

Report of Round-Table on “Child Marriage Restraint Act (Draft)-2013: Present Situation”

Date of the event: June 22, 2014



Place: VIP Lounge, National Press Club, Dhaka, Bangladesh.

National Girl Child Advocacy Forum organized round table on “**Child Marriage Restraint Act (Draft) – 2013: Present Situation**” June 22, 2014 at National Press Club, Dhaka. The event was graced by **Meher Afroz Chumki MP**, the Honorable State Minister for Women and Children Affairs as Chief Guest, Mr. AKM Saiful Islam Chowdhury, Project Director (Additional Secretary), Birth and Death Registration Project, MoLGRD (Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development) as special guest.

The event was also polished by Ms. Sheepa Hafiza, Director of Gender & Justice and Migration, BRAC, Prof. Latifa Akanda, Vice President, National Girl Child Advocacy Forum (NGCAF), Ms. Shaheen Akter Dolly, Executive Director, Nari Maitree, Ms. Tazima Hossain Majumdar, Women Entrepreneur & Social Activist, Mr. Gawher Nayeem Wahra, Chairman, Shariatpur Development Society (SDS) , Ms. Wahida Banu, Executive Director, Aparajeyo Bangladesh and Ms. Nasima Akhter Joly, Secretary, National Girl Child Advocacy Forum as discussants with speakers from international organizations, academia, NGOs and activists on child marriage in Bangladesh. Speakers indicated child marriage as one of the major obstruction for country’s development. Finally the round-table made a call for

joining hands of all stakeholders to combat child marriage in Bangladesh and enact the laws (Child Marriage Restraint Act (Draft) 2013) as soon as early possible for the improvement of girl child in Bangladesh.

Ms. Nasima Akhter Joly, Secretary, NGCAF has delivered her Welcome speech and boldly addressed to finalize the draft law and enact the law for reduce child marriage. She has also mentioned that child marriage is a curse of a girl child and there is a motto in worldwide that within 2030; child marriage will abolish from the world.



The Moderator of the event was **Mr. Joyanto Adhikari**, Executive Director, CCDB welcomed everybody on the round table discussion and introduced all the distinguished guests. He addressed “From today’s discussion we will definitely find out a gateway to reduce child marriage in Bangladesh”.



Key Note Presenter **Mr. Mahmud Hasan**, Country Engagement Coordinator, Bangladesh, Women and Girls Lead Global – ITVS said, “Bangladesh has made great success on MDG Goal-4: Reduce Child Mortality Rate which acknowledged by UN-United Nations. Bangladesh’s name is in 16 countries who achieved this success. Women’s empowerment has

increased in socially, economically and politically. Bangladesh has others accomplishment on better education, water & sanitation, women leadership etc. Despite these gains, girl child are still facing worth mentioning obstacles to progress – chief among of them is child marriage.”

Unfortunately Bangladesh has the fourth highest rate of child marriage in the world; 64 percent of girls are married before age 18 which is not only a significant violation of the rights of girls in Bangladesh, but it has also been a key barrier to achieving 6 of the 8 Millennium Development Goals. As the world considers how to achieve sustainable development over the next 15 years, it would be short-sighted to ignore a practice that holds back progress toward gender equity, health, education and economic development.

In spite of the child marriage moderation law namely **The Child Marriage Restraint Act, 1929** which was enacted before one decade basically has become in vain to reduce child marriage in Bangladesh. In 2013, Bangladesh government has taken the initiative to amend the previous law though it is a late start, but here the salutation towards the government for starting the process and recommending finalize the laws from the draft version.

Mr. Hasan, in his key note speech, presented of remarkable stories of individuals and communities highlighting causes and consequences of child marriage in Bangladesh.



Chief Guest **Meher Afroz Chumki MP**, Honorable State Minister for Women and Children Affairs said, “Bangladesh becomes role model in the world for women empowerment though we have lots of obstacles along with high rate of child marriage in Bangladesh. The importance of the issue

(child marriage) and allies; like, dowry problem, ensure education for girl child is

top of our priorities. But still we are having very worse situation. At present, we are trying to finalize the Child Marriage Restraint Act (Draft) 2013 and hope we will come up in a conclusion within this year. We have to collaborate with each other to do the work comprehensively.”

She thanked to **‘National Girl Child Advocacy Forum’** and others for their important recommendations on the draft law. She also suggested that we have to take the initiative that how we can make our girl child as well as women as a national asset rather than burden. Ms. Afroz suggested few issue as priority to end child marriage which are; social stigma, malnutrition, attitude, lack of education, security, create peer group, culture, improved curriculum especially on reproductive health etc.



Special guest **Mr. AKM Saiful Islam Chowdhury**, Project Director (Additional Secretary), Birth and Death Registration Project said, “I think child marriage is an immature marriage where young girls are forcefully compelled to the relationship which has a negative impact on their mental and reproductive health. He

focused on birth registration of a child within 45 days of his/her birth to combat child marriage in the next decade.”



Ms. Tazima Hossain Majumdar, Women Entrepreneur & Social Activist addressed “It is not possible to prevent child marriage without ensuring proper safety and security of the girls. We have to change some of our long cherished wrong values and work comprehensively in the community level. We should be

committed to build a girl child as well as women friendly Bangladesh.”

Ms. Sheepa Hafiza, Director of Gender & Justice and Migration, BRAC addressed “Problems related with child marriage not only harm for the pregnant mother and the embryo but also continue even after birth. Women who are the victim of child marriage give birth to the stunted child and child with 45% less weight. These weak and mal-nutritious children can be the cause of hindrance for national development.”



Ms. Shaheen Akter Dolly, Executive Director, Nari Maitree said, “To reduce child marriage; birth certificate is a very important document. So for marriage registration birth certificate should be in digital format and any other alternative should be banned regarding birth certificate.”

Prof. Latifa Akanda, Vice President, National Girl Child Advocacy Forum (NGCAF) addressed “because of falsification of birth certificate child marriage rate is increasing; if everybody become honest as well as values and ethics should followed by the society then falsification regarding child marriage will reduce.”



Mr. Gawher Nayeem Wahra, Chairman, Shariatpur Development Society (SDS) pointed that the punishment for child marriage should be not simple, if the punishment will hard then the tendency of child marriage will decrease from the society.



Ms. Wahida Banu, Executive Director, Aparajeyo Bangladesh addressed that to reduce child marriage collective approach is essential rather than individualistic approach. Local administration, Media, Peoples representatives, NGO representatives, Law enforcement agencies should work together in an integrated way;

she pointed out.



Ms. Touhida Khandaker from BNWLA pointed that there is lots of loopholes in the law, so we should identify all the loopholes to combat child marriage. She also suggested that to reduce child marriage the accountability of marriage registrar should ensure.

Mr. Farukh Ahmed from Plan International-Bangladesh addressed some important points regarding the law and he recommend to finalize the law with reflection of the recommendation from civil society as well as NGOs'.



Some notable Recommendations from the round table discussion:

- The draft law ***Child Marriage Restraint Act, 2013*** needs to finalize as soon as early possible and the respective Ministry should take the initiative to disseminate the law among all after finalizing it;
- The Birth Certificate should submit for marriage registration and it should be in digital format to prevent its falsification.
- The Birth Certificate should be issue within 45 days after born a baby.
- The affidavit birth certificate by notary public should be banned;
- Guardians specially fathers and mothers should play a very important role to stop early marriage;
- Local administration, Union Parishad, Marriage registrar, Law enforcement agency, Religious leaders, Local leaders, School teachers have to be connected with the efforts to prevent child marriage;
- Needs to ensure girls education at least till secondary level and arrange skill development training for girls;
- Young generation needs to be involved enough (both boys and girls) to prevent child marriage;
- Need to work to change our long cherished wrong values and work in the community level;
- Ensure the social security for girls at home, schools and on road;
- To prevent child marriage media needs to play a very positive role and a policy should take regarding the appearance of girls as well as women in the media;
- To prevent child marriage in the law's needed to mention of hard punishment instead of simple punishment;

The event was covered by major broadcasting channels, like BTV, ATN Bangla, Channel 24, Channel 71, Boishakhi TV, Shomoy TV, ATN News, SA TV, ETV, Jamuna TV etc as well as print media like, The Daily Ittefaq, The Daily Bangladesh Shomoy, The Daily Kaler Kantho, New Nation, New Age, The Daily Janakantha, The Daily Observer etc.

Here including some links-

<http://www.risingbd.com/detailsnews.php?nssl=a38c63887cb8c9402729f0dfe197904a>

<http://www.kalerkantho.com/print-edition/news/2014/06/23/99305>

http://mybangla24.com/ittefaq_bangla_online_newspaper.php

<http://www.eshokalerkhabor.com/2014/06/23/>

<http://www.einqilab.com/2014/06/23/>

The Daily New Age – 23th June, 2014 (in 7 Page)

The Daily Bartoman – 23th June, 2014 (in 3 Page)

The Daily Jugantor – 23 June, 2014 (in 16 Page)

The Daily Sangbad – 23 June, 2014 (in 4 Page)

The event was supported by SDS- Shariatpur Development Society and CCDB- Christian Commission For Development in Bangladesh.

Some major Organizations attended the event:

1	WBB Trust- Work for a Better Bangladesh	13	Aparajeyo Bangladesh
2	Plan International- Bangladesh	14	The Hunger Project Bangladesh
3	TMSS	15	CARE- Bangladesh
4	BRAC	16	BNWLA
5	Islamic Relief- Bangladesh	17	Bhuiya Foundation
6	HEED Bangladesh	18	ASAUP
7	CCDB	19	SUROVI
8	SDS	20	Nari Maitree
9	ACLAB	21	Intervita
10	ITVS	22	Palli Daridra Bimochon Foundation
11	UCEP- Bangladesh	23	Good Neighbours
12	ASD	24	SAP