



#EachforEqual

LankaBangla Finance-The Daily Star dialogue urges for ensuring a gender equal world

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Although Bangladesh has progressed a lot in terms of women's empowerment in the past 10 years, to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by 2030, it has to expedite the preparation process and work with women's rights activists as well as leaders of different women-led organisations to inch towards gender equality.

The speakers at the discussion titled "#Each for Equal: Celebrating International Women's Day 2020", jointly organised by LankaBangla Finance Limited and The Daily Star on March 3, highlighted some key issues that should be given attention to ensure women's rights and empowerment and create a violence-free environment for them.

"The participation of the urban women compared to rural women is less in the labour force, as urban women face troubles regarding daycare facilities, transportation, safety and security issues, and accommodation," said Dr Fahmida Khatun, Executive Director, Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD).

"Besides, if we look at the education status and skills of our women, the rate of their participation is higher in the primary and secondary level, while they start to drop out in the higher education tiers. This is a major cause behind why 35 percent of women who are involved in the labour force are engaged

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Women's unpaid care work should be recognised and the monetary value of their work should be calculated while estimating GDP.
- Women should be equipped with higher education to get formal jobs, and the female RMG workers should be upskilled and reskilled.
- Investment for women in education and healthcare should be increased, and at the same time, more opportunities should be created for women to engage in entrepreneurship activities and access finance and market information.
- Every workplace should have a day-care centre/

in low-income activities and, of them, almost 89 percent work in the informal sector," she added.

Immediate reforms are needed in the process of estimating the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) which excludes the unpaid care work of women, said Dr Khatun.

Fauzia Moslem, Acting President, Bangladesh Mahila Parishad, focused on the growing incidence of violence against women and girls. According to her, if we cannot get rid of the culture of impunity, the magnitude

of violence cannot be reduced.

She also highlighted the importance of reforming the rape law as the existing law compels the survivors to prove the incident of rape. "The burden of proof must fall on the perpetrator," opined Moslem.

If we look at the legal aspects, we have many archaic laws from the British period that, on the surface, seem to ensure gender equality, but in reality, are laced with misogynistic and patriarchal elements.

For example, we talk about discrimination

ensure whether women are getting their alimony and maintenance costs, and (iv) create proper legislation for workplace sexual harassment.

- The media should portray equal representation in all new and emerging sports where women are doing well.
- To prevent sexual harassment in public transport, the number plate of the vehicle should be made visible in every way, the staff should have their identity cards, advertisements pasted on the vehicle should be removed, waiting rooms for public transport should be made free of encroachment and the staff should be given motivational training regularly.

in the inheritance law, as women get 50 percent less than men. But research shows that not even 10 percent of women are getting 50 percent of their due inheritance, and nobody is talking about it, said Taslima Yasmin, Assistant Professor, Faculty of Law, University of Dhaka.

Prof Yasmin also pointed out that there is a concept of 'Mata' (post-divorce maintenance) in the Quran, which directs that if a man arbitrarily divorces a wife, he is obligated to provide a reasonable amount

of compensation to her. But women are not getting their alimony and maintenance after divorce, while Hindu women still have no power to divorce their husbands, even if the marriage is abusive.

Another important fact is, according to the definition of the archaic rape law, only sexual intercourse would be regarded as rape, whereas in numerous rape incidents of children, penetration occurs with an object, which does not fit the definition of the rape law. And in most of the rape cases, after forensic examination, the case turns into a case of "sexual assault" instead, she said.

The issue of equal representation of women in sports was also highlighted at the discussion as Ashreen Mridha, Founder & Chairman, Deshi Ballers and Former Athlete, Bangladesh Women's Basketball National Team, said, apart from cricket and football, there are several emerging sports where women are doing well and this needs attention.

"We need diversity when we talk about women in sports," she said.

Mridha also pointed out the discrimination women face due to their age in terms of mentoring and remuneration. At the same time, the federation and the sports ministry must remove bureaucracy and give room for the youth-led initiatives to prosper.

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