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Dr. SM Mokhlasur Rahman ^{1, *}

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CAPACITY AND CAPABILITY OF ELECTED REPRESENTATIVES: A STUDY OF QUOTA SEATS AS AN AFFIRMATIVE MEASURE

Dr. SM Mokhlasur Rahman ^{1,*}

¹ Department of Political Science, University of Rajshahi, Bangladesh.

*Corresponding author: milonpol.313@ru.ac.bd

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ABSTRACT

This research investigates the capacity, capability, and achievements of women members elected to reserved seats in Union Parishads. In particular, it explores the dynamics of capacity building and gender mainstreaming in the local government institutions in northern Bangladesh through the lens of the Capability Approach. The study utilized primary data, employing surveys and in-depth interviews with elected women members from Rangpur, Lalmonirhat, and Kurigram districts. The Findings show a strong patriarchal presence in a society where marital status sets the norm to be a good girl or a bad girl. A divorcee or an unmarried woman is not seen as representing society, and hence it is difficult for them to contest elections and win in this patriarchal setting. The study findings also document that women in the survey area are lagging in terms of their productive role with economic return. This also limits women's ability to live a life of their choice, with dignity, bodily integrity, and a sense of pride, as emphasized by Sen (1999) and Nussbaum (1999, 2000) in the Capability Approach. Our findings also document that elections in Bangladesh are very expensive, which essentially puts unwealthy families at odds in the election race. However, confirm that with the election in the quota seats, women can participate and play a role in organizations, form and maintain social relationships, and they can interact with people and connect with them, as emphasized by Nussbaum (2011) as a key feature of the Central Human Capability.



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