or gender equity.
- Replication of model in other schools,

## Political Leaders:

- Local government representatives to enable platform members to become volunteers and members and raise their demands for GE.



# STORIES OF CHANGE AND LOCALISING OF SDGS

young women  
activists

# Finding Confidence and Challenging Gender Bias: The Story of a Young Indigenous Woman



Indigenous student from Dighinala, currently studying at Eden Mohila College. Faced challenges adapting to city life and lacked confidence in expressing her views.

## Challenges Faces

- During a fuel shortage, her grandmother sympathized with her uncle's difficulty in commuting to work.
- She noticed that her aunt's daily struggle as a primary school teacher was being overlooked.
- Respectfully raised the issue and emphasized that women's labor and contributions deserve equal recognition.

## Turning Point

Foundation Training by Naripokkho a turning point- Through training and participatory activities, I learned about different forms of violence and discrimination. I realized that multiple layers of marginalization—not only because of my ethnic identity but also because I am a woman.

## Challenging Gender Bias

Questioned why her uncle's work was valued more than her aunt's.

Encouraged family members to recognize and respect women's contributions equally.

## Impact & Reflection

Created a meaningful family discussion on gender equality.

Reconsider traditional beliefs about men's & women's roles

Realized that conversations can spark important social change.



## Most Significant Change

- ☐ Transformed from a shy and hesitant young woman into a confident advocate for gender equality.
- ☐ Now confidently identifies and challenges gender bias while promoting equal recognition and respect for women's contributions.



# From Silence to Speaking Out: Challenging Gender Bias in Everyday Life



Ekra Akter is a student at the University of Dhaka and actively involved in student leadership activities. Previously, she often overlooked gender discrimination in everyday life because she lacked the awareness and confidence to question it.



## Challenging Discriminatory Language

- While receiving a crest as the Debate and Literary Affairs Secretary, she noticed the word “Janaba” written before her name.
- After learning about its discriminatory implication for women, she raised the issue with the hall parliament’s General Secretary.
- The authority acknowledged the mistake, apologized and promised not to use such language in the future.

## Turning Point

- Participated in Naripokkho’s training program, “**Loraita Bhasharo**” (Struggle is also about Language).

## Addressing Institutional Bias

While reviewing a departmental publication, she noticed that when both a male and a female student achieved the highest CGPA and became CRs, the male student’s name was always listed first.

She discussed the issue with the office assistant and explained how such practices can reinforce gender bias. The concern was accepted, and the listing was later revised.



## Most Significant Change

Transformed from someone who passively accepted gender-biased language and practices into someone who actively questions and challenges them.

Now confidently speaks out against discrimination in educational institutions, public spaces, and within her own family.

Realized that even small actions and conversations can contribute to building a more equal and inclusive society.

# From Silence to Strength: The Leadership Journey of Joyonti Mollo



Joyonti Mollo is a student of the University of Chittagong. Before joining Naripokkho, she lacked confidence in public speaking.

## Initial Challenges Faces

- Felt nervous speaking in front of others.
- Hesitate to talk about gender equality, women's rights, and social justice.
- Frequently doubted her ability to communicate effectively.

## Beginning of the Transformation

- Participated in Foundation Training and follow-up sessions.
- Learned communication, facilitation, session planning, and participant engagement skills.

## New Understanding of Leadership

Discovered that leadership is more than speaking confidently.

Learned value of listening, respecting different viewpoints and creating inclusive spaces.

## FOSTERING STUDENT ENGAGEMENT

### Passive Learning

Students are not actively involved



### Interactive Session



### Engaging Learning

Students participate & learn to raise voice

Encourage open sharing of ideas

Students ask questions confidently

Students share their perspectives freely



## Practical Field Experience

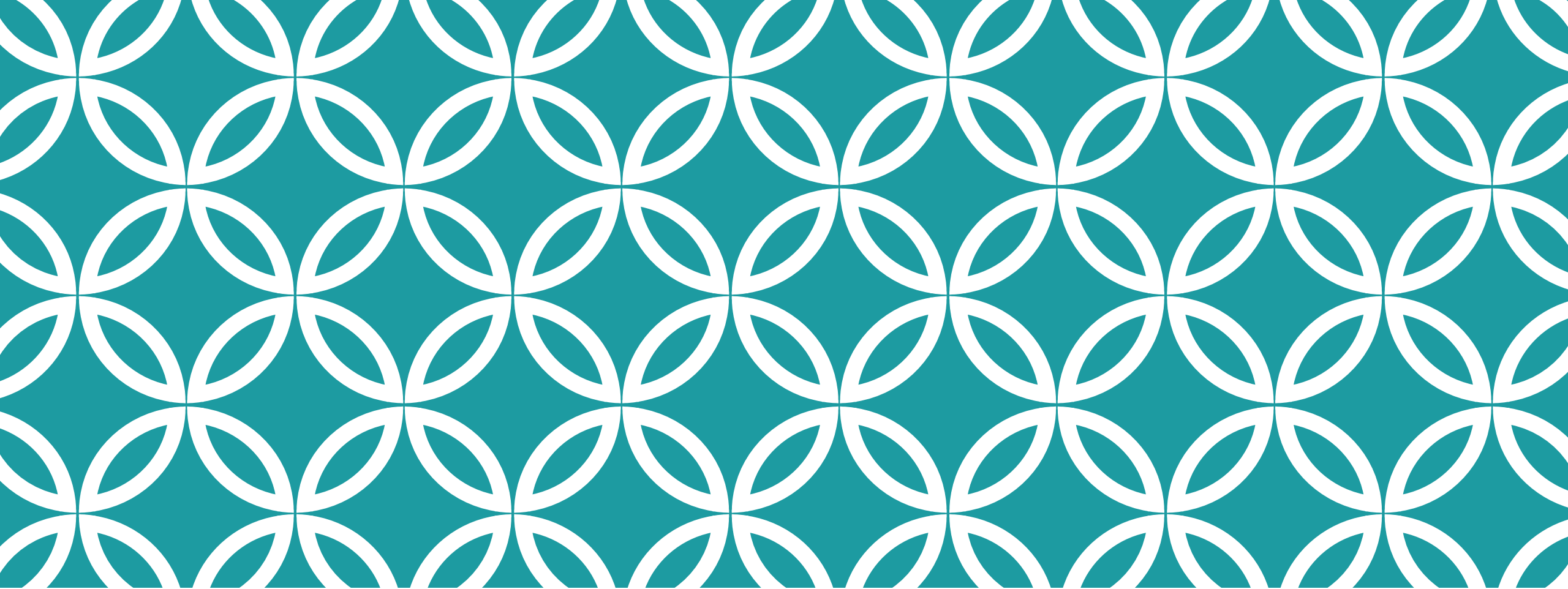
Facilitated school session on SDG Localization.

Participated in awareness sessions in communities.

## Most Significant Change

Transformed from a young woman afraid to speak in public into a confident facilitator and leader.

The voice that once feared being heard now inspires others to speak up and create change.



# STORIES OF CHANGE AND LOCALISING SDGS

female school  
students







# CASE STORY OF MONIKA AKTER

