



## APARAJITA

<b>Domain of intervention:</b>	Democratic Governance
<b>Implementation period:</b>	16.10.2018 – 31.12.2022
<b>Implementing partner:</b>	HELVETAS Swiss Intercooperation
<b>SDC contribution:</b>	CHF 6.4 million
<b>Modality:</b>	Mandate

### General description

Aparajita means “undefeated” in Bengali and connotes “resilience”, and by the definition of its name, the project aims to encourage and ensure greater participation of women and their voices in local governance. The Programme is more geographically focused, and works in all the unions of 62 Upazilas (totaling 541 unions) grouped in six clusters that correspond to 6 divisions and 16 districts of Bangladesh.

### Objectives

The goal of the Aparajita project is to contribute to equal participation, representation and leadership of women in local governance. The project further encourages greater participation of women in the local governance process, not only as elected representatives, but also by increased involvement in ensuring their voice, and with their needs reflected in initiatives taken by the local government bodies. Aparajita will be giving special focus on engaging with men, local influential persons, institutions and household members of women leaders to ensure increased support and encouragement for women’s participation in local governance. The project will also aim to bring forth improved policy and legal frameworks to enable and accelerate women’s political empowerment.

### Lines of action / components

- Training elected and potential women representatives at local levels, to strengthen their voices and enhancing their capacity to contest in the local (Union Parishad) elections.
- Sensitizing men in households, local communities and the local governance institutions to be more gender sensitive, and more open to encouraging women’s participation in the community and political sphere.
- Advocacy initiatives driven at different levels by a network of ‘Aparajita women’ leading to higher degrees of implementation of favorable policies as well as greater moves for policy reform supporting women’s political empowerment.

### Intended impact in terms of systemic change

Aparajita aims to bring about systematic changes within the local governance processes by bringing on board different stakeholders to better understand and support gender-sensitive initiatives, and encourage greater participation of women’s voices in those spaces. The project will also engage in policy advocacy work at different levels, and seek to influence the wider society by engaging with male members of the family, influential community persons, political party leaders and local government representatives to create a more ‘enabling environment’ for the inclusion of women. Aparajita aims to see the processes in local governance become more open to women’s issues, and be able to take forward gender-responsive initiatives based on the needs of the community.

### Intervention Targets

- 30% of women leaders to be interested in participating in UP elections to be held in 2021.
- All target UPs are showing different degrees of positive changes towards women’s political participation by taking forward gender responsive initiatives.
- Upazila dialogues and regular interaction with Political Parties, in order to ensure they start involving 33% women in their committees; ensuring participation of 20% women leaders in these committees.
- National event organized with relevant stakeholders, including government officials to highlight the need for establishing the RPO of 33% involvement of women at every level of the political parties, to ensure their representation and increase participation in local government elections.