



A Report

On

International Women's Day, 2015 Celebration



Theme of this year

Empowering Women, Empowering Humanity: Picture It!

(In Bangla, Narir Khomotayan-Manabatar Unnayan)

National Girl Child Advocacy Forum

To uphold women's right and to ensure their empowerment in the light of Beijing Declaration 1995, International Women's Day is being celebrated. After Beijing Declaration, significant development of women has taken place but at the same time they are facing a lot of problems. So, there is need for encouraging women to ensure their contribution in their respective areas in order to ensure their rights and gender equity because women empowerment is essential to ensure development of humanity i.e. development of democracy, good governance and sustainable development. Bangladesh Government is also giving emphasis on women empowerment. In this concern national women development policy-2011, national action plan to implement the women development policy, prevention of women and child repression Act-2003 including many gender friendly laws and orders have been formulated in the last recent years. Though women empowerment is gradually increasing due to these laws/acts/rules, violence against women is not being stopped. However, establishment of women rights in family, society and state and make sure of enabling gender equity environment are badly needed to visible women empowerment progress. Like every year International Women's Day-2015 was observed across Bangladesh as elsewhere in the world, with women raising their strong voice with the theme of- **"Empowering Women, Empowering Humanity: Picture It!"** in this year.

Keeping the above mention theme in mind, like every year National Girl Child Advocacy Forum (NGCAF)



celebrated International Women's Day on 7th March at 412 places throughout the country. A central event organized in Dhaka was followed by a huge rally, discussion meeting, special award giving ceremony to those women who are contributing for women development, a cultural program and dissemination of poster and leaflet. The program sparked off with a rally,

inaugurated by **Ms. Meher Afroj Chumki**, State Minister, Ministry of Women and Children Affairs, Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh at 8.45 am from National Museum, Shahbagh, Dhaka compound.

A kilometer- long procession, led by women and girls in traditional apparel holding the banner with the participation of approximately **1350** men, women, adolescent girls and boys, students, human rights activists, academician, NGOs and INGOs representatives from **45** organizations and institutions, waving the placards inscribed with slogans including 'stop violence against women', 'implement the 2011 national women development policy', 'ensure security



of women in all sphere of their life'. The marchers travelled towards Engineers Institute, Dhaka chanting slogans like 'equality of man and women make progress of a nation', 'ensure women rights', 'do implement CEDAW charter', 'ensure gender equality in every sphere', 'do ensure of women's right on assets', 'abolish wage discrimination', 'want discrimination free society, want to live as human being', 'ensure humanity', do empower rural women, build a hunger-poverty free country' etc. The rally was exciting and colorful.

After the rally, all participants joined a discussion meeting followed with guests of honor featuring chief guest **Meher Afroj Chumki**, State Minister, Ministry of Women and Children Affairs, Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh, chaired by Dr. Badiul Alam Majumdar, Global Vice President and Country Director of THP-B and President of National Girl Child Advocacy Forum. Besides them, **Professor Mahmuda Islam**, Ex-President, Women for Women, and Professor, Women and Gender Studies, College of Liberal, University of Massachusetts, Boston, America, **Shaheen Akhter Doly**, Executive Director, Nari Maitri, **Ms. Wahida Banu**, Executive Director, Aparajao Bangladesh, and **Nasima Akhter Joly**, Secretary, National Girl Child Advocacy Forum were also present in the program as special discussants. While Bina Adhikari moderated the program.

The central theme of the discussion was "**Empowering Women, Empowering Humanity: Picture It!**" All the discussants expressed their viewpoints on the central theme and called for ensuring equal rights for women and girl children in all spheres of the society.

In her speech **Meher Afroj Chumki** stated that women empowerment and gender equity is needed to lead the



country forward. For this being self confident, women have to be educated and eligible. She mentioned that present government also believes in women empowerment. In this concern, she mentioned that various laws have been passed in order to protect women from violence, gender sensitive policy in 40 ministries has been formulated, 121 social safety net programs specially for women

has been undertaken by 21 ministries, and 15 thousand women are being provided training on computer. It is proved that women can prove themselves as worthy if they get chance. Nothing will be barrier in their lives, if this trend of progress of women is continued, she commented.

In her welcome speech **Nasima Akhter Joly**, Secretary, NGCAF, spoke that 105 years of celebration of



International Women's Day passed away. In spite of remarkable progress of women in the society, it is insignificant in terms of percentage. Therefore, women empowerment has to be more visible and women should be treated from the point of respect and dignity. Women involvement in all decision making processes at all levels from local to national and women right on assets and hereditary should be

ensured. At the same time 'Women Development Policy-2011' should be fully executed immediately in Bangladesh.

Professor **Mahmuda Islam** told that we are celebrating International Women's Day on the occasion of



celebrating 20 years of Beijing Declaration which is accepted by 189 countries in 1995. There are many laws protecting women from violence and proper execution of these laws is needed. We dream a society of gender equity and for this patriarchy attitude towards women must be changed. We are not women but we are human being.

Dr. Halida Hanam Akhter stated that overall development of the country will be ensured, if women



empowerment in all spheres of the country including politics is ensured. For this, women have to be clamorous. Women have to stand against child marriage because victim of child marriage become victim of death during early pregnancy and delivery.

Quoting from the speech on 7th March by Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibor Rahman, **Shaheen Akhter Doly** told that struggle for this time is struggle for establishing women empowerment because women empowerment signifies win of humanity. For this, we all have to be more determine to establish women right.



Wahida Banu told that progress of women after 44 years of independent of Bangladesh is appreciable. Their



progress will be more visible, if they can make proper use of their hidden talent by using their wisdom. Strengthen and capability of the national institutions has to be increased more so that women get proper services. Our promise on this day should be that we will be pioneer in building women friendly state in the world.

Addressing speech on 7th march in 1971 by Bangabandhu, **Dr. Badiul Alam Majumder** told that as we gave



blood, we will give more blood for the interest of independent of the country and we are celebrating International Women's Day on this historical day. Our declaration on this day shall be establishment of women right in our country because development of women means development of nation i.e. development of humanity.

On this day **Krisna Rahman**, Freedom Fighter and social worker, and **Monowara Begum**, grass-root woman leader and community organizer were awarded for their contribution in the society as well as in the country.

Krisna Rahman is a freedom fighter. She also actively participated in the mass movement in 1969 of



Bangladesh. During the liberation war when she was only 17 years old, she shouldered responsibility to reach the confidential file/information of the provisional government from one place to another. For this she had to spend night out of her home. After liberation war she

came back Bangladesh from Kolkata and devoted herself for the welfare of the country. Presently, she is an active member of education and cleanliness committee of Dhaka South City Corporation. The chairperson and the chief guest presented her crest bearing citations of her achievements. Acknowledging speaks of the honored Mrs. Rahman said, "I am grateful to NGCAF and THP-B for honoring me and feel proud being honored on this historical day (7th March). She also said that this independent is not only for woman but also for man. She dreams to see to woman as president of the country. 'Women's work should be taken under consideration and child marriage must be stopped due to its' negative consequences', she urged to government.

Monowara Begum is quietly opposed to the promotion and a white minded woman whose contribution to her



community as well as to the country is memorable. Most of her time spent for the welfare of the community people. Though she was deprived from education, she made her community free from illiteracy. Being victim of child marriage, she is working against child marriage. In order to stop child marriage, she has established '**Child Marriage Protection Club**' which is comprised of 60 members. She

is providing rendering services to the community people through her organization '**Kolkondo Ujjibok Somittee**'. Due to her great initiative, her community is cent percent sanitation. The chairperson and the chief guest presented her crest bearing citations of her great contribution.

Instantly *Mrs. Begum* expressed her feeling "I am very glad to be honored and grateful to the organization. One upon my full meal was not possible for me but today I am self dependent and working for community development." She also stated that I dreamt before but execute dream now. 'I want to see me as a **Union Parishad** member in the next upcoming local government election to keep more contribution to community development', she expressed her dream.

In the event, a publication entitled **Narir Kotha-10** (Voice of Women-10) and a **poster on international women day** had been inaugurated by the attended guests.



The whole program ended with a colorful cultural demonstration. The cultural program was led by Aparajeyo Bangladesh. Besides this organization, Nari Maitree, Bangladesh Girl Guides' Association also performed in the program.



The organizations that attended the rally and discussion meeting were USC- Canada Bangladesh, The Hunger Project- Bangladesh, SUROVI, TMSS, CARITAS Bangladesh, ASD, Nari Maitree, ASF, Rights and Sights for Children (RSC), Bangladesh National Women Lawyers Association (BNWLA), YWCA of Bangladesh, Good Neighbors' Bangladesh, Aparajeyo Bangladesh, Girls' Guides Association, Life Center, ASAUP, Dustho Bekar Kallayan Samitee, Aparajita Nari Shangathan, Arnob Heed Foundation, Environment Development Foundation, Eclab, Action in Social Development, Eventful Bangladesh Society, UDDIPAK, Work for a better Bangladesh, Koynania, Child Development Forum, Dhaka Ahsania Mission, Plan International Bangladesh, Ucep Bangladesh, Youth Ending Hunger, DAWN Forum, Eden Girls College, Prothom Alo Model High School, Bhuya Foundation, Mayer Dak, CCDB, Steps towards Development, SAP-Bangladesh, Akota Dustho Mohila Kallayan Samitee, Chetona Mahila Shanggha, Educo Bangladesh etc.

The event was covered by major broadcasting channels, like Boishakhi TV, Shomoy TV, Desh TV, SA TV, Jamuna TV, Rtv. Focus Bangla and print media (The Daily Samokal, The Daily Sun, The Kalerkontho, Amader Samoy, The Daily Prothom Alo etc.).