

Strategic Policy Dialogue:
Renewable energy policy related
instruments must include women,
marginalised communities

Renewable energy is not merely about power generation. It is directly linked to people's lives, work, income, safety and rights, speakers said. They called for women and marginalised communities to be clearly reflected in the Draft National Renewable Energy Development Strategy (2026-2030) and Rooftop Solar Operation and Maintenance Guidelines. The strategic policy dialogue, "Strengthening Renewable Energy Governance: Review of Energy Policy Related Instruments for Gender Equality and Social Inclusion", was organised by Manusher Jonno Foundation (MJF) under its Women's Empowerment and Energy (WEE) project.



Discussants and participants at a strategic policy dialogue held on Thursday, July 9, 2026, at Manusher Jonno Foundation's office in Mirpur, Dhaka. Photo: Media and Communication Unit of MJF



Banasree Mitra Neogi
Manusher Jonno Foundation (MJF)

National policies must provide the foundation for gender equality and social inclusion. Civil society organisations need to play an active role in pushing for change and identifying practical actions within their own areas of work. The documents should also be made publicly accessible, and broader consultations with civil society should take place before they are finalised to ensure an inclusive and participatory policy-making process.



Hasan Mehedi
Coastal Livelihood and Environmental Action Network (CLEAN)

The renewable energy strategy should reflect Bangladesh's current energy realities and clearly address the needs of marginalised communities. Instead of relying mainly on punitive measures, the policy should promote incentive-based compliance and practical implementation checklists. We need to invest in skilled entrepreneurs and ensure new technologies are matched with capacity to use and sustain them effectively.



Shahnaz Siddiqi Soma
Bangladesh Nari Sangbadik Kendra (BNSK)

Policies and projects should assess both the benefits of including marginalised communities and the costs of excluding them. Evidence-based policymaking must show who benefits, who is left behind, and the social and economic consequences. Renewable energy should also be integrated into the national education curriculum to build an informed and inclusive generation for a just and sustainable energy future.



Md. Newazul Moula
Transparency International Bangladesh (TIB)

Sufficient time should be allocated for stakeholder consultations to ensure meaningful participation in policy development. The strategy must include clear background, actionable recommendations and a practical implementation roadmap, while strengthening investment provisions. Women's participation must extend to meaningful decision-making rather than reinforcing traditional gender roles.



Sazzad Hossain
Infrastructure Development Company Limited (IDCOL)

Renewable energy policies should go beyond technical and megawatt-based targets to include clear social impact and beneficiary goals. Access to finance also remains a major barrier, particularly for women and marginalised communities. More inclusive financing mechanisms, simpler loan procedures and targeted financial products are urgently needed to enable their meaningful participation in renewable energy.



Sadia Jahan Rothi
C3ER
Brac University

Practical renewable energy laboratories should be introduced across the education system so that girls can gain hands-on experience with technologies such as solar panels and energy-efficient systems. This learning can build skills and confidence, encourage more girls to pursue STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) and renewable energy careers, and help develop a diverse, future-ready workforce.



Md. Ikbal Faruk
Waterkeepers Bangladesh

Access to energy should be recognised as a basic human right and as a foundation for inclusive development. Bangladesh's renewable energy transition must ensure that no one is left behind. With better access to finance, technical skills, markets and business support, women can become entrepreneurs, service providers and leaders in this sector. It can also strengthen local economies and create inclusive opportunities.



Marjia Jahan
ActionAid Bangladesh

A dedicated helpline should provide accessible information, technical guidance and timely support on renewable energy, particularly for women and marginalised communities. Public services should be more responsive to people's needs and easier to access. Bangladesh needs a battery-management roadmap to ensure safe collection, recycling and disposal, and to reduce environmental and public-health risks.



Jannatul Ferdaus
Ethical Trading Initiative (ETI) Bangladesh

The discussed renewable energy policy documents need to clearly define the role of the Ministry of Women and Children Affairs. Gender equality cannot be treated as an afterthought without institutional ownership. This will ensure that women's needs, leadership, entrepreneurship, access to finance, skills development, participation in decision-making are systematically reflected in Bangladesh's renewable energy transition.



A.S.M. Munir
Bangladesh Sustainable and Renewable Energy Association (BSREA)

Marginalised communities were among the earliest beneficiaries of solar initiatives, but our focus must now extend beyond solar home systems to the wider renewable energy ecosystem. Policies should clearly identify who will benefit from the value chain. Continuous stakeholder consultation is also essential to ensure that gender equality and social inclusion are meaningfully integrated into policy and strategic frameworks.



M Mofazzal Hossain
Change Initiative

Access to energy should be recognised as a basic human right and as a foundation for inclusive development. Bangladesh's renewable energy transition must ensure that no one is left behind. With better access to finance, technical skills, markets and business support, women can become entrepreneurs, service providers and leaders in this sector. It can also strengthen local economies and create inclusive opportunities.



Md. Ahsanul Wahed
Manusher Jonno Foundation (MJF)

Energy transition must include adequate social safety nets for vulnerable communities and targeted measures to increase women's participation in renewable energy employment. Bangladesh should address gaps in achieving SDG 5 and SDG 7 through inclusive policies, while providing context-specific guidance for regions such as the haor areas, where local conditions require necessary customized solutions.



Wasiur Rahman Tonmoy
Manusher Jonno Foundation (MJF)

The two recent renewable energy policy instruments were prepared without adequate consultation with relevant stakeholders. Women and marginalised communities are also not sufficiently reflected in the documents. The government should provide special incentives and easier access to finance, while making the strategy and guidelines more realistic as well as inclusive through wider consultation with civil society, the private sector, development partners and experts.



A. Legal, Policy, and Structural Reforms

- **SDG Alignment:** Directly address existing policy gaps relating to SDG 5 (Gender Equality) and SDG 7 (Affordable and Clean Energy).
- **Policy Context & Scenarios:** Include the current baseline renewable energy scenario to strongly justify the policy rationale.
- **Drafting & Consultation:** Structure the strategic policy distinctly around background, policy recommendations, and an implementation roadmap, allowing sufficient time for future stakeholder consultations.
- **Civil Society Inclusion:** Form a committee that involves civil society to review, validate, and bridge gaps in the guideline.



D. Technology, Financing, and Market Access

- **Inclusive Financing:** Establish long-term financing mechanisms and introduce a "social credit model".
- **Economic Incentives:** Provide targeted tax and VAT exemptions for renewable energy technologies to spur local market adoption.
- **Rooftop & Industrial Models:** Expand rooftop solar initiatives past commercial/industrial sectors into marginalized communities, and strengthen the accountability of industrial owners operating under the OPEX model.
- **Targeted Tech Deployment:** Prioritize clean cooking technologies, home gardening pump machines, solar charging stations, and electric cooking systems to directly uplift vulnerable women.
- **Technical Infrastructure:** Formulate a clear national battery roadmap, maximize energy generation from waste, and build localized technician support networks/helplines for active solar panel maintenance.



Recommendations

B. Institutional and Governance Accountability

- **Inter-Ministerial Collaboration:** Explicitly include the Ministry of Women and Children Affairs within the policy framework.
- **Clear Ownership:** Clearly identify and assign the specific institutions responsible for the execution of the policy.
- **Accountability vs. Punishment:** Move away from strictly punitive measures to counter corruption; instead, introduce project implementation checklists, social audits, and incentive-based compliance mechanisms.
- **Procurement and Coordination:** Integrate a comprehensive procurement strategy into the guidelines and coordinate equipment standards directly with customs authorities.



C. GESI, Social Safety Nets, and Human Rights

- **Energy as a Right:** Explicitly recognize access to energy as a fundamental human right.
- **Inclusion of Vulnerable Groups:** Strengthen explicit provisions safeguarding marginalized populations, ensuring clear frameworks demonstrate how remote or excluded groups will benefit.
- **Data and Demographics:** Shift from tracking purely megawatt targets to setting beneficiary-based targets.
- **Meaningful Empowerment:** Promote women's active participation in executive decision-making roles rather than designing policies that reinforce traditional gender roles.
- **Safety Nets:** Ensure robust social safety nets are established to shield vulnerable communities during the macro-level transition to renewable energy.



E. Education, Training, and Human Resource Development

- **Curriculum Integration:** Introduce renewable energy and its inclusive benefits into school textbooks.
- **Practical Facilities:** Build functional laboratory facilities to bolster hands-on skills development and technical education.
- **Entrepreneurship & Labor:** Balance advanced tech acquisition with local human resource cultivation; develop highly skilled local entrepreneurs and incorporate explicit labor market considerations and Just Transition principles.
- **Training Equity:** Weave GESI integration strategies deeply into technical training and capacity-building tracks.