



Report on Celebration of National Girl Child Day, 2014

In Bangladesh, 45 percent of the total population consists of children below the age of 18, of whom 47 percent are girls. A girl child is not only a future mother but also a great asset of the nation and without creating an amiable environment for their well-off and empowerment, a gross development of the nation is never possible.

With a view to build mass awareness of the importance of valuing girls, securing their rights and advocating policies that improve girls' lives, National Girl Child Advocacy Forum (NGCAF), Ministry of Women & Children Affairs (MoWCA) and Bangladesh Shishu Academy celebrated the National Girl Child Day 2014 on the theme 'Ensure Education and Nutrition; Stop Child Marriage'.

Day is celebrated in 61 districts out of 64, 102 UPZs and 339 Unions in total 502 places where more than 6 lacs people participated with great enthusiasm. At National level, celebration was started by colorful rally. After rally participants took part in the Discussion Meeting & Cultural program.

The days glisten off with a rally, inaugurated by Honorable State Minister of the Ministry of Women and Children Affairs (MoWCA), Ms. Meher Afroz Chumki MP. The chief guest stated in her speaks that child marriage is a curse of the progress of Bangladesh. The consequences of child marriage like violence against women and percentage of stunted child is increasing day by day. So we should take an integrated action to stop child marriage right now. She also welcomed all to stop child marriage and work for ensure education, nutrition for girl children in Bangladesh.



More than 2600 participants from 51 organizations took part in the rally with colorful banner and festoon. Students, teachers, parents, guardians, development activists, government and non government officials from different organizations and institutions joined in the colorful festival.

The rally started from the Fine Arts Institute of Dhaka University and end at the Bangladesh Shishu Academy. With confidence marchers intoning slogans like 'Make girl child educated so that the society will be enlighten', 'No more child marriage, girl child will conquer the world', 'Ensure the rights of girl child' etc.



Following the rally, Mr. Mosharraf Hossain, Director of Bangladesh Shishu Academy, Mr. Tariq-ul-Islam, Secretary, MoWCA, Dr. Badiul Alam Majumdar, Country Director, THP Bangladesh and President, National Girl Child Advocacy Forum, Ms. Jamie Terzi, Country Director, CARE-Bangladesh took part in a discussion meeting and talks about the importance of the days as well as civic responsibility to create enabling environment for girl children in Bangladesh. Prof. Latifa Akanda, Vice-President, National Girl Child Advocacy Forum, Ms. Ashrafunnessa, Joint Secretary, MoWCA, Project Director, EECR Project, Ms. Jannatul Ferdous Ruma, Adviser, Child Protection, Plan-International Bangladesh and Ms. Nasima Akhtar Joly, Secretary, NGCAF also spoke on the occasion.

In discussion meeting, all the guests and discussants acknowledged the effort of National Girl Child Advocacy Forum for organizing & celebrating successfully National Girl Child Day in every year.

In her welcome address, Nasima Akhter Joly, Secretary of NGCAF stated that the position of Bangladesh is fourth in the world for occurring child marriage. Child marriage is like an enemy for girl children. So to stop child marriage only enact of laws are not sufficient, we have to work in a holistic approach to stop child marriage.



Mr. Tariq-ul-Islam said, we want to see no more child marriage at the community level. We have a hot line number which is 10921. If anybody calls in this number for seeking help to stop child marriage, we take an immediate action. He also focused on mass publicity to stop child marriage in remote areas as well as central.



Dr. Badiul Alam Majumdar said, Child marriage is alike violence against child. So we should stop it now. He focused on ensure education and nutrition for children to build up an educated and healthy nation.



Ms. Jamie Terzi has mentioned that the negative consequences of child marriage have a long term effects on the whole nation. She said, we know in Bangladesh have good mother, good father, effective politicians and effective policy maker; so it will not be a tough job to create a better future for girl child in Bangladesh. One day there will be no child marriage in Bangladesh, she wishes.



Ms. Ashrafunnessa said, State have all the responsibilities to make progress for the girl children. Already Bangladesh Government has taken many significant initiatives for girl children. Hope with the support of all one day the girl children of Bangladesh will overcome all the obstacles.



Ms. Jannatul Ferdous Ruma has mentioned in her address that because of child marriage the dropout rate and child mortality rate is increasing in Bangladesh. So we need to stop child marriage.



Mr. Mosharraf Hossain said, our girl child should know all the rights which they have. If we want to make an enable environment for girl children they should know their rights.



Prof. Latifa Akanda said, National Girl Child Day is a significant day of girl children in Bangladesh. We feel proud to celebrate the day. For progressing girl child in Bangladesh we need to open all the doors for them, she added.

All Distinguished speakers expressed their pledge for Girl Child's rights, ensure education, nutrition for them and made request to government to create safe enabling environment for Girl Child and stop child marriage as well.



Girl Children's of different organizations of the Forum performed a mild blowing cultural program including music, acting, and storytelling and dancing after the discussion meeting.

Awards given to 35 children participated in the essay competition and art competition, creating around themes.

Theme of Art Competition: Open theme (Age Group: 3-6), My School (Age Group: 7-9), My Family (Age Group: 10-12), Natural Disaster: Girl Child (Age Group: 13-16).

Theme of Essay Competition: Girl's education (5th Class-7th Class), Child Marriage: Role of Parents (8th Class-10th Class).



Special Awareness Debate Competition

On 1st October, 2014 a special Awareness Debate Competition held on Press Club, Dhaka on the occasion jointly organized by National Girl Child Advocacy Forum and Debate for Democracy. Students of two famous colleges of Dhaka took part in the parliamentary style debate.



State Minister for Women Children Affairs Meher Afroz Chumki; Salma Khan, Chairperson, NGO Coalition for Beijing Platform for Action, Former Chairperson, UN CEDAW; Women activist Prof Dr. Maleka Begum; NGCAF president Dr. Badiul Alam Majumdar and Secretary Nasima Aktar Jolly addressed the function. Debate for Democracy Chairman Hasan Ahmed Chowdhury Kiron was in the chair.

Meher Afroz Chumki said the Child Marriage Prevention Act, 2013 is being made tougher with the provision of a two-year jail and fine of Taka 50 thousand for the offender.

"The present government has taken various initiatives to prevent child marriage. But those are not being effective because of social outlooks and lack of awareness. Therefore, the Child Marriage Prevention Act, 2013 is being amended to make it tougher," she said speaking at the award-giving ceremony of a debate competition marking the National Girl Child Day 2014.

The state minister said Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, in Girl Summit in UK, had mentioned child marriage as a social problem and asserted to resolve it. Amendment to the Child Marriage Prevention Act, 2013 is reflection of the Prime Minister's commitment, she added.

Referring to the debate over fixation of age of marriage for girls at 18 or 16 years, she said the government would not take any decision over this hastily.

Discussions would be held with all on this issue, she said and added that the Prime Minister would take the best initiatives for welfare of girls. The state minister urged mass media to create awareness against early marriage.

Dr. Maleka Begum criticized and protested the proposal to lower the age of girls' marriage to 16 while the boys' to 18 years.

A Supplementary on Girl Child Day

A supplementary published in the Daily Samakal on the occasion on 30th September 2014 by Ministry of Women and Children Affairs & National Girl Child Advocacy Forum.

President of Bangladesh Abdul Hamid and Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina issued separate messages on the occasion of the National Girl Child Day-2014.

In the messages Abdul Hamid and Sheikh Hasina hoped that every family alongside the government will come forward to increase social awareness in stopping early marriage of girl child, ensure their rights and security as well as overall welfare.

In his message, President Abdul Hamid said it's true that without healthy and educated mother, prosperous nation could not be built. So, all kinds of cooperation alongside nutrition, education,



health and security should be ensured for the physical, mental and intellectual evolvement of girl child from their childhood, he added.

Describing child marriage as one of the major hindrance to the physical, mental and intellectual development of girl child, the President said child marriage deprived the girl child of getting their required facilities causing serious health injuries. In some cases, girl child has to often meet unnatural death due to early marriage, he added.

Abdul Hamid emphasized on building social awareness in stopping child marriage. The President wished all success in celebration of the National Girl Child Day.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, in her message, said she is delighted to know that the Girl Child Day is being celebrated across the country with the initiatives of government and non-government organizations.

Sheikh Hasina said overall development possibility of girl children shrink whenever they are given marriage in childhood, which is also the hindrance to their physical, mental and intellectual development. So, showing of birth certificate or national identity card is mandatory during registration of any marriage, she added.

The prime minister said the present government has implemented various programs for ensuring equal participation of girl child in all spheres including family, social and cultural arena. Sheikh Hasina hoped that people of all walks of life alongside the government would come forward to groom the girl child for future leadership ensuring all kinds of facilities.

The Prime Minister wished all success of the National Girl Child Day.

A Journal ‘Koinnashishu- 9’ published covering write up of 30 eminent writers of the country on Girl Child issue.

The program has made inspiring impact of students especially in the grassroots level. More than 500 students of 10 unions of Patnitala UPZ



of Noagaon district has written letter on how they treat child marriage. A consensus against child marriage has evolved through this letter writing program.

4538 students took part in the essay competition and 538 students participated art competition on the occasion.

23 news media and 14 electronic media covered the programs.

A leading TV channel ATN Bangla has broadcasted a documentary on Stop Child Marriage dated 30th September, 2014 which is remarkable and inspiring. THP supported all information to make that documentary and ATN Bangla has acknowledged THP for the work on girl child issue. (We will send the documentary later)

National Girl Child Advocacy Forum
Secretariat: The Hunger Project-Bangladesh 3/7, Asad Avenue, Mohammadpur, Dhaka- 1207 Phone: 811-2622, 812-7975. Mobile: 01713-040-852. Fax: 811-6812,
Email: nasima.akhter@thp.org Website: www.girlchildforum.org

Please visit the following links for news coverage

- <http://www.timewatch.com.bd/2014/09/30/6495>
- <http://www.prothom-alo.com/bangladesh/article/333817/%E0%A6%86%E0%A6%9C-%E0%A6%9C%E0%A6%BE%E0%A6%A4%E0%A7%80%E0%A7%9F-%E0%A6%95%E0%A6%A8%E0%A7%8D%E0%A6%AF%E0%A6%BE-%E0%A6%B6%E0%A6%BF%E0%A6%B6%E0%A7%81-%E0%A6%A6%E0%A6%BF%E0%A6%AC%E0%A6%B8>
- http://www.dainikdestiny.com/?view=details&type=gold&data=Visa&pub_no=950&cat_id=1&menu_id=1&news_type_id=1&news_id=136132
- http://www.jjdin.com/?view=details&archiev=yes&arch_date=02-10-2014&type=single&pub_no=971&cat_id=1&menu_id=38&news_type_id=1&index=7
- <http://www.kalerkantho.com/online/national/2014/10/01/135660>
- <http://www.samakal.net/2014/10/02/90069>