

NEWSLETTER



Welcome to APWEN Lens,
the official quarterly newsletter of the Asia Pacific Women
Empowerment Network (APWEN).

More than a newsletter, APWEN Lens is a regional platform for
knowledge, dialogue, and collective action. Through this, we bring
together stories, research, policy insights, innovative practices, and
voices from across the Asia-Pacific to advance the empowerment
of women and girls.

Each issue highlights the work of our partners, amplifies grassroots
experiences, showcases emerging research, and shares
opportunities for learning, collaboration, and advocacy. We believe
that meaningful change begins with informed conversations,
evidence-based action, and strong regional solidarity.

Whether you are a practitioner, researcher, policymaker,
development professional, activist, or ally, we invite you to learn,
contribute, and grow with us. Together, we can build a more
inclusive, equitable, and empowered Asia-Pacific.



See. Learn. Connect. Empower.



PSDI Foundation – Advancing Inclusive Development Through Women’s Leadership

The Platform for Sustainable Development Initiatives (PSDI) Foundation is a women-led, non-profit development organization in Bangladesh, established in March 2025 with a vision of building a sustainable, inclusive, and environmentally responsible society where every individual enjoys dignity, equal opportunities, and the benefits of sustainable development.

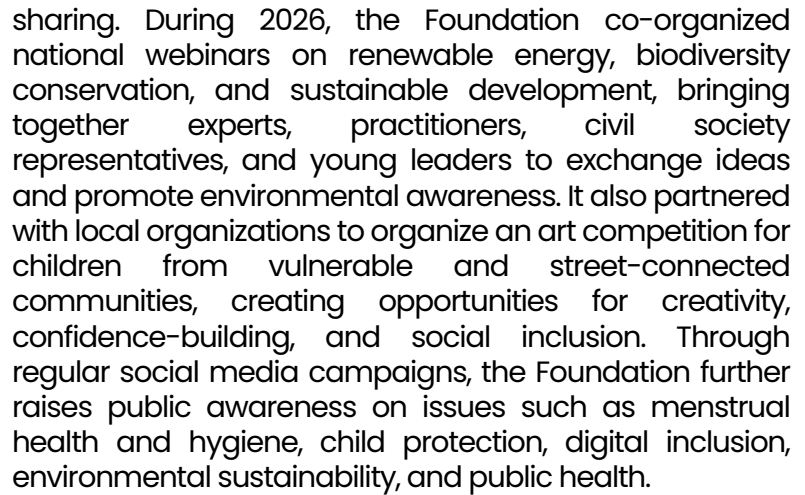
Although a young organization, PSDI Foundation has quickly emerged as a promising development actor committed to advancing the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) through innovative, participatory, and rights-based approaches. Registered under the Registrar of Joint Stock Companies and Firms (RJSC), Bangladesh, the Foundation works to empower communities by strengthening human rights, promoting environmental stewardship, and fostering inclusive development that leaves no one behind.

A defining strength of PSDI Foundation is its commitment to women’s leadership and gender-responsive governance. The Foundation is proudly women-led, with 9 of its 13 Executive Committee members being women. Women also hold four of the organization’s five key executive leadership positions, serving as the Chairperson, Vice-Chairperson, Joint Secretary, and Treasurer. This governance structure reflects PSDI Foundation’s belief that women should not only benefit from development but also shape policies, influence decisions, and lead institutional transformation. By placing women at the forefront of leadership, the Foundation demonstrates that gender equality begins within organizations and extends into the communities they serve.

Women’s empowerment is therefore not a standalone programme but a cross-cutting principle embedded throughout PSDI Foundation’s mission, strategies, and operations. The Foundation promotes gender justice by strengthening women’s leadership, entrepreneurship, decision-making, access to education and health services, and participation in climate action, community governance, and civic engagement. It believes that empowering women and girls creates stronger families, more resilient communities, and more sustainable development outcomes.

Recognizing the interconnected challenges facing women and marginalized communities, PSDI Foundation adopts an integrated development approach that combines gender equality with climate justice, education, health, child protection, youth development, digital inclusion, livelihood promotion, humanitarian response, and social accountability. Guided by the principles of "Do No Harm," participation, inclusiveness, sustainability, and community ownership, every initiative is designed to ensure that vulnerable populations actively participate in shaping their own development.

Despite its recent establishment, PSDI Foundation has already demonstrated a strong commitment to collaboration and knowledge



Partnership lies at the heart of PSDI Foundation's development philosophy. Since its inception, the Foundation has established collaborations with more than ten national and local organizations and networks across Bangladesh, recognizing that sustainable and inclusive development can only be achieved through collective action. As a member of the Asia Pacific Women Empowerment Network (APWEN), PSDI Foundation values opportunities to strengthen regional solidarity, exchange knowledge and good practices, amplify women's voices, and build strategic partnerships that advance gender equality across the Asia-Pacific region.

Looking ahead, PSDI Foundation is preparing to expand its programmes beyond Dhaka to underserved regions across Bangladesh, with a particular focus on women, youth, children, indigenous communities, persons with disabilities, and other marginalized populations. The Foundation is also developing new partnerships to implement community-based initiatives that promote women's economic empowerment, climate resilience, education, digital transformation, and accountable local governance.

At PSDI Foundation, women are not viewed simply as beneficiaries of development—they are recognized as leaders, innovators, and change-makers. By investing in women's leadership, strengthening local capacities, and fostering inclusive partnerships, PSDI Foundation is contributing to more resilient communities and a more equitable future. As a proud member of APWEN, the Foundation looks forward to working with partners across the Asia-Pacific region to accelerate progress toward gender equality and build a more just, peaceful, and sustainable world for all.

Prepared by:

Sanjoy Majumder,

General Secretary,

PSDI Foundation





SHEpolicy: Advancing Women's Rights Through Research, Relief, and Education

Partner Spotlight: SHEpolicy

SHEpolicy is a gender justice and policy advocacy organization working to advance the rights, economic security, and leadership of women and girls across Bangladesh. Headquartered in Dhaka with an active presence in Barisal, SHEpolicy combines rigorous research with direct community response, guided by the conviction that women should not merely benefit from policy but author it. Our work spans emergency relief, educational access, and gender-responsive research, alongside training programs in financial, legal, and gender literacy that build long-term resilience among underserved communities.

Program Highlight: Korail Fire Emergency Response

In November 2025, a devastating fire swept through sections of Korail, one of Dhaka's largest informal settlements, destroying homes and leaving many women-headed households without shelter, clothing, or basic necessities. SHEpolicy mobilized within days to deliver direct relief, distributing clothing and dignity kits containing eleven essential items – including soap, shampoo, sanitary products, and other hygiene necessities – to women navigating displacement and loss. Field teams worked directly within the community, listening to women's accounts of the disaster and identifying the most urgent gaps in support. The response reflected SHEpolicy's broader commitment to centering women's dignity and agency even in moments of acute crisis, treating relief as an extension of rights-based advocacy rather than as charity alone.



Fire damage in Korail, Dhaka, November 2025



SHEpolicy field team consulting with women affected by the fire



Hygiene and dignity kit items prepared for distribution



Packaged dignity kits ready for delivery to affected households

Program Highlight: Ramadan Educational KitBox Initiative

This Ramadan, SHEpolicy partnered with Orvaya Foundation to deliver Educational KitBoxes to children from underprivileged communities in Dhaka and Barisal, alongside a complementary book donation drive for underserved students. Each kit included notebooks, pencils, rulers, erasers, and storybooks – in many cases Bangla-language books designed to nurture early literacy and a love of reading among children who otherwise have limited access to educational materials.

The initiative reached children across both urban informal settlements and rural, riverine communities in Barisal, reinforcing SHEpolicy's belief that educational access is foundational to breaking cycles of gender and economic inequality.



A young recipient with her Educational KitBox and Bangla storybook

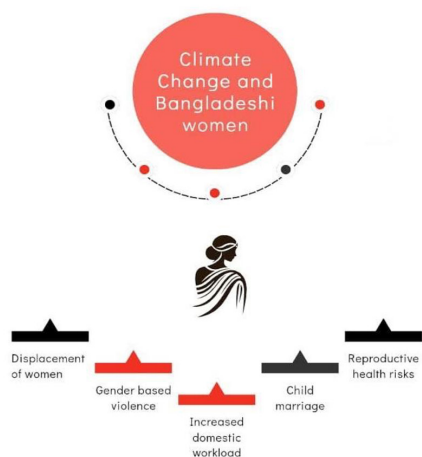


SHEpolicy and Orvaya Foundation deliver Educational KitBoxes to children in underprivileged communities

Research & Knowledge Product: An Author's Voice on Climate and Gender

SHEpolicy's Founder & Director, Owakila Tabassum Mumu, recently authored জল, মাটি, অ্যাডাম ও ইভ (Jol, Mati, Adam o Eve – “Water, Soil, Adam and Eve”), a 176-page work exploring the intersection of climate, environment, and gender. Published in February 2025 by Anyesha Prokashon, the book uses the imagery of Adam and Eve, and the sheltering tree whose role we so easily forget, to reflect on how women's lives are bound to land and water, and how climate disruption reshapes gender roles, vulnerability, and resilience in Bangladesh.

The book reflects SHEpolicy's broader research focus on the gendered dimensions of climate change – including displacement, increased domestic workload, gender-based violence, child marriage, and reproductive health risks faced disproportionately by women in climate-vulnerable communities.



Looking Ahead

Beyond emergency response, education, and research, SHEpolicy continues to deliver training on financial, legal, and gender literacy to women across our active regions. We welcome opportunities to collaborate with fellow APWEN partners working toward shared goals of women's empowerment across the Asia-Pacific.

Contributed by

SHEpolicy – Dhaka & Barisal, Bangladesh



Humanitarian Enhancement Aid for Resilient Transformation-HEART is an UNCCD accredited, youth-led & grassroots non profit voluntary organization registered with the Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh based in Cox's Bazar since 2021. It empowers climate-vulnerable and marginalized groups, including Dalit fishers, Indigenous peoples, and Rohingya refugees. HEART operates through a democratic structure featuring a 7-member Executive Committee and a 14-member Senior Management Team leading 11 specialized department. Supported by three sister concerns—IRTD, WAYDO, and HEART Social Enterprise Ltd.—the organization delivers evidence-based humanitarian assistance and development programs. With affiliations to the UN and European Commission, HEART continues to drive SDG-aligned, community-focused, and sustainable transformation.



Message from HEART's Founder & Executive Director

As we close this productive quarter from March to June 2026, I am proud of HEART's transformative journey. These past few months have been defined by growth, impactful interventions, and the forging of vital new partnerships. We successfully launched and completed several key initiatives, reinforcing our commitment to climate resilience and community empowerment. By scaling our advocacy and strengthening our network with global and local stakeholders, we continue to bridge policy and grassroots practice. Thank you to our dedicated team and partners for driving this sustainable change. Together, we are building a more resilient, inclusive future.-- [Jobair Mahmud Jubo, ED, HEART]

Our Mission:

HEART dreams of a world without hunger, ensuring equal opportunity and participation through transformational and sustainable programs to foster resilience, progress, and humanitarian service.

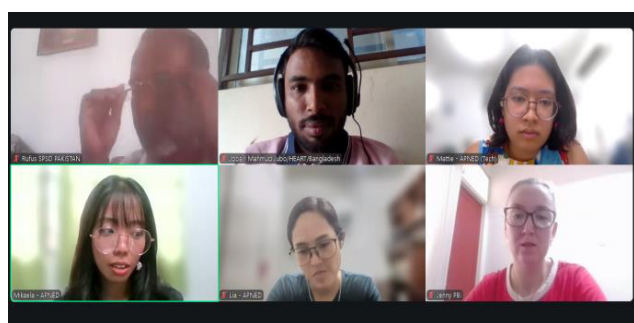
Our Vision:

HEART aims to build a bond of unity through integrated initiatives and resilient awareness to foster a people-friendly, environment-friendly, and child-friendly world where latent talents can shine.

Program & Project Highlights

During this quarter, HEART successfully launched the "Digital Resilience for Inclusive Civic Engagement (DRICE)" project, supported by CIVICUS under the DDI-DRG program. This six-month initiative, running through December 2026, focuses on enhancing digital democracy in Cox's Bazar through eight core activities. Key interventions include capacity-building workshops, hybrid webinars on digital democracy, legal aid for victims, and psychosocial support services. Culminating in a Democracy Summit, the project is strategically designed to reach 250 direct and 1,000 indirect beneficiaries. This milestone strengthens HEART's ongoing commitment to safeguarding human rights and fostering resilient, informed community leadership.

HEART's commitment to regional advocacy reached a new milestone as the Asia Pacific Network of Environmental Defenders (APNED) officially granted Notice of Acceptance for HEART to join its network. Representing the organization, HEART's founder participated in a rigorous two-day virtual training on Human Rights Violations (HRV) Monitoring and Documentation. Among more than 30 environmental practitioners from across the Asia-Pacific region, the founder successfully completed the course and earned certification as a passed participant. This membership and training further solidify HEART's capacity to monitor digital attacks and defend environmental human rights.



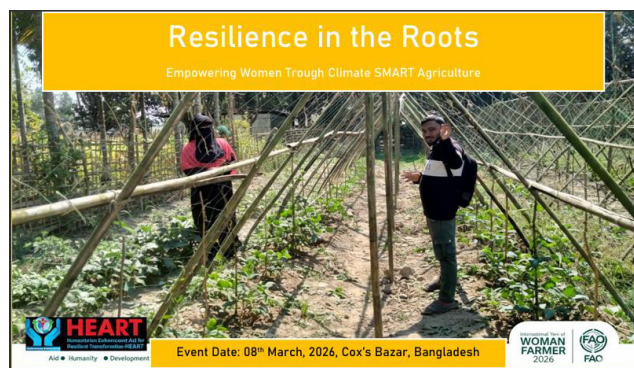
Grant Agreement

Between



Project
Title

Digital Resilience for Inclusive Civic Engagement By Protecting Rights and Expanding Civic Space in Cox's Bazar



Success Stories / Stories of Empowerment

Livelihood Impact: UN FAO spotlighted IYWF 2026, showcasing HEART's success stories from the Climate Smart Agriculture Project within the Cox's Bazar livelihood sector.



Research, Insights & Knowledge Products

HEART's knowledge webpage serves as a hub for critical research and resources. Highlights include the Youth Statement on Y-NEET and civic challenges in Cox's Bazar. Additionally, the platform showcases HEART's 2026 education strategy, which has been verified as a best practice by UNESCO.



Campaigns & Advocacy Initiatives:

This quarter, HEART achieved significant milestones in community and civic engagement. Key successes include:

Civic Advocacy: HEART led impactful campaigns such as "Ramisa's Justice on Rapped" and commemorated both World Refugee Day and World Environment Day.

Global Recognition: The UNEP formally recognized HEART for its environmental day celebrations, while UNESCO featured HEART's best practices for SDG-4 (Quality Education) on its official website.



Upcoming Events & Opportunities

HEART is actively seeking to expand its collaborative network and invites media organizations to apply for a new paid media partnership. This initiative aims to foster long-term strategic cooperation to amplify our humanitarian and advocacy efforts. Interested partners are encouraged to review the official circular for application details and requirements.

**For Joining APWEN,
Please Scan the QR**

