



WOMEN'S VOLUNTARY ASSOCIATION (WVA)

CELEBRATING
50 YEARS

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বাণী

উইমেন্স ভলান্টিয়ারী এসোসিয়েশন (ডব্লিউ ভি এ)-এর পঞ্চাশ বছর পূর্তিতে এই সংগঠনের সঙ্গে জড়িত সকলকে অভিনন্দন জানাই।
সমাজ সেবামূলক বিভিন্ন প্রকল্পের মাধ্যমে ডব্লিউ ভি এ সমাজ উন্নয়নে যে নিরলস সেবা দিয়ে আসছে তা প্রশংসনীয়। নিরক্ষরতা দূরীকরণের জন্য অবৈতনিক প্রাথমিক শিক্ষা প্রদান, জনসংখ্যা রোধে মাঠ পর্যায়ে পরিবার পরিকল্পনার জন্য সহায়তা দান, মহিলাদের আর্থ-সামাজিক উন্নতির জন্য কর্মজীবী প্রশিক্ষণের ব্যবস্থা, বিশেষ করে শারীরিক প্রতিবন্ধী শিশুদের আবাসিক সুবিধাসহ চিকিৎসা প্রদানের মাধ্যমে ডব্লিউভিএ একটি অনুকরণীয় দৃষ্টান্ত স্থাপন করেছে। আমাকে জানানো হয়েছে, কোন প্রকার বৈদেশিক অনুদান ছাড়াই এই সংগঠন সমাজ সেবামূলক বিভিন্ন কর্মসূচি গ্রহণ ও পালন করে চলেছে।
আমি ডব্লিউভিএ'র উত্তরোত্তর সাফল্য কামনা করি।
আব্দুল হাফেজ, বাংলাদেশ জিদ্দাবাদ।

প্রফেসর ড. ইয়াজউদ্দিন আহমেদ
রাষ্ট্রপতি
গণপ্রজাতন্ত্রী বাংলাদেশ



বাণী

উইমেন্স ভলান্টিয়ারী এসোসিয়েশনের সুবর্ণ জয়ন্তী উপলক্ষে আমি এর কর্মকর্তা ও সদস্যদের তত্ত্বাবধায় ও অভিনন্দন জানাই।
পঞ্চাশ বছর পূর্তি একটি সংগঠনের জন্য অত্যন্ত পৌরবের বিষয়। এ সময়ে এই সংগঠনটি দুঃস্থ ও অবহেলিত নারী এবং প্রতিবন্ধী শিশুদের বাস্তু, শিক্ষা ও আর্থ-সামাজিক উন্নয়নে গুরুত্বপূর্ণ অবদান রেখেছে। নারীর ক্ষমতায়নে পালন করছে বলিষ্ঠ ভূমিকা। আমি আশা করি, আগামীতেও এই সংগঠনটি তার সমাজ সেবামূলক কার্যক্রম অব্যাহত রেখে দেশের উন্নয়নে আরো অর্থবহ অবদান রাখবে।
আমি উইমেন্স ভলান্টিয়ারী এসোসিয়েশনের সুবর্ণ জয়ন্তী'র সকল কর্মসূচির সাফল্য কামনা করি।
আব্দুল হাফেজ, বাংলাদেশ জিদ্দাবাদ।

খালেদা জিয়া
প্রধানমন্ত্রী
গণপ্রজাতন্ত্রী বাংলাদেশ সরকার

বাণী

উইমেন্স ভলান্টিয়ারী এসোসিয়েশন, সংগঠনের পঞ্চাশ বছর পূর্তি উপলক্ষে একটি স্মরণিকা প্রকাশ করছে জেনে আমি আনন্দিত। এসোসিয়েশনের এই উদ্যোগ প্রশংসার দাবি রাখে।
পৃথিবীতে যাকিছু মহান, সুন্দর ও কল্যাণকর তা সমিতির মাধ্যমে সহজে অর্জন করা সম্ভব। আমি মনে করি দেশে নারীর ক্ষমতায়নে তথা উন্নয়নের মূলোৎপাড়া মহিলাদের অংশগ্রহণ নিশ্চিত করতে শীঘ্র রাষ্ট্রপতি জিয়াউর রহমান-এর অনুমতি কর্মসূচির ফলে এক সময়ের অবরোধবাসিনী নারী আজ আত্মপ্রকাশ করছে। মেধা, যোগ্যতা এবং দক্ষতায় তারা আজ এগিয়ে।
আমি জেনেছি, উইমেন্স ভলান্টিয়ারী এসোসিয়েশন, সমাজের অবহেলিত নারী ও প্রতিবন্ধী শিশুদের কল্যাণে কাজ করছে। এ ধরনের কর্মযজ্ঞ নিঃসন্দেহে মানবতার কল্যাণে একটি মহৎ উদ্যোগ।
আমি এই সংগঠনের সার্বিক সাফল্য কামনা করি।
আব্দুল হাফেজ
বাংলাদেশ জিদ্দাবাদ।

খুরশীদ জাহান হক
মন্ত্রী
মহিলা ও শিশু বিষয়ক মন্ত্রণালয়, গণপ্রজাতন্ত্রী বাংলাদেশ সরকার



বাণী

বিস্ময়ান্বিত রাহমানির রাহিম
উইমেন্স ভলান্টিয়ারী এসোসিয়েশন পঞ্চাশ বছর পূর্তি উপলক্ষে একটি তথ্য বহুল স্মরণিকা প্রকাশ করেছে জেনে আমি আনন্দিত।
মুশাব্বেরের অবক্ষয়ের এ যুগে সমাজের অবহেলিত নারী ও শিশুদের সুন্দর জীবন পড়ে তোলার জন্য প্রয়োজন উপযুক্ত প্রশিক্ষণ ও শিক্ষা। আর এ মহৎ কাজটি সুচারুরূপে করার জন্য ডব্লিউভিএ-এর সমাজ সচেতন সদস্যরা সেবার অব্যাহত হাত প্রসারিত করেছে। বিষয়টি অত্যন্ত প্রশংসনীয়।
আমি উইমেন্স ভলান্টিয়ারী এসোসিয়েশন-এর সকল ইতিবাচক কর্মকাণ্ডের সাফল্য কামনা করছি।
একই সাথে সবশ্রী সকলকে আমার অভিনন্দন ও তত্ত্বাবধায়।

সেলিমা রহমান
প্রতিমন্ত্রী
সংস্কৃতি বিষয়ক মন্ত্রণালয়, গণপ্রজাতন্ত্রী বাংলাদেশ সরকার



WVA today



RUBY RAHMAN

WOMEN'S Voluntary Association which is popularly known as WVA is in the midst of its golden anniversary. From its humble beginning in 1954 by a group of socially conscious ladies from both home and abroad, WVA has come a long way and has grown in membership. Currently, there are 200 plus ladies who are actively trying to make a difference in our society through WVA's various social activities.

Started by the drive to make a difference in our society, WVA over the years have focused on the less fortunate people of our society and their plight in the struggle of life. As a pioneer NGO, the organisation has been driven to help in their modest ways rather than seek publicities. Among the various activities currently conducted by WVA and its' members are as follows:

Baby Land: The object of this group is to help poor and needy women. This also generates income for the organisation. This group of members develops of various designs and pattern in the baby wear items. Which in turn, do the needy women produce and it is sold at a store at the association's premises. The majority of the income is given to the needy women as the wages. This group's chairperson is Ms Maqsooda Mayeed.

Development: The primary function of this group is to lend the five halves of the premises to different organisations for various seminars, conferences, O' level examinations. Sometimes these organisations give us donations for using our premises. Seminars and other programme of DCRC, Family Planning Offices and Baby-land store are held at the premises of the association. To keep the halls lucrative, the group spends a lot of time in the up keep of the premises. The Chairperson for this group is Ms Zakia Doha.

DCRC (Disabled Children Day Clinics): The group runs a clinic for disabled children. Started in pre-Bangladesh era in Milford Hospital and currently in Mahan agar Hospital in Nayabazar. Many patients from Milford Hospital come to the clinic for treatments. The clinic has a physiotherapist and an ayah. In addition to the treatments, milk, biscuits and vitamins are provided to the children free of cost. This year, 70 children have recovered from their disability so far. The Chairperson for this group is Ms Muntajun Nahar.

DCRC (Disabled Children's Residential Center): DCRC is one of the

oldest projects of WVA. It provides housing for physically challenged needy boys and girls between the ages 5 to 12 years of age. In addition to providing them shelter, they are given food, clothing, medicines and physiotherapy assistance. This program is assisted by various renowned organisation and personalities of the country. The group chairperson is Ms Saleha Mansoor.

Education: This group runs three schools of WVA. These schools are imparting with literacy to poor children. A total number of 360 destitute children are seeing the light of education through this program. The educational group not only ensures the distribution of education to the needy children but continuously monitor the quality of the education delivered to ensure proper deliverables. Children willing to further higher education are encouraged through private scholarship program. The Chairperson for this group is Ms. Ifat Siddiki.

Family Planning: This group is one of the most important groups of the organisation as it deals with a major problem for the poor women of the country. It objectives is to create socially responsible conscience among the less educated women regarding the benefits of family planning. They operate two centers. One of the centers is in Dhanmondi (WVA premises) and the other in the slum of Rayer Bazar, Battala. Recently, this group operates a free clinic on Fridays along with free treatments at the hospital including medicines. During the national immunisation drive, this group provides immunisations to needy children such as polio and vitamin A. Ms Polly Rashid heads this group.

Fund Raising: Like any organisation, funds are needed to operate various activities. This group is responsible to generate funds for the organisation. Among the biggest fund raising events are the International Ladies Lunch and the Annual Meena Bazaar. These events are organised with the cooperation of many embassies with their huge donations and with their courtesy food with different taste. The group also coordinates with various people and businesses to get donations as prizes for raffle draw and the organisation as a whole. Ms Reyhana Ashraf heads this group of ladies.

Membership: No organisation is complete without its' members. This group of ladies is constantly to bring more and more like-minded ladies in the organisation. There are several social events and festivals are organised to invite ladies to attend and possibly join the organisation. At the same time, it is a member's appreciation for the current members of the organisation. Ms Julia Huq is heads this group of ladies.

Programme: This group is responsible for organising programmes for the benefits and recreation of the members. This group invites prominent personalities to provide special on various subjects of importance to the membership and the country as a whole. Programme for national importance are organised to the benefit of the members. Ms Nasreen Haq heads this group.

Sewing: As a vital part of the organisation, it is involved in developing items for stitching and selling these items to raise funds. This group uses its imaginations to add items for fabrication. It also designs and procures materials for stitching and finally develops a marketing strategy for selling the items. The Chairperson for this group is Ms Anjum Ara Zaman.

Vocational Education: This group supports 25-30 girls each year. They receive training at WVA center to make them able to earn a living for themselves. At this time, there are three different kinds of training available such as, sewing, nursing and computer operation. 48 students were educated in computer training and 11 nurses were trained at Holy Crescent Hospital and Shamaila Rahman Institute of Nursing Bhoirab Foundation. After completion of the course certificates are given. We also help them to get jobs. The chairperson of this group is Ms Sayeda Begum Rila.

I am proud and privileged to head this benevolent organisation at this period. WVA is celebrating its 50th anniversary this year and I am honored to celebrate it being the president. It has been 23 long years since I have joined the organisation, among which I have served 4 years as a group chairman, 4 years as treasurer and 4 years as vice president.

I thank all the past presidents from whom I have learnt and still am learning a lot. They always have been good friends, great encouragement and a proper guide for me. I thank all the members for being there for the organisation all through us the good and the bad times. I specially thank all the board members who support me and help me in a very dedicated manner in each and every step and specially this occasion. Last but not the least, I remember all the members and past presidents who are not with us today. May their souls rest in peace.

Ruby Rahman is President-2004, WVA



PROF. ROUSHANARA RAHMAN

The Women's Voluntary Association, popularly known as WVA is celebrating its 50th year, the Golden Jubilee this year.

WVA was established in October 1954 when the then East Pakistan was plunging into a disastrous flood. To help the suffering people some local and foreign ladies from different Embassies and UN offices at Dhaka and Narayanganj sat together to chalk out a program of how to help the people. Eventually they formed a committee by the name of Women Voluntary Services. The name was changed to Women Voluntary Association (WVA) after some time. Dr. Madeline Prinkerton, a British Doctor, senior advisor of the Maternal and Child Health Care at Dhaka headed the first committee. Few other names of the committee members could be mentioned as Mrs. Bilquis Durrani, Ms. Joy Miles, Ms. Najma Kader Zohra Reza, Ms. Rukshana Reza, Ms. Sultana Masood, Ms. Daphne Olorenshaw, Maud Dolphine, Patts, Dorothy Patts, Ms. B.K. Nazir, Ms. Mena Hasan, Ms. Knorre and a few others. The unique feature in the membership of WVA shows that it was International in combination. There were a number of ladies from foreign nationals, very much eager to help the less fortunate people of our country and worked very hard.

It should be mentioned that expatriate members of WVA enjoyed full membership with the right to vote and to be elected to the Executive Committee. According to Mrs. Miles (wife of the first Secretary of the British High Commission at 1954), the first committee meeting was held on the 30th of December, 1954 and the general meeting on the 4th of January 1955. The meeting venue was the Dhaka Club Hall. Within a very short time it was decided that WVA would promote and encourage local artisans to develop their indigenous arts and crafts. So the members of WVA arranged a "Cottage Industries Discovery Competition."

"The Morning News" writes on that "East Pakistan's Cottage Industries can be developed into first rate foreign exchange earners, is the conviction of the Women's Voluntary Association and with this end in view, in addition to their desire to help the people of East Pakistan to raise their standards of living through their own labour, a province-wide competition has been organised by the Association." A committee was formed with at least 30 other participating organizations. The District Magistrate of Dhaka was a great help for WVA to call the organization to participate. It was a very successful event. At the competition, some of the Judges were: Mr. G.A. Faruqui, Chief Secretary, Dr. W.A. Jenkins, Vice Chancellor of Dhaka University, Mr. Zainul Abedin, Director of the Government Institute of Art, Miss Benic Montgomery, Consultative Advisor on Cottage industry to the government. The Morning News and "The Mirror" published in detail the activities of WVA from time to time.

The first group of WVA - Cottage industry group was formed after the successful "Cottage Industries Discovery Competition" was held. The Chairman and Secretary were Mrs. Durrani and Mrs. Knorre respectively. A few of the other members were Mrs. Bryant, Mrs. Hayden, Mrs. Carlson, Mrs. Aitken, Mrs. Davey, Mrs. Akbar Masood, Mrs. Murry, Mrs. McClean

Mrs. M.A. Ispahani.

After the successful "Cottage Industry Discovery Competition" on the 29th of November, 1955, WVA was looking for a shop. First shop was rented at the newly built Stadium.

Area, then it was shifted to 12 the then Jinnah Avenue, after the liberation the location was changed to 32, Bangabandhu Avenue. It was found from the records that the first year of WVA was full of activities. After the successful Cottage Industry Competition -- the members organised a Charity Ball. On March 10 1955, a most enjoyable Ball was held at the Dhaka Club in aid of the funds of the Women's Voluntary Association. About 400 residents of Dhaka and Narayanganj attended it. The efforts of the committee, headed by Mrs. Khatri, Mrs. Nelson, Mrs. Hayden and Mrs. Appleby were well rewarded by raising of Rs. 3,300.00. His excellency the Governor and Begum Shahbuddin attended the Ball. In one corner of the Ball-room Mrs. Durrani and Mrs. Rahmat Ali Khan and the Cottage Industry Committees had arranged an exhibition of all the products they have. All members had been asked to contribute food, and so generous was the response that a surplus was sent to the Children's Orphanage. Thus the Founding year of WVA was a year full of enthusiasm and significance. The First Annual General Meeting to elect the New Committee of office bearers was held on 9th December 1955. Mrs. W.A. Jenkins, wife of the Vice-Chancellor of Dhaka University was elected President of WVA. Mrs. John Hayden and Mrs. Patrick Coldrick were elected as Joint Secretaries. Mrs. H. Knorre as Treasurer. 65 members attended the meeting at the home of Mrs. Arthur K. Willy. In that meeting decision was taken that besides Cottage Industry, WVA will work for Public Health (including family planning), education and activities like Public Affairs of the community. On the motion of Begum Shamsunnahar Mahmood, a vote of thanks to the outgoing office bearers was given by Mrs. Mubarak T. Hassan (Mena Hassan). Mrs. Mena Hassan was the President of WVA in '59 consecutive years 1957, 1958 and '59 and Mrs. Henriette Knorre was treasurer and then Joint Secretary.

From 1961 the shop at Jinnah Avenue was used not only for the cottage industry group but it was also the official address of WVA and the general meeting, used to held at the Dhaka Club. For sometime Eskaton Ladies Club also used for annual Mela and a Thrift-shop, selling used goods at a nominal price.

From 1960 the health group has rendered valuable services to the poor patients in the hospitals and Leprosariums, to the orphans and the working mothers in day nurseries. The group also rolled bandages for the Leprosarium patients at Myensing, Sir Salimullah and Chandragona Leprosariums. This group had a milk distribution centre at the Dhaka Medical College out patients every day for the children and expectant mothers. The members collected books and ran a library service for the hospital patients. This type of services has been abandoned in early seventies

but few other groups were very effectively started to work. Education group was established in 1959 to start adult literacy and primary classes for the children. Initially a centre was opened at Pikhana, then Navabganj, Lalbagh and then Bashabo at Kamalapur. The local people provided place for the class. It created lot of problems. In 1964, the government very kindly donated a small plot of land at Kamalapur where WVA built a room for the class as well as for family planning advices. Mrs. Masuda Jahan of Bashabo joined WVA at 1959 as an adult education teacher. We sent her to Kotbari, Comilla for adult education training which she did successfully and she was our teacher until her untimely death. Another teacher Sahera Begum joined lately and she was in charge of Lalbagh centre.

Beside her school teaching she was in charge of health group food distribution to WVA's four centre such as Chotokata, Mitford clinic, RCC Home and Dhaka Medical College Milk distribution centre. The item of food was milk, oil and sargam allotted to WVA from the government. It was very tough job to take delivery from the government godown and then distribute every month. Sahera did it very efficiently until the food programme of the government existed.

Education group is one of the premier programmes of WVA. From the beginning, most of the Bengali speaking ladies joined in the group. Mrs. Mahemunir Ahmed, Mrs. Razia Quddus, Mrs. Jahanara Rahman, Mrs. Rokyaya Mannan, Mrs. Anwara Mansur, Mrs. Rakibuddin, Mrs. Roushanara Rahman and a few other ladies were members from the beginning.

Cottage Industry Group at Jinnah Avenue (now Bangabandhu Avenue) was running very successfully. In 1961 and in 1966 this group brought out two recipe books with recipes of the sub-continent. The cover one of the books was chosen from entries from the students of the Art College. The winner, a third year student of that college stood first for her design, the famous "Sitalpati" for the cover of the book. Mrs. Aruna Ispahani and Mrs. Erfan Ahmed were responsible for compiling and publishing the book.

The center for the rehabilitation of crippled children was opened on 1st May, 1966 in a house rented by WVA at Outer Circular Road. Mrs. Mariam Azher, herself a trained physiotherapist, was employed to carry out the treatment. As the place was not suitable for patients to reach, the center was moved to the "King Edward Ward" of the Mitford Hospital as a day clinic center. After the war of liberation, the Shaheed Suhrawardy Hospital decided to open an orthopedic department to treat the war casualties. Dr. Garst who was heading the department agreed to treat WVA's children. Eventually in November 1975, WVA's Crippled Children Residential Center was established at a rented house at Mohammadpur. Mrs. Asfa Hossain, Chairman of that group managed the center very efficiently. At the beginning the center was financed by the World Vision International other than by WVA. The salvation Army Rotary clubs from Dhaka and Japan, CARE, Glaxo

Ltd., Nabisco Biscuits, UNICEF, ASIA Foundation, all are the donors for the school children and for the cripple children home.

As the accommodation in the Mohammadpur house was not suitable for the children, the center had to shift to Dhanmondi, Road No. 27, House No. 20 (the present WVA home). Later on as the government decided to sell it, we opted for. Then in 1985, Begum Roushan Ershad, the then first lady, handed over the house to WVA.

At present WVA consists of eleven groups, but the Fund Raising group, specially, needs to be mentioned. Formally this group was named "Ways and Means" group up to 1976 when Mrs. Julie Rumbelow was the chairman. After that we changed the name to "Fund Raising" group. The annual Mela used to be held at several places, such as on the premises of Dhaka Club, Eskaton Ladies Clubs, Women's Sports Complex at Dhanmondi, Shilpakala Academy, and now, at Gulshan Youth Club playground.

Another Function-International Lunch was held in 1965 at Dhaka Club, then at Sheraton Hotel and now, at Pan Pacific Sonargaon Hotel. In 1971, due to the liberation war, all the activities of WVA were suspended. After the liberation in 1972 some of us, the senior members of WVA tried hard to re-organise the WVA's work and we were successful and formed a committee with Joan Kabiruddin as the president.

From the beginning of WVA it is an unwritten norm that some of foreign ladies will be included in the executive body as one of the Vice-Presidents and Joint Secretary. This tradition was maintained up to the mid-eighties. So we see Dorothy Pecht, Baroness Dr. Nothomb, Nancy Larson, Madam Saleh Al Mohammad, June Clements, Sheila Smallman, Dr. Josephine Flood, Margaret Baker, Paddy Wain Wright, Cynthia Currie and many other in the Executive Committee. But now none of them in the committee for their pre-occupation but almost all the embassies are very much concerned and helping WVA at the yearly Mela and International Lunch. There were so many ladies in the fifty year involved with WVA that each and every name could not be mentioned but we remember them for their dedication and love for the underprivileged people of our country.

This is WVA, by the ceaseless efforts of the members throughout the 50 years our society has given a firm recognition to the achievement of WVA's goal. We have passed long 50 years. Many of our old members who are scattered throughout the whole world as I mentioned earlier, it is due to their sincere services, WVA has become an established part of the community. All the members of the Golden Jubilee year hope that WVA will carry the torch of humanitarian services for coming years and more and more members will come forward and join hands with us to help our poor citizen with our limitations for a better Bangladesh.

Prof. Roushanara Rahman is past President, WVA



Presidents from 1972-2003. Sitting from left - Rowshanara Ahmed, Khorshedi Alam, Prof. Roushan ara Rahman, Munira Khan, Zakia Doha. Standing from left - Farida Moni, Reyhana Ashraf. Not in the picture - Joan Kabiruddin (now abroad), Zerina Rashid and Shilu Abed (expired)