



## Aparajita

<b>Swiss Portfolio Outcome:</b>	Improved social well-being for all, including in emergencies
<b>Implementation Period:</b>	16.10.2018 – 30.06.2024
<b>Implementing Partner:</b>	HELVETAS Swiss Intercooperation
<b>Swiss Contribution:</b>	CHF 7.7 million
<b>Modality:</b>	Mandate

### General Description

Aparajita, which translates to “undefeated” in Bengali language, is a programme that is designed to empower women politically to ensure their greater participation in local governance processes as elected representatives. Women from Aparajita network are active in 541 unions of 62 Upazilas, grouped in six clusters that correspond to 16 districts of Bangladesh. From the onset of its implementation phase, around 41.8% of the female representatives contested for Union Parishad (UP) election in 507 unions, against an estimated target of 30%, while the average number of candidates per UP was higher in Aparajita working areas than in the rest of the country.

### Objectives

Aparajita aims to contribute to equal participation, representation and leadership of rural women by ensuring their inputs are reflected in initiatives taken by the local government bodies. It specifically focuses on engaging with men, local influential persons, youth, institutions and households so that they support the inclusion of women in local governance to act as a driver of change. It further aims to bring forth improved policy and legal frameworks to enable and accelerate empowerment of women in political sphere and hence improve overall public service.

### Lines of Action / Components

- Training elected and potential female representatives (generally referred to as “Aparajitas”) at local levels to contest in the local (Union Parishad) elections.
- Foster platforms for gender sensitization that will further encourage grassroots female leaders’ to partake in local governance activities to better serve the needs of the community.
- Advocacy initiatives at sub-national levels by Aparajita networks for policy reform that supports and includes women’s political empowerment and engagement.

### Intended Impact in terms of Systemic Change

Aparajita aims to bring together stakeholders of local governance to better understand and support gender-sensitive initiatives and encourage greater participation of women in local politics. It shall engage in policy advocacy to influence the wider society to create a more ‘enabling environment’ for the inclusion of women and hence improve the overall quality of public services at local level.

### Intervention Targets

- A total of around 8100 grassroots women leaders have improved capacity to participate in local governance processes more effectively.
- Secondary stakeholders (e.g. family members, community leaders and men in local government bodies) in all target unions and Upazilas are exhibiting greater degrees of support towards women’s political participation by taking forward gender responsive initiatives.
- Scaled up advocacy efforts focusing on involving women in 33% positions in all committees of political parties as per Bangladesh Election Laws mentioned in the Representation of the People Order (RPO).