

International Women's Day 2009

Men and Women United to End Violence against Women and Girls



Ministry of Women and Children Affairs



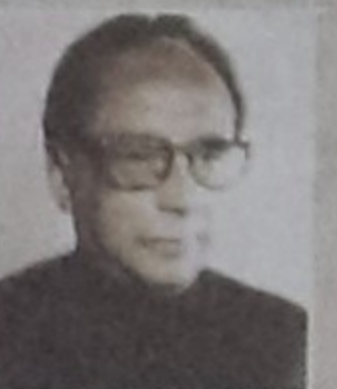
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Violence against Women: Challenges and possibilities

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First of all, greetings to everyone on the International Women's Day 2009. This is indeed a very significant day in the life of women the world over which started from a very basic need for women to be able to have control over their own life, to enjoy equality and peace. We all are aware it took almost a century for women to have a day to themselves, a day on which the world will stop for a while to discuss, analyze and engage in future planning for women's advancement, to establish women's rights and most important of all, to pledge to stop violence against women. Women had to go through many struggles, sometimes even facing fierce reactions, to earn this day. Yet, women know no respite. Equality, equal dignity, equal sharing, life free of violence and fear are still matters of relentless struggle for women. One may want to halt here for a minute. This is 21st century, the new millennium- do we still need to plan to stop violence against women? Even now when it is claimed that the human civilization has reached its peak? Unfortunately the answer will be 'yes'.

Questions of course are constantly raised as to 'is it only women who are subjected to violent treatment Aren't men too are victims of violence?' 'Don't you think women now have a much better deal in the society, in politics with all the quota systems and affirmative action mechanisms?' 'Don't you see women taking over everywhere?' On a lighter note, many men would say they have surrendered their lives to their wives and are living totally under their control. As individual cases what they say may be true. But looking at the documentation of the number and various kinds of violence perpetrated on women in 2008 done by one of the human rights organizations we have real reasons to worry. The document tells us that in 2008 about 27 women were thrown at, out of 296 women were tortured for dowry with 172 deaths, fatwa instigated violence stands at 20, 83 women were killed out of 486 women that were raped. Of these 127 were gang raped. 110 female domestic workers were tortured in many different ways including physical torture, rape and other kinds of physical harassment. About 60 of the domestic workers died because of torture or were killed after rape. Some were forced to commit suicide.



রাষ্ট্রপতি
পদ্মশ্রী বাংলাদেশ
ঢাকা।
২৪ ফাল্গুন ১৪৩৫
০৮ মার্চ ২০০৯


বিশ্বের অন্যান্য দেশের নায় বাংলাদেশে 'আন্তর্জাতিক নারী দিবস-২০০৯' পালনের উদ্যোগকে আমি স্বাগত জানাই। এ উপলক্ষে বাংলাদেশসহ সারা বিশ্বের নারী সমাজের প্রতি আমার আন্তরিক শুভেচ্ছা।

বিশ্বের সকল সৃজনশীল ও উন্নয়নমূলক কর্মকাণ্ডে পুরুষের পাশাপাশি নারীর অবদান অনস্বীকার্য। পরিবার ও সমাজের সকল ক্ষেত্রে নারীর মর্যাদাপূর্ণ ও সৃষ্টিশীল ভূমিকা দেশের আর্থ-সামাজিক উন্নয়নকে ত্বরান্বিত করে। বাংলাদেশের সংবিধানে নারী-পুরুষের সম-অধিকারের কথা ওকত্বের সাথে বলা হয়েছে। বর্তমান সরকারও নারীর সম-অধিকার বাস্তবায়নে বদ্ধপরিকর। উন্নয়ন কর্মকাণ্ডের মূল প্রোতসাহার্য নারীর অংশগ্রহণ নিশ্চিতকরণে নারী ও কন্যা শিশুর বিরুদ্ধে সকল প্রকার বৈষম্য দূর করা একান্ত প্রয়োজন। আন্তর্জাতিক নারী দিবসের এবারের প্রতিপাদনা 'নারী ও কন্যা শিশুর বিরুদ্ধে সহিংসতা নিরসনে ঐক্যবদ্ধ নারী ও পুরুষ' যথার্থ হয়েছে বলে আমি মনে করি। আমি নারীর অধিকার ও মর্যাদা প্রতিষ্ঠায় সকলকে দায়িত্বশীল ভূমিকা পালনের আহবান জানাই।

আমি 'আন্তর্জাতিক নারী দিবস-২০০৯' এর সার্থিক সফলতা কামনা করি।

বেদা হাফেজ, বাংলাদেশ চিরজীবী হোক।

মোঃ জিবুর রহমান



প্রধানমন্ত্রী
পদ্মশ্রী বাংলাদেশ সরকার
২৪ ফাল্গুন ১৪৩৫
০৮ মার্চ ২০০৯

বিশ্বের অন্যান্য দেশের মত বাংলাদেশেও যথাযোগ্য মর্যাদায় আন্তর্জাতিক নারী দিবস ২০০৯ উদযাপিত হচ্ছে জেমে আমি আনন্দিত। আন্তর্জাতিক নারী দিবসের এ বছরের প্রতিপাদনা: 'নারী ও কন্যা শিশুর বিরুদ্ধে সহিংসতা নিরসনে ঐক্যবদ্ধ নারী ও পুরুষ' অত্যন্ত সমর্থনযোগ্য বলে আমি মনে করি।

জাতির জনক বঙ্গবন্ধু শেখ মুজিবুর রহমান নারী-পুরুষের সম অধিকারভিত্তিক সোনার বাংলায় স্বপ্ন দেখেছিলেন। বাংলাদেশের সংবিধানেও নারীর মর্যাদা ও অধিকার সুস্পষ্টভাবে স্বীকৃত। তা সত্ত্বেও আজও বিভিন্ন কারণে নারীকে অনেক বেশি প্রতিশ্রুততার মধ্যে জীবনযাপন করতে হয়।

এই প্রতিশ্রুততা জাতীয় উন্নয়নের মূলমন্ত্রে নারীর অংশগ্রহণে সৃষ্টি করেছে প্রতিবন্ধকতা এবং মৌলিক মানবাধিকার থেকে নারীকে বঞ্চিত করেছে। বর্তমান সরকার নারী-পুরুষের সমতাভিত্তিক সমাজ নির্মাণের মাধ্যমে দিন বদলে বদ্ধপরিকর।

আসুন, নারী ও কন্যা শিশুর বিরুদ্ধে সহিংসতা বন্ধের মাধ্যমে নারীর মর্যাদাপূর্ণ জীবনযাত্রা এবং জাতীয় জীবনের সকলক্ষেত্রে তাদের সম অধিকার ও অংশগ্রহণ নিশ্চিত করি।

আমি আন্তর্জাতিক নারী দিবসের সকল কর্মসূচির সফলতা কামনা করি।

জয় বাংলা, জয় বঙ্গবন্ধু
বাংলাদেশ চিরজীবী হোক।

শেখ হাসিনা

Women suffering domestic violence within the family in the hands of their male relatives or relatives through male partners in one year is as high as 312. Not less than 245 women were murdered by the perpetrators who happen to be their husbands or friends and relatives of their husbands. However, without going into further details we can state that the picture of violence against women we get to see is rather alarming as we all know the reported numbers indicate merely the tip of the iceberg. It is generally known not only among the women's rights or human rights activists but anybody concerned that the trend of violence against women is extremely high in Asia concentrating in South Asia and is the highest in Bangladesh. Therefore, the official Theme for this year's International Women's Day saying 'Women and men unite to end violence against women' is particularly appropriate for us.

The theme, as we can see, comes from a deep reflection over the situation regarding violence against women and the very conviction to see a violence free world for women. If we travel a bit down the memory line, we can easily track down the advancement and the changes in the thought process of the policy makers as well as the implementers of development endeavours in relation to women's conditions. In the beginning of the development activities, development was seen in supplies of materials, in the transfer of technologies and knowledge basically to male clientele without taking the specifics of either class, cultural, ethnic identities, power structures or gender.

It took decades for the development experts to find the answer to their failures to achieve what they planned to achieve and frustrations thereby. Perhaps it will not be too out of place to go through, though selectively, some of the processes that helped the world leaders to arrive at a point where women-men collaboration in achieving developmental goals including ending violence against women started to be discussed as an important strategy. The issue of women's historical deprivation was recognized by them only in the mid-seventies when in the Mexico conference (1975) women were able to put forward the theoretical arguments based on their very personal and practical experiences. Nevertheless it took every one a few more decades to relate development policies to women's need for personal, social, cultural and political freedoms and peace for them to enjoy the benefits of development.

In the Nairobi (1985) conference women established their demand for equality and dignity in rights but had to wait for almost another ten years for the world to agree that women's rights are human rights (1993). Cairo ICPD conference in 1995 gave recognition to women's right in the reproductive field while in Beijing conference in the same year women were successful in drawing the world's attention to the basic issue of domestic violence though CEDAW (1979) was with various reservations by different countries was more or less operational since early eighties. Realizing that the main reason for the world's failure to analyze the drawbacks of the development policies and plans regarding women's empowerment and liberation were the very patriarchal mindset and views that inform the planners in their work.

Subordination of women, according to the patriarchal ideologies is so much an accepted norm that anything to do with women's equality which is one of the fundamental conditions of development does not get the due consideration through the policy making processes dominated by them. That is why the slogan women chose for the Beijing Conference was 'see the world through women's eyes'. I feel responsible to explain the slogan a little bit. The slogan never meant to say that the world has to be handed over to women only but defined the womanly view to be qualified by equality, development and peace. It also emphasized on democracy. So it is not the physical woman that the slogan is upholding, but the woman who believes in equality not discrimination, development not backwardness, peace and not violence and above all democracy not appropriation of power and resources. And the call to the world was to re-define the world from that point of view so that no one, on the basis of any difference, is deprived, denied or seized of the equality, dignity and human rights due to a human being. This according to women is a moral responsibility of the civilized world.

Women as women realize how denials of rights, definitional subordinate position throw women in the face of violence- physical, mental, psychological. It is not a situation to be examined in the light of characteristics of two individuals but that of gender relationship. And that is where the role of both women and men become crucial. No doubt, women all over the world have advanced to an amazing extent. In Bangladesh, women leadership in all sectors of the society has not only become an accepted phenomenon, in many areas people have very few alternatives to suggest. In the rural Bangladesh, women through working with various non-governmental organizations- both activist as well as development, have transformed themselves into exemplary forces of development despite many hindrances and risks from the conservative, fundamentalist, antidemocratic and anti-woman groups. Winning of the Noble Prize by the Grameen Women entrepreneurs for peace with Professor Yunus is a landmark in the history of women's advancement of Bangladesh. This could never have happened without the united effort of both women and men.


As it has been already said, the main hindrance to women's empowerment and liberation stems from the idea imbibed into human psyche by the patriarchal social norms that women are to be kept under the protection of men and disciplining women is a moral right given to them failure of which is disgraceful for them too. Needless to say, the benefits and convenience men enjoy this set up act as the main motivation for men not to give into processes of change so easily. Women themselves also become attuned to playing to the same and therefore find it very difficult to protest or raise their voice against what they are taught to be the legitimate due which unfortunately integrates into the idea of an ideal woman-subservient, obedient, gratifying, and above all not protesting. The ways and means to attain this utterly unjust and unjustifiable position is sought in coaxing, coercion and above all direct violence.

Violence against women, one must remember, does not come from men only. In many cases women are the main perpetrators of violence on women. We have an idea of the statistics of violence against women that took place in 2008, but the form and manner used in these incidences could be mind-boggling. The most pressing question that comes to our mind in this particular context is how then we can meet the challenge thrown to us in regard to women-men order of relationship, definition of rights and responsibilities between them and to create a violence free life for women.

The very realization that the tendency of violence against women is borne by both men and women, serious efforts were taken to strategically develop the ground for generation of new ideas of women-men relationship based on mutual respect and human understanding. Following this, they were encouraged to induce gender relations analysis, study and application of gender sensitive policies to bring reform to the existing paradigms for development.

Women's empowerment, autonomy, freedom and liberation became the touch words to mean development. Bangladesh, with its very bleak record of violence against women is fortunate to have outstanding examples of the lives of the successful women in its history like Begum Rokeya, Shamsunnahar Mahmud, Sara Taifur, Zobeda Rahim Chowdhury, Sufia Kamal, Nurjahan Begum and definitely many more who enjoyed the support and respect of their male family members to reach their respective heights. The current political leadership also presents a bright picture of women's empowered position.

We will however want to see that these examples do not remain remote or exceptional but become realities in the life of all women. Empowerment directly affects the elimination of violence but women cannot fight violence alone. End of violence against women means end of violence against men too as they share the same world. There is, therefore, no alternative to the joint effort by both women and men to establish a violence free society.



সভিণ
মহিলা ও শিশু বিষয়ক মন্ত্রণালয়
পদ্মশ্রী বাংলাদেশ সরকার
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নারীর মর্যাদা ও অধিকার প্রতিষ্ঠার সুনির্দিষ্ট উদ্যোগে আন্তর্জাতিক নারী দিবস একটি তাৎপর্যপূর্ণ দিন। সূচ কারাবানার নারী শ্রমিকের প্রতিবাদের মধ্যে দিয়ে যে নারী অধিকার আন্দোলনের সূচনা হয়েছিল আজ তা অনেক পরিণত রূপ লাভ করেছে। সমাজ ও রাষ্ট্র ব্যবস্থার সব ক্ষেত্রে নারী আণের চেয়ে অনেক সক্রিয়ভাবে উপস্থিত। তবু আজও শেষ হয়নি নারী আর কন্যা শিশুর ওপর নির্যাতন।

আন্তর্জাতিক নারী দিবসের এ বছরের প্রতিপাদনা 'নারী ও কন্যা শিশুর বিরুদ্ধে সহিংসতা নিরসনে ঐক্যবদ্ধ নারী-পুরুষ'। অর্থনৈতিক ও সামাজিক কর্মকাণ্ডের মূল প্রোতসাহার্য নারীকে সম্পৃক্ত করতে নারীর ক্ষমতায়ন এবং নারী নির্যাতন প্রতিরোধ জরুরি। সরকারি উদ্যোগের পাশাপাশি বেসরকারি উদ্যোগ এবং ব্যক্তি সচেতনতা এ ক্ষেত্রে অনেক বেশি প্রয়োজন। সবার সম্মিলিত প্রচেষ্টায় নারীর অধিকার প্রতিষ্ঠা ও নারী নির্যাতন প্রতিরোধ এবং নারীর মর্যাদা সমুন্নত করে সূচনা হবে দিনবদলের নতুন যাত্রা-এই আমাদের প্রত্যাশা ও অঙ্গীকার।

আমি আন্তর্জাতিক নারী দিবসে বিশ্বের সকল নারী ও কন্যা শিশুর নিরাপদ ও সফল জীবন কামনা করছি।

রোকেয়া সুলতানা

