



CONSUMER



World Consumer Rights Day

Consumer movements unites against unethical drug promotion



Consumers are largely unaware of how their drug consumption choices are being shaped by corporate motives for gargantuan profits. For world consumers rights day (WCRD) 2007, Consumers International and its member organisations around the world are calling on national governments to put an end to unscrupulous marketing practices by the pharmaceutical industry.

The many forms of drug promotion: Drug promotion can take on many forms. Overt ways of plugging new product lines are common place, but we are increasingly seeing more subtle, inconspicuous forms of promotion. On the face of it, these methods might not seem to be promoting a product at all.

Fuelled by profit: Drug companies are moneymaking corporations just like any other; they exist to create a profit. The overarching aim of corporate drug promotion, therefore, is to increase profits by raising consumer demand for pharmaceutical products. This approach fuels unethical drug promotion in several ways. The most common violations include:

- Promoting misleading or false claims about a drug.
- Deliberately suppressing risks and side effects of a drug.
- Providing financial incentives to doctors for prescribing a drug to consumers.
- Using disease awareness campaigns for drug promotion rather than health promotion.
- These methods can ultimately lead to irrational drug use by consumers, with potentially fatal health risks.

Who checks to make sure drug promotion is ethical?

The unfortunate answer is... Predominantly the drug companies themselves. **The evidence:** Consumers International's 2006 report, Branding the Cure, provides clear evidence that industry self-regulation does not protect consumers against unethical and sometimes illegal drug promotion tactics. For example, there were 972 confirmed breaches of the Association of the British Pharmaceutical Industry's (ABPI) code by the 20 biggest drug companies between 2002-2005. More than 35% of these breaches had to do with misleading drug information.

Warning!

Drug marketing can be dangerous to your health. Drug companies will often say that they are providing a valuable information service and raising vital awareness about health matters. But the reality is that their unethical drug promotion methods can have serious implications for consumer health and safety. For example, the pharmaceutical company Merck suppressed information about cardiovascular side effects associated with taking the drug Vioxx, despite having information about these risks at least four years before the drug was eventually taken off the market. The company spent US\$160 million annually on marketing this drug. Vioxx caused between 88,000 - 140,000 cases of heart disease in the US alone.

WCRD 2007 is part of the long-term campaign to tackle Unethical Drug Promotion. The purpose of this global campaign is to:

1. Hold industry accountable for compliance with global codes for ethical drug promotion.
2. Hold governments accountable for rigorous enforcement of regulations on drug promotion in order to uphold consumer rights to safety and information.
3. Improve consumer access to credible, reliable and transparent drug and health information.

Source: Consumer International.

HUMAN RIGHTSanalysis

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

Breaking the impunity at home

SADRUL HASAN MAZUMDER

ENDING Impunity for Violence against Women and Girl - is the slogan for marking the International Women's Day 2007. The United Nations General Assembly, composed of delegates from every Member State, celebrates International Women's Day to recognize that peace and social progress require the active participation and equality of women, and to acknowledge the contribution of women to international peace and security.

The idea of an International Women's Day first arose at the turn of the century, which in the industrialized world was a period of expansion and turbulence, booming population growth and radical ideologies. On 8 March 1857, Garment Workers in New York City, in the United States, staged a protest. They were fighting against inhumane working conditions and low wages. The police attacked the protestors and dispersed them. Two years later, again in March, these women formed their first labour union to try and protect themselves and gain some basic

slogan "Bread and Roses", with bread symbolizing economic security and roses a better quality of life. In May, the Socialist Party of America designated the last Sunday in February for the observance of National Women's Day. Following the declaration of the Socialist Party of America, the first ever National Woman's Day was celebrated in the United States on 28 February 1909. Women continued to celebrate it on the last Sunday of that month through 1913. Since those early years, International Women's Day has assumed a new global dimension for women in developed and developing countries alike and subsequently March 8 has turned into International Women's Day.

In spite of national and international initiatives, Violence against Women is a daily and most deadly fact in our society and largely abused by close associates like husbands and relatives at domestic level. Domestic violence is the most unrecognised form of violence and a very pervasive, serious social malady in every cluster of the society whether rich or poor, literate or illiterate, developed or underdeveloped. Domestic violence especially wife beating has been

be brutally tortured or injured certified by a registered doctor to get justice, without which complaints of torture/violence are not taken into cognizance. This is because immediate reforms are needed to bring the required change in the legal arrangement so that in one hand domestic violence can be addressed according to the intensity of the committed offense and prohibiting misuse of that arrangement in other hand.

Only the physical violence are visible that includes threats and ends up with emotional disaster and psychological disorder of the concerned individual or family, which are not commonly attributed in our existing social norms and practices. Spouse battering is not an isolated incident. There is a continuum from the normal amount of quarrelling through mild violence up to serious battering. Frequently couples treat even rather extreme violence as if it were nothing special, or else dismiss it as if it were an unpredictable aberration. Typically Domestic Violence is directed against women which includes physical, sexual, economical and emotional or psychological. Various threats of violence are also found as life threatening and systematic that prevails for long time. Physical violence that causes internal injuries, permanent handicaps and disability or death mostly ends up psychological/mental disorder.

More absolutely it has been found as a fashion existing as if such behaviors heighten the value of being man in the society. Interestingly it prevails both in the affluent and lower class of the society, the difference is that when it happens in the slum we notice quickly as the women come out of their homes shouting but in the affluent class of the society we notice only when it turns into a suicide or when any body is brutally murdered. Such circumstance pose a serious threat in designing social programmes for addressing violence against women and girl child in general and Domestic Violence in particular. So called social prestige also found as one of the inherent causes of such silent violence against women and in most cases woman has to faces indecent queries like, "What did you do to make your husband angry?" People at large continue to believe that domestic violence is a private matter between a couple, rather than a criminal offense that demands a strong, swift and integrated response to resolve. We should help the society to keep up such superstitious believes and extending support to possible sufferers.

Since most of us grew up in families that provided unique forms of love and support, we tend to think of families as places where people are nurtured and protected. Generally family members do care for each other, provide for each other and help each other to survive. Since we like to think of families as protective and caring, it is sometimes difficult to accept the fact that so many people intentionally inflict pain and suffering on other family members. While it is important to acknowledge that support and gentleness are typical of most families, it is also important to understand why it exists. Family as multidimensional reality now a day has become a topic of controversies cutting in all directions. The concept of joint family has been fading away giving birth of nucleus families, which has turned into center of violence. Frustratingly families are one of the most common con-



texts of violence in our society. This is generally caused by Economic Class-the dimension ranging from poverty to wealth, and includes the occupations and carriers by which people get their income; Power-determines who controls whom ranging from state to personal level, such as who gets to decide when to have sex; Status-the dimension concerning who is held in most respect. Such erosions has to be protected bringing real sense of respect among the family members as family is being considered as the fundamental institution- where every individual gets the first lesson on earth. If any individual fails to respect his or her family members s/he can never respect the norms of a society. Behaviors among the members in a family construct the social attitude at large which is said to be changed for addressing Domestic Violence and restoration of piece in family. So without attempting to make respectful of every individual towards other members of their family programming against domestic violence may not succeed as aspiration.

Traditional way of accounting for marital violence was either to ascribe it to lower-class culture or else to describe it as psychologically pathological and deviant. As we have experienced, there is some support for the idea that the lower class is especially prone to violence, but this can not be the whole story, since violence also occur in middle class. To ascribe it merely to pathological individuals, however, evades the question of explaining it. One particularly pernicious psychological account is the argument that women are masochistic and hence "ask for it". Actually violent husbands often use this as an excuse for a description of what happened. What it implies, sociologically, is that there is a wide spread cultural belief that women should behave in certain ways; if they do not, it is legitimate to violence against them. Laws actually gave a husband the right to physically chastise his wife for nagging or other offense against her unless it is not mentionable or serious in nature.

There is evidence that intergenerational transmission of violence affects women. A woman who was abused by her own parents is more likely to stay in a violent relationship with her husband. This is because she tends to perceive violence as normal, or because she has low self-esteem and little sense that she could improve the situation and cumulatively lives in greater social insecurity. She

does not have any option to leave her violent husband and return to her parents. Perhaps even more importantly, husbands who were subjected to a great deal of physical punishment when they were children are especially like to assault their wives. The more violent a husband is to his wife, the more likely she is to use violent punishment on her children. Violence husbands are also more violent to their children. This closes the circle and sets off the likelihood of children growing up to become spouse abusers in the next generation. This vicious cycle has to be broken for addressing Domestic Violence, which can not be attained only through ensuring strict enforcement of laws. We need to device an integrated social response very immediately.

Socio cultural reasons and weakness in the existing laws are factors that help perpetuate Domestic Violence. So programming against Domestic Violence requires measure to change social attitude and beliefs that legitimate male violence and essence of male superiority. The measure might include changes in education, incentive to enhance the moral quality during the tender age. Urgent initiatives needed to board creating a social safety net based on community participation that includes supports like counseling and legal aid as protective measures. In addition to that integral services for identifying the possible victims and enhancing local government initiatives so that they can handle such victims within their capacity and jurisdiction. Largely media can play a pivotal role in framing the attitude of the society along with a specific legislation on Domestic Violence, which requires urgent and immediate response.

The author is the Project Coordinator of Bangladesh National Women Lawyers' Association (BNWLA).

HUMAN RIGHTSadvocacy



Advocating for the human rights of the leprosy affected people



REVEREND MARTIN ADHIKARY

LEPROSY or Hansen's disease is one of the few most ancient diseases that have afflicted mankind. It still continues to be a big health issue in many of the so-called 'Third World' countries including our own, Bangladesh. Indian sub-continent is believed to have been the birth-place of leprosy. The ancient Indian medical book called the Sushrutashanghita (c. 600 B.C.) contained a description of it. The Mosaic Law in the book of Leviticus (Chapter 13-14) in the Old Testament has prescription about how the then society was to deal with people affected by these diseases. We can hardly even imagine how in ancient time society stigmatized such people. Still today those who work with leprosy affected people have a hard time to get the medical treatment for these people integrated into the

general health infrastructure because of the stigma attached to it.

Leprosy is a least infectious disease, which primarily affects skin, peripheral nerves and mucous membranes. A rod-shaped bacillus named 'Mycobacterium leprae' lie behind this. The Norwegian scientist Armauer Hansen first identified this bacillus in 1873. Thus it is also known as 'Hansen's disease'. The first medical answer to leprosy was not invented until 1941. But as the bacillus grew resistance this did not prove to be very effective. The WHO-recommended MDT (Multi Drug Therapy, a cocktail of dapsone, clofazimine and rifampicin) remains the most powerful medication against leprosy since the year 1981. Up to now around 30,000 people in Bangladesh have irreversible physical disability due to leprosy.

The societal and psychological dimension of this disease is my area and I would pursue for an integrated

approach to this problem urging for advocacy for the human rights of the people, who easily get socially excluded and denied of their rights. Still today in countries like Bangladesh leprosy remains as a stigmatizing disease, although this is decreasing over the years because of the progress in medical science and social awareness. Stigma remains even after one gets cured of leprosy. Person with leprosy faces many problems in social interactions including marriage, inheritance, social acceptance, employment, etc. The married ones (especially women) are divorced. Many were and still are forced to live by begging. In fact, the words 'pauper' and 'leper' (the latter carries a derogatory sense, so it is not used by us now; the words 'person affected with or by leprosy' are used) went together often in the past. The Leprosy Mission Bangladesh (TLMB), the Bangladesh chapter of the Leprosy Mission International works for the eradication of leprosy and advocates for the human rights of the people affected by it. Removal of stigma enhances their human dignity by means of changing people's attitude that lies behind the stigma. These areas require integrated interventions for any holistic care for the affected person.

The community participation is vitally important for rehabilitation of the leprosy sufferers into community. To advocate for the rights of the people with leprosy we need to speak up, draw the attention of the society to this issue with the objective of directing decision-makers towards a solution. Awareness is the first step in the process, which should move the decision makers to make needed change in policy for new actions that

should change the scenario. We need to address this issue by means of the interventions and mobilize people to undertake actions to overcome these problems. In Bangladesh the stigmatizing old British Acts concerning leprosy should be changed and new laws should be passed to protect the human rights of these people.

The Articles of the most recent UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities should be implemented as far as possible in our country. Article 1 states the purpose of the same: "The purpose of the present Convention is to promote, protect and ensure the full and equal enjoyment of all human rights and fundamental freedoms by all persons with disabilities, and to promote respect for their inherent dignity. Persons with disabilities include those who have long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments which in interaction with various barriers may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others."

An effective way to advocate for the human rights of the leprosy patients is in self-advocacy on the part of the sufferer. In this TLMB plays a role in ensuring social inclusion and access to equal rights for all services and resources for leprosy sufferers. This is being done through the self-

help groups for promoting income generating activities, health education and community awareness through social mobilization all adding to the protection of the human rights of the affected people. All these are essential parts of community-based rehabilitation the goals of which are the total empowerment of the patients at their societal level.

There is a need of political commitment both on part of the government and the public. One area should be legislation favouring integration. Discrimination is markedly decreased in many countries. But in Bangladesh this still remains in practice. The issue of advocacy for leprosy-affected people cannot be isolated from human development. Social exclusion is a human rights issue. It is verily a development issue and needs to be integrated into the mainstream developmental philosophy and practice.

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LAWweek



CA orders arresting price hike of essentials

Chief Adviser Fakhruddin Ahmed urged the field-level civil and military officials to take effective measures to keep prices of commodities at tolerable level through ensuring adequate supply in the market. He directed the authorities to open the sealed godowns across the county so that the stored good quality foodstuff can be sold in the market, saying that keeping commodities in sealed godowns would not bring any benefit. The chief adviser was speaking at an opinion-exchange meeting with high civil and military officials of Khulna Division at the local Circuit House. This was his third meeting with government officials outside the capital after the first in Chittagong on February 27 and the second in Barisal on March 4. About the ongoing drive for evicting illegal structures across the country, Fakhruddin cautioned the agencies concerned to ensure the poor do not lose everything. "It is not the intention of the present government," he said. He also asked the government officials to be careful so that no slums or huts and bazaars, which are not causing any problem, are evicted unnecessarily. -Unb, Dhaka, March 12.

Tarique Rahman sent to jail

Senior Joint Secretary General of BNP Tarique Rahman will have to sleep on cold hard concrete in Dhaka Central Jail just like other general inmates as he was denied division facilities after a Dhaka court had sent him there. "We did not provide division facilities to Tarique as he does not qualify under any category to get the facilities," Deputy Inspector General (Prisons) Major Shamsul Haider Siddique told The Daily Star. Tarique was kept in a cell with other general inmates, jail sources said. Jail doctors were supposed to take a look at him to treat his headache and pain in the waist. If the doctors would suggest admitting him to the jail hospital he would be admitted there, the DIG said. According to the jail code, government officials who fall under serial No 1 to 18 on the government's warrant of precedence are entitled to get division facilities. Besides, Ekushey Award winners, holders of gallantry awards Bir Uttam, Bir Bikram and Bir Protik, commercially important persons, (CIPs) and general secretaries of political parties with representatives in the parliament may get division facilities in jail. -The Daily Star, March 13.

Political parties to submit income-expenditure reports to EC soon

Parliamentary political parties will soon have to start disclosing the sources of their annual incomes and submit expenditure reports to the Election Commission (EC). The EC has prepared a set of electoral reform proposals that includes this provision to ensure transparency and democracy within parliamentary parties, sources said adding that the provision also stipulates that the parties' accounts will have to be audited every year. Every parliamentary party will have to be registered with the EC giving an undertaking that it will follow the party constitution. An unregistered political party will not be allowed to contest in parliamentary elections, sources said quoting from the draft proposal which will be sent to the government soon. The registration of a political party will be cancelled if it fails to follow the rules, sources said. Once the electoral reforms are implemented through promulgation of an ordinance by the president, parliamentary parties including Awami League, BNP, Jatiya Party and Jamaat-e-Islami will have to be registered and will be forced to disclose the sources of their incomes and report their expenditures to the EC. -The Daily Star, March 14.

Rab catches 'corrupt' tax man red-handed

Intelligence officials of Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) picked up a joint commissioner of taxation and three others from the tax official's Bijoynagar office in the capital on charges of bribery. Away in Sylhet, the joint forces arrested a Chief Engineer of Sylhet City Corporation (SCC) Saiful Islam from his office on corruption charges. Suspended by Mayor Badar Uddin Ahmed Kamran on graft allegations, slam admitted to have amassed ill-gotten wealth amounting Tk 20 crore, sources said. Islam also admitted that he has a bank balance of over Tk one crore with Standard Chartered Bank, 10 plots at Bashundhara, flats at Gulshan and Uttara, a petrol pump and a CNG filling station at Sirajganj, sources added. At Bijoynagar, Rab members also confiscated Tk 25,000 from the desk drawer of the tax official and from the pocket of one of the other detainees. The detainees are Joint Commissioner of Taxation (Appellate Division) of Range 4 Harunur Rashid Bhuiyan, Chartered Accountant of Farias Constructions Nitai Chand Roy, Executive Officer of Dutch Bangla Bank Limited Hasanuzzaman, and Advocate Maziful Islam. -The Daily Star, March 14.