



## **National Girl Child Advocacy Forum (NGCAF) Celebrated National Girl Child Day 2013 With enthusiasm and pledge**

In Bangladesh, 45 percent of the total population consists of children below the age of 18, of whom 48 percent are girls. From birth, girls in Bangladesh face some of the most severe discrimination in the world, hampering their physical and psychological development. Bangladeshi girls score lower than boys in education, skill development and confidence level. Girls also suffer enormously from sexual violence. Improving these circumstances requires a profound change in social attitudes towards girls. Bangladeshis must come to recognize that girls are not only future mothers but also a great asset of the nation. The progress of the country depends on girls achieving good physical and mental growth, safety, and equal participation throughout society. Investing in girls is the best and most important investment the country can make.

From this recognition, The Hunger Project-Bangladesh originally proposed celebrating a National Girl Child Day countrywide to focus attention on the rights of girls and build a social movement committed to this cause. Fifty-four non-governmental organizations as well as cultural organizations and prominent individuals stepped forward to give strong support to this goal. On 4 June 2000, the group submitted a written proposal to the Ministry of Women and Child Affairs of Bangladesh calling for the declaration of National Girl Child Day on the second day of National Child Rights Week. The government agreed, and declared that 30 September would be celebrated as National Girl Child Day.

Since 2000, various governmental and non-governmental organizations celebrate the day across the country in order to focus awareness on one annually chosen aspect of girls' rights, such as education, nutrition or safety. To spread this vision at the grass-root level throughout the country, the group established the National Girl Child Advocacy Forum (NGCAF) in 2002 as a sustainable platform committed to this effort.

The goal of this platform is to build mass awareness of the importance of valuing girls, securing their rights and advocating policies that improve girls' lives.

### **National Girl Child Day 2013 celebration Through Rally, Human Chain, Competition & Cultural Program**

National Girl Child Advocacy Forum and Bangladesh Shishu Academy (a national academy for children in Bangladesh, established in 1976 for promoting cultural development of children) jointly celebrated National Girl Child Day as part of the annual children's Rights Week with

colorful rally, human chain and discussion meeting on 30 September 2013 with the theme of 'Girls are not Brides, they conquer the world'.



National Girl Child Day activities took place at the national level through a unified campaign engaging a broad network through rallies, human chain and media coverage in the discussion on the critical importance of providing safety-security, better health, education and nutrition to girls.

Honorable State minister of the Ministry of Women and Children Affairs (MoWCA), Meher Afroz Chumki inaugurated the rally. Forum members took part in the rally with colorful banner, festoon. The rally started from National Museum, Shabbagh and end at the Bangladesh Shishu Academy. About two thousands students, teachers, guardians, government and non government officials took part at the Rally and human chain.



Ministry of Women & Child affairs, Bangladesh & Girl Child Advocacy Forum organized for the first time a human Chain throughout the country to call for Girl Child advancement in the country. Bangladesh Government sends letters to all government officials as well as educational institutions to hold a human chain from 10 am – 10.30 am throughout the country and it was happened with the joint initiative of Ministry and National Girl Child Advocacy Forum with

huge participation and great enthusiasm. .

At the local level, National Girl Child Day is celebrated among people's associations, NGOs, and local governments so that all Bangladeshis can participate. Concerned citizen of Bangladesh celebrated the day in 543 places throughout the country. Day celebrated in 50 districts, 27 upazillas and 329 unions.

Following the rally, THP Bangladesh Country Director Dr. Badiul Alam Majumdar chaired a discussion meeting featuring chief guest Ms Meher Afroz Chumki and special guests Mr Tariq-ul-Islam (Secretary, MoWCA), Mr Sheikh Abdul Ahad (Chairman, Bangladesh Shishu Academy), Ms Mili Biswas (Deputy Inspector of Police, Dhaka Metropolitan Police), Eminent Singer Farida Parveen, Everest Conqueror Wasfia Nazneen.



Awards given to the children aged 3-16 who participated in the essay competition and art competition, creating around themes such as family, school, and girls' relationship with nature, to encourage their articulation of their role in society.

Children join art competition in 4 age groups at Bangladesh Shishu Academy on September 21, 2013. Students of 3-6 age groups took part in competition on open theme, 7-9 age groups on theme 'my school', 10-12 age groups on 'my family' and 13-16 age groups on 'Nature and Girl Child'. Students from all over the country send their essay divided into two groups. Students of 5-7 age groups compete essay competition on theme 'Child rights' and 8-10 age groups on theme 'Rights of Girl Child'.



In discussion meeting, State minister & the secretary of MoWCA acknowledged the effort of National Girl Child Advocacy Forum for organizing & celebrating Girl Child Day every year successfully from the year 2000. The Ministry always with the forum for Girl Child advancement issue, they added. State minister made request to people to be with ministry always in women and girls rights. Mili Biswas shared that they are trying hard to ensure safety and security of girl child and women. All speakers expressed their pledge for Girl Child's rights and made request to government to create safe enabling environment for Girl Child and Women all over the country. Girl Children's of different organizations of the Forum performed a mild blowing cultural program including music, dancing after discussion meeting.

A supplementary published in the Daily Samakal on the occasion by Ministry of women and child affairs & National Girl Child Advocacy Forum. A Journal 'Koinnashishu 9' published covering write up of eminent writers of the country on Girl Child. A booklet will be published covering celebration news of Girl Child Day.

Secretary of the Girl Child Advocacy Forum, Nasima Akhter Joly thanked Ministry to be with forum in activities and campaign programs. She expressed her pleasure of contribution of forum



members with great satisfaction. She said, our girls, women keeps our house safe always but nobody taking responsibility to save them. She calls for a national movement for safety security and advancement of Girl Child in Bangladesh.

Dr. Badiul Alam Majumdar said, UN decided to celebrate Girl Child day in 11 October every year and we are thrilled with the United Nations' recognition of this important day to raise awareness about the rights of girl children so we can put an end to the discrimination that leads to girls eating last and least, being forced into early marriage and dropping out of school. Bangladesh making example for the world and he mentioned that the people of Bangladesh will be able to show many more examples for the betterment of Girl Child of the world in future.

### Roundtable on Preventing Child Marriage and Keeping Girls at school

The roundtable, 'Preventing Child Marriage and Keeping Girls at School' was jointly organized by National Girl Child Advocacy Forum (NGCAF) and Women and Girls lead (WGL) in the capital's Jatiya Press Club on October 2, 2013.



Ms. Ayesha Khanom, Chairperson, Bangladesh Mahila Parishad participated as chief guest, Mr. M Hamid, Director General, BTV as Special Guest while Dr. Badiul Alam Majumdar, President, National Girl Child Advocacy Forum, Global Vice President & Country Director, The Hunger Project chaired in the program.

Since laws are ineffective in curbing child marriage the only way to prevent this nuisance for the country's girls is by creating social awareness, speakers told in the roundtable.



Addressing as chief guest, Ayesha Khanam said, Child marriage creates a cycle of poverty. Let us all try to create social awareness to stop child marriage. She gave thanks to Girl Child Advocacy Forum for their significant contribution from 2000 in the area of girl child advancement especially in Bangladesh. She emphasized the importance of study to find out steps worked better for women and girls advancement.



Special Guest M Hamid emphasized on creative television program on betterment of girl child rather than child participation in music and dancing only. He made request to participants to come up with valuable television program ideas on this issue.



Dr. Badiul Alam Majumdar said that the future of girl child is the future of Bangladesh so we must take proper care of our child from very beginning of their lives. He calls for joint initiatives and programs by national and international organizations for preventing child marriage.



Ms. Nasima Akhter Jolly, Secretary of NGCAF shared in her welcome speech that they have taken special initiative in two Upazillas of two Zillas of Southern part of Bangladesh comprising local government institutions, women leaders, youth leaders for child marriage prevention activities. She respected the attendance and humbly recognizes the support needs to eliminate child marriage.



Presenting the key note paper, WGL Country Coordinator Mahmud Hasan stated, Bangladesh has the fourth highest rate of child marriage in the world which creating obstructers for country's advancement. Due to early marriage girls drop out from schools and are prevented from realizing their potentials, he added.



Ms. Mahmuda Rahman Khan, Senior Program Specialist, USAID/Bangladesh told, about 71 percent of rural girls and 54 percent urban girls get married before reaching 18 years of age, which often deprives them of their rights to education, health and security. Married women should get the opportunity to be involved with income earning activities, she added.



Prof Amena Mohshin of Dhaka University's the department of International Relations, said it was vital to change people mindset. We should not only focus on the girls. The minds of the men need to change if we want to stop child marriage, she said. She added that local governments could play a significant role in curbing child marriage. However it will not happen in the current political culture.



Ms. Zinnat Afroz, Child Protection Advisor said Child marriage in against of human rights. We will protect child marriage, its fine but we will have created an environment where nobody will think of early marriage in the society.



Dr. Saidul Alam, Head, Education of Islamic relief said, we will have to change our family outlooks. Marriage ensures safety and security of girls, they think and that's why they go for child marriage. This outlook is suicidal and it must be stopped.



Dr. Ubaidur Rob, Country Director, Population Council pointed out that every year 12 lakh (1.2 million) marriages take place across the country in which 8 lakh (0.8 million) brides are bellow 18 years. It is also found that due to early marriage, Girls face more divorces than from marriages at appropriate age.



Dr. Mahbuba Nasreen of DU pointed out that Government recruited 60% women teacher to encourage Girl child to be enrolled in education. Government ensured stipend for female students. Now we can see the result and they are doing better result than boys in the public examinations. We are moving forward and hope the situation of Girl Child will be better coming days.

Youth Ending Hunger Bangladesh activist Abdus Sabur believed, we must not think only for prevention of child marriage as our work, we should work for creating a situation where guardians, especially fathers of girl child will realize terrible effect of early marriage and from that realization they will see girls as their asset like boys of the family.

Seven years old student Sharmin Akhter of Dhanmondi Yusuf High School expressed her worry that Parents does not think they can be asset of their family. She made request to the participants to make guardians of Bangladesh understand that girls are asset for family, society and the country.

## Child Marriage Prevention focused Awareness Raising Parliamentary Debate Competition

Child Marriage Prevention focused Awareness Raising Debate competition was jointly organized by National Girl Child Advocacy Forum (NGCAF) and ‘Debate for Democracy’ in the capital’s Jatiya Press Club on October 5, 2013.



Mr. Nurul Islam Nahid, Education Minister, Government of Bangladesh, participated as Chief Guest. Ms. Tasmima Hossain, Editor of ‘Annanya’ joined as special guest in the occasion. Professor Iffat Ara Nargis, Principal of Homo Economics College, Ms. Wahida Banu, Executive Director, Oporajeo Bangladesh, Ms. Nasima Akhter Jolly, Secretary, National Girl Child Advocacy Forum (

NGCAF) participated as discussant in the parliamentary debate competition. Mr. Hasan Ahmed Chowdhury Kiron, Chairman, Debate for Democracy chaired and moderate parliamentary debate completion.

State University of Bangladesh and Dhaka International University took participated in the debate competition on ‘*We can prevent Child Marriage through awareness rising not by law*’. State University of Bangladesh emphasized on awareness rising in the society. Guardian must be aware of bad effect of child marriage. Aware people generally law concern, they said. If we want to activate laws in the issue we must create aware citizens in every corner of the society. The opposition was focused on implementation of laws.

Discussants pointed out that we need to aware society first and we can make concerned society awaking people. Concerned Citizen will be able to pressurize government to implement laws impartially.



Education minister also focused on necessity of awaking society as well as proper implementation of laws. Government will have to take the responsibility and ruling party is trying to do that. Now day’s media and civil society making important role to prevent child marriage. It’s time to protect child marriage and lets all try to work for that, he added. He expressed his happiness to see good result of girl child in the public exams.



Iffat Ara Nargis emphasized on creation of mass awareness in against child marriage. She added, if we be able to create concerned masses then it will be easy to prevent child marriage because law enforcement agency needs help from the society to solve social issues.



Wahida Banu said that country's situation reflects on the condition of women and children especially girl child. She made request to government to be more serious on discussions of laws and implementing laws in favor of victims of the society.



Ms. Tasmima Hossain said, we need to work to build up balanced society. Man-Women equity will ensure honor for women as well as girl child. We all will have to contribute from our respective position in protecting Child marriage.



Ms. Nasima akhter Jolly said, Prevention of girl child marriage is not only issue for women, it's for man also. She calls for man-women activism in against early marriage. Early marriage rate 66% in Bangladesh which is not acceptable in Bangladesh, she added. She emphasized coordinated role of government-non government initiative to get rid of early marriage situation in Bangladesh.



Mr. Hasan Ahmed Chowdhury said, we need to increase social awareness to protect child marriage in our society. Families must be conscious and aware because families play critical role on this issue.

## National Girl Child Advocacy Forum

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**Please visit the following links for news coverage**

### Rally and Discussion

- <http://www.ittefaq.com.bd/index.php?ref=MjBfMTBfMDZfMTNfMV82XzFfNzU1NjE=>
- [http://www.prothom-alo.com/bangladesh/article/51982/%E0%A6%B6%E0%A6%BF%E0%A6%B6%E0%A7%81\\_%E0%A6%95%E0%A6%A8%E0%A7%8D%E0%A6%AF%E0%A6%BE%E0%A6%B0\\_%E0%A6%AC%E0%A6%BF%E0%A6%AF%E0%A6%BC%E0%A7%87\\_%E0%A6%A8%E0%A6%AF%E0%A6%BC](http://www.prothom-alo.com/bangladesh/article/51982/%E0%A6%B6%E0%A6%BF%E0%A6%B6%E0%A7%81_%E0%A6%95%E0%A6%A8%E0%A7%8D%E0%A6%AF%E0%A6%BE%E0%A6%B0_%E0%A6%AC%E0%A6%BF%E0%A6%AF%E0%A6%BC%E0%A7%87_%E0%A6%A8%E0%A6%AF%E0%A6%BC)

### Debate Competetion

- <http://www.ittefaq.com.bd/index.php?ref=MjBfMTBfMDZfMTNfMV82XzFfNzY3OTU=>

### Roundtable

- [http://www.jjdin.com/index.php?view=details&archievable=yes&arch\\_date=03-10-2013&type=single&pub\\_no=618&cat\\_id=1&menu\\_id=38&news\\_type\\_id=1&index=0](http://www.jjdin.com/index.php?view=details&archievable=yes&arch_date=03-10-2013&type=single&pub_no=618&cat_id=1&menu_id=38&news_type_id=1&index=0)

**Special Supplementary on Girl Child Day 2013 Celebration issue**

- Daily Samakal; 30 September