

## Pragyna Mahpara

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**PROFESSIONAL SUMMARY:** Qualitative researcher and gender policy and advocacy specialist with 6+ years of experience leading gender justice research, policy reforms, program management and coordinating cross-sector partnerships across the Global South. Expertise in transforming evidence-based research into praxis and high-impact advocacy campaigns, with over 15 scholarly publications and outputs like policy briefs, project reports, book chapters and journal articles. Extensive knowledge of liaison with international coalitions, donor engagement, team supervision and public speaking. Deeply committed to intersectional equity, inclusivity, cross cultural collaboration and transformative justice.

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### EDUCATION

- **MA in Gender, Feminist and Women's Studies**  
York University, Toronto, Canada  
Graduated with highest academic standing across all coursework, October 2025
  - **MSc in International Development**  
The University of Manchester, Manchester, United Kingdom  
Graduated with Merit, 2017
  - **BSS in Economics**  
BRAC University, Bangladesh, 2016
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### PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

#### Research Assistant- NGOs as repeat player at the United Nations: The Case of the Universal Periodic Review

*York University (Supervisor: Dr. Amélie Barras)*

January 2026- Present

- Contributing to a funded research project supporting the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) process through applied policy research and analysis.
- Supporting program planning, research coordination, and deliverable tracking aligned with project objectives and timelines.

#### Senior Qualitative Researcher – Gender & Social Transformation

*BRAC Institute of Governance and Development (BIGD)*

June 2021 – August 2025 (on study leave)

- Led and coordinated feminist policy research on domestic violence, tech-facilitated GBV, backlash to gender justice and adolescent's voice and agency
- Supported end-to-end program cycle management including proposal development, donor reporting, and project closure
- Coordinated with local and community partners to manage project implementation, timelines, and compliance with donor requirements
- Engaged with coalitions, national and international NGOs and donor agencies to co-develop research materials and strategic advocacy initiatives.
- Advised senior stakeholders and participated in global policy forums including the UN CSW.
- Published over 15 academic and policy outputs.
- Supervised junior researchers; facilitated participatory action research and capacity-building sessions.

#### Research Associate – Gender & Social Transformation

*BRAC Institute of Governance and Development (BIGD)*

March 2018 – June 2021

- Conducted national-level policy reviews and advocacy campaigns focused on adolescent rights, women's leadership and digital safety.
- Provided administrative support for program related events and meetings

- Maintained accurate project records and contributed to administrative functions such as budgeting and procurement.
- Supported research design, tool development, coding frameworks, storytelling outputs and research dissemination.

### Market Development Intern

CARE Bangladesh

Jan – Mar 2018

- Supported engagement with women entrepreneurs and community-based facilitators in economic empowerment projects.

### SELECTED PUBLICATIONS

Full list of publications available upon request and at: <https://bigd.bracu.ac.bd/publications/>

- Antara, I. J, **Mahpara, P.**, & Fairouz, S. (2025). Gender Equality through Digitalization: Women’s Visibility in the E-Business Space. *Digitalization and Development: A Social Science Perspective*. BRAC Institute of Governance and Development, Bangladesh.
- **Mahpara, P.**, Khondaker, S.I., & Aktar, T. (2024). Adolescents Mobilising in Real Life and Online: The Bangladesh Context. *Young people in the Global South: voice, agency and citizenship*. *Gender & Adolescence: Global Evidence (GAGE) Handbook*, Routledge.
- **Mahpara, P.** & Sultan, M. (2024). ‘It’s a Family Matter’: Inaction and Denial of Domestic Violence. *IDS Bulletin*.
- Sultan, M., Islam, M., **Mahpara, P.**, Jahan, I., & Novelty, S. N. (2024). Analysis of Voice and Agency in Countering Backlash Against Gender Justice: Synthesis of Three Policy Cases in Bangladesh [Report]. The Institute of Development Studies and Partner Organisations
- Sultan, M., Akter, M., **Mahpara, P.**, Pabony, N. A., Tasnin, F., Hossain, S., Titir, A., Siddiki, E. J., & Antor, S. I. (2022). In search of justice: Untold tales of domestic violence survivors. BRAC Institute of Governance and Development, BRAC University & Rule of Law Programme, GIZ Bangladesh.
- **Mahpara, P.**, Antara, I.J., Nath, S.R., Pabony, N.A. (2022). Tracking Gender-Based Violence and Backlash Against Women’s Rights in the Digital Space: Cases from Bangladesh. BRAC Institute of Governance and Development
- **Mahpara, P.** (2021). Unpacking Bangladesh’s ‘Women’s Leadership Paradox’. *Gender & Development*.
- Huq, L., Khondaker, S., **Mahpara, P.**, Sultan, M., Khandaker, Z. and Syed, S., (2021). New Forms of Adolescent Voice and Agency in Bangladesh through the Use of Mobile Phones and ICT. *Gender and Adolescence Global Evidence (GAGE)*.

### PROJECT & PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

- **Countering Backlash: Reclaiming Gender Justice (IDS Sussex & SIDA)** – Led data collection, research logistics, and conducted analysis to produce high impact policy and academic outputs
- **Sustaining Power for Women’s Rights (IDS Sussex & ESRC)** – Coordinated research design, data collection and contributed to legal and policy analyses using theory of change and feminist frameworks.
- **COVID-19 Access to Justice Project (GIZ)** – Oversaw research timeline, coordinated with donor and partner agencies, and communication for a multi-partner study.
- **Adolescent’s Voice and Agency (GAGE ODI)** – Co-led fieldwork, conducted data collection, coordinated field staff and prepared stakeholder dissemination reports.

### SPEAKING & ADVOCACY ENGAGEMENTS

- Speaker, Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) 68, 2024: *How is gender backlash weakening institutional contexts for gender equality across the world?*
- Panelist, Development Studies Association (DSA), 2022: *New Shrinking Spaces: Violence against Women in the Digital Spaces*
- Speaker, Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) 65, 2021: *Protecting and Promoting Civic Space in Recovery: A Cross-Regional Study*
- Panelist at the Development Studies Association (DSA) 2021: *Countering Sexual Harassment in Educational Institutions*
- Panelist at the Development Studies Association (DSA) 2020: *Exceptional Women: Women's Leadership, Informal Networks Policy Change and Policy Change in Bangladesh*

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## **CORE COMPETENCIES**

Qualitative Research • Development & Advocacy • Donor Engagement • Program Management • Public Speaking & Media Engagement • Scholarly Writing & Publications • Feminist & Intersectional Analysis • NVivo | Microsoft 365 | Google Workspace