



The journey towards dignity and self worth

Equality through Dignity

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State Minister for
 Women and Children's Affairs Ministry
 The People's Republic of Bangladesh

Greetings

I wholeheartedly thank Manusher Jonno Foundation for taking up the initiative to launch a campaign titled 'Equality through Dignity'. The Bangladesh government has already taken up initiatives to improve the status of women and empower them. In this respect the campaign is timely and relevant.

The immense progress of women in Bangladesh is now a known fact worldwide. The often hostile and difficult situation have not stopped women from going ahead through a democratic process. Issues like women's empowerment and gender equality have faced many hindrances at all levels of the social strata be it in the family, society or state. In spite of such adversity, women from all walks of life are contributing in building a prosperous Bangladesh; from a farmer in the village to a working woman in the city, from a homemaker to industrial workers in the garments sector and steel industry, foreign remittance earners, small and medium entrepreneurs, women in politics, in export trade or in the construction industry, women workers are taking Bangladesh to greater heights alongside their male counterparts.

Despite societal aggression women are no longer confined to their homes. They have come out from the shackles of negative societal attitude irrespective of class, creed and religion. It is indeed overwhelming to see such participation of women in the education sector. There are many instances where women have played active and supportive roles to help their families to attain economic affluence. The role of women in farming, which is one of our main livelihoods, has never been properly evaluated. The present government has taken up various steps to ensure empowerment, equality and respect for women in every social and political sector. To improve the overall position of women in society, The National Women Development Policy 2011 has been promulgated and depending on this the National Plan of Action will be completed very soon.

Considering the overall women's status and human rights situation in Bangladesh, the long term campaign that Manusher Jonno Foundation undertook is certainly praiseworthy and deserves appreciation. This nationwide campaign will help recognise the role of women in their families, the society and in the state and this will play an important role in reducing violence against women significantly.

Lastly I wish the campaign 'Equality through Dignity' success.

শুভ আবস্থা প্রেরণ
 Dr. Shirin Sharmin Chowdhury

Every nook and corner of Bangladesh is full of stories of women's work and struggles. Women in the city are employed in many international and corporate offices where they are working with competence. There are women entrepreneurs, women organisers, and women politicians. Women of Bangladesh played a vital role in our language movement, in our movement against Pakistan, in our War of Liberation. In spite of all these achievements, our women both in cities and in villages, are victims of discrimination and violence.

Did you know?

- Women have to do 15 times more household work than men.
- The proportion of Bangladeshi women in the economic labour force is almost 67%.
- Almost 78% of the women work forces in the country are involved in agriculture business.
- Women do more than 80% work for the family.
- Currently, using 10 thousand Grameenphone lines, women are reaching almost one and half crore villagers throughout the country.
- 43.3% women and only 9% men are in entirely involved in household jobs.
- 9.8% women and 34.5% men are involved in income generating jobs.
- The National Productivity survey shows that a women's contribution in the national economy count can drastically shoot up from 25% to 40% if all are taken into account. On the other hand men's contribution will come down from 75% to 69%.
- A woman in the village spends 53% of her time in income generating work

- (agriculture, handicrafts) whereas men spend about 47%. Women involved in non economic work are 49 percent whereas men are about 11%.
- According to the ILO, there are about 43% women labours among total labours in the country.
- In the 2010-2011 fiscal years, the growth rate was 42%, in which the growth of the garments sector alone was 43% and this sector's major labour force is comprised of women.
- In the last National Statistics Survey of 2010 it shows that almost 5 crore 41 lakh population of the country are working out of which 1 crore 62 lakhs are women.
- Women's contribution to vegetable and fruit production and cattle rearing in the house stand is about 45% to 85%.
- According to Dr. Abul Barakat research it shows that in the government survey women's contribution to local productivity (GDP) is 20%. However if the work that women do in her household is evaluated in monetary terms it would stand at 48%.

The main objective of the campaign

- To change society's attitude towards women.
- To acknowledge and recognise women's contribution at family, society and state level.

Campaign programme

1. Countrywide awareness campaign
2. Research on women's paid and un paid work and contribution to the economy
3. To incorporate the contribution of women in the GDP through policy advocacy



Why this campaign

In the last 40 years Bangladesh has made tremendous progress in promoting education for women and girls, reducing maternal mortality and creating job opportunities. Thousands of medium and small women entrepreneurs have grown due to the provision of micro credit and policies of national and state lending institutions. Specific laws and policies have been enacted to address gender based violence and promote political empowerment of women. Today in Bangladesh, there is no sector where women are not present and not making a contribution.

However, in spite of these gains, women in Bangladesh continue to face discrimination and are accorded lower social status than their male counterparts. One of the outcomes of the lower status of women is manifested in violence against girls and women, discrimination and even death. The discrimination starts from birth when a male child is preferred to a girl child, early marriage, domestic violence and high maternal mortality.

The reason for lower status is because women's contribution is not evaluated adequately and therefore not valued. This leads to non recognition and under valuation of their work perpetuating the stereotype that women are dependent and burdens to the family and society and therefore deserve lower status.

If women do not get their due status National Development goals will remain unfulfilled as will attainment of the MDGs. Given the above a nation wide campaign titled **Equality through Dignity** has been planned with the goal of changing attitude and mind set of society towards women, recognition of their contribution and thereby enhance their status in private and public life.

The campaign will result in the following:

- Reduction in the number of violence against women and discrimination towards them
- Contribute towards ensuring women friendly policy interventions and law compliances
- Economy, society as well as state will benefit for ensuring full utilization of women's strength
- Assist in achieving national development goals and the MDG's

We seek wide support for the success of the campaign and join in creating a society that is just and fair where men and women enjoy equal rights in private and public life.

Shaheen Anam
 Shaheen Anam
 Executive Director, Manusher Jonno Foundation



We are equal in contribution and in dignity

The Reality for Women in Bangladesh

- 3516 Girls and women were victims of rape in 2011
- 3523 Women were victims of Spousal Violence in 2011 (as reported)
- 47% Girls and Women were the victim of physical violence every day at home in 2011
- 2814 were victims of Dowry violence in 2011
- 70% of women suffer from nutritional deficiency
- 67% of pregnant women do not receive antenatal care as a result of gender discrimination. Even if the status of women has improved in the education and health

- sector, it is seen that women do not get proper care and nutrition during pregnancy resulting in high maternal mortality.
- 8000 cases of violence against women and children were reported and taken to court from January to June, 2011
- About 400 women are falling prey to trafficking every month.
- School enrolment rates for girls at primary levels are one hundred percent but there is huge drop out at secondary levels. In higher education, girl child dropout rate is more than 80 %.
- The inheritance law is not favourable to women resulting in male preference and discrimination against girl child and women. The law on custody and guardianship of children does not recognize women as natural guardian of children. Even though the name of mother has been added with the father in all legal documents, women do not get equal rights as a parent.
- In Bangladesh along with other Asian countries the participation of women has increased in the labour market. However their jobs are termed as cheap labour whereas almost 80 percent of the work is

done by women. Thus a woman does not get fair wages in the job market.

- A woman does not easily seek help from the police even if she is a victim of violence due to lack of awareness, illiteracy, and economic crisis, long running court cases, and gender insensitive attitude of law enforcers.
- 7.9% of women are victims of Hilla marriage and fatwa which has been declared as illegal by the High court.
- Almost 68% of girls are victims of child marriage, according to a UNICEF survey.

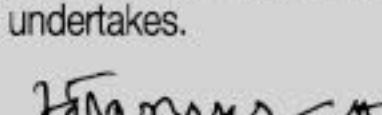
SIGNATURE GREETINGS

The countrywide campaign 'Equality through Dignity', initiated by Manusher Jonno Foundation aims to get recognition for women's contributions towards the society and the State, and expedites the long standing social demand of giving women their rightful status through respect and equality. I wish this campaign success and give them my whole hearted support.


 Abdullaah Abu Sayed

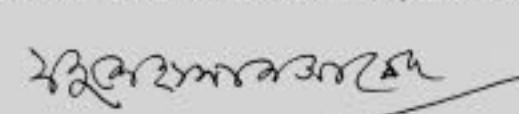
Chairman and Chief Executive, Bishwa Shahitya Kendra

The major pre-condition for women's empowerment is to evaluate the intangible work that she undertakes.


 Ayesha Khanam

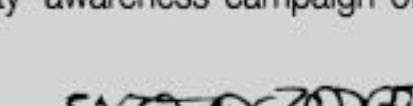
Chairperson Bangladesh Mohila Samity

To create a just, happy and prosperous society it is of utmost importance to give full credit and establish respect for women's contributions.


 Fazle Hasan Abed

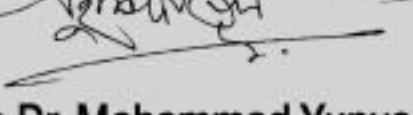
Founder and Chairperson, BRAC

The difference between men and women should end among in all classes, religions or creeds and their relationships should stand on respectful equality. I am also wholeheartedly joining the 'Equality through Dignity' awareness campaign of Manusher Jonno Foundation.

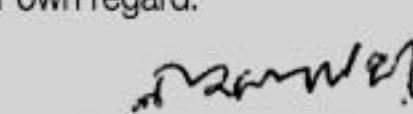

 Maleka Begum

Women rights activist, researcher, teacher, writer

The 'Equality through respect' awareness program is a very praiseworthy initiative. This campaign, I believe, will lead to an increase in the respect for women in all aspects of society, will draw a close to the inequality between men and women and make women more self confident. I wish the success of this timely awareness campaign.

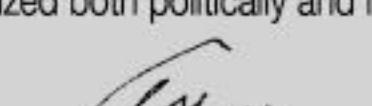

 Nobel laureate Dr. Mohammad Yunus

A society that does not give recognition to its women wants to keep women confined and suppressed. It is the job of the women to break down the shackles of this discriminatory society and establish herself in her own regard.


 Dr. Nazma Chowdhury

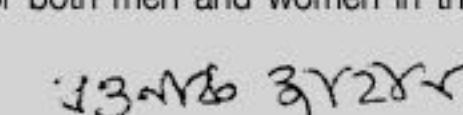
Emeritus Professor and Founding Chairperson, Women and Gender Studies Department, Dhaka University

Women in Bangladesh, through the contribution of their untiring labour to Bangladesh's principal export industry and their high level of creditworthiness in the microfinance sector, have established themselves as major contributors both to the national economy and to the sustainability of their households. This should be recognized both politically and in the design of our policy agendas.

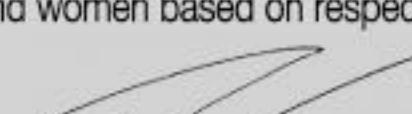

 Rehman Sobhan

Chairman, Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD)

The contribution of Bangladeshi women to the country's economic and social development is a well established fact in many local and foreign researches. But till now women did not get her proper distinction in any social or state policy. First and foremost we need to have a high opinion of women and establish equal rights for both men and women in the society.


 Rownak Jahan, Distinguished fellow, Centre for Policy Dialogue, CPD

Evaluation of women's economic contribution and non-economic labour will add to the country's progress and ensure relations between men and women based on respect and equality.


 Rokhiya Afzal Rahman

Chairman, Arlinks Group

The working parameters of the campaign

- The campaign will be run and implemented by Manusher Jonno Foundation (MJF) and its 109 partner organisations. On April 17, simultaneous press conferences were held in 7 divisional cities including Dhaka and the Chittagong Hill Tracts to launch the campaign. Hundreds of local people, journalists, social activists and government officials attend the Press conference pledging their support the campaign. To implement the campaign, the partner organisations will work separately in their own working areas.
- The Women and Children Affairs Ministry has agreed to collaborate in this campaign and provide support through its offices at district and upazila level.
- The campaign will be evidence based and the Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD) a well known and credible research organization will conduct the research to find empirical evidence of women's contribution through their paid and un paid work. A communications agency will be responsible for producing and managing all the materials for the campaign.
- The target group for this campaign are the general public, women and men of a certain age group, students of schools, colleges and universities, policy makers, and mass media;

Women in the Economic Sector

Women in readymade garments sector: The country's major export earning sector is readymade garments and women comprise about 80% of the workforce. About 75% of the total export income comes from the garment sector where women are playing a major role.

Women in export generating income: Women are directly involved in the production of export oriented products such as frozen fish, leather and leather goods, handicrafts and the tea industry. The key tasks in all these sectors are primarily undertaken by women.



Stopping
 violence against women
 ensures happy and
 peaceful family and society

Microcredit and women: According to the country's Microcredit Regulatory Authority's last survey in June 2010, there are about 2 crore, 52 lakhs and 80 thousand beneficiaries of which 90% are women.

SME industry and women: Small and medium entrepreneurs are a vital part of the country's economy. According to the central bank a total of 53 thousand 719 crore taka were disbursed as loans in the SME sector in the year 2010. A total of 16 thousand and 697 women entrepreneurs are directly involved in this sector.

Women in agriculture: Women's contribution in agriculture is 61 percent however women's land ownership is at 10%. Since there is a strong co-relation between owning agricultural land and farming, women's contribution towards this sector has no impact and is not recognized.

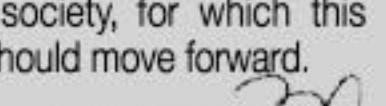
Expatriate women wage earners: Presently 1 lakh 82 thousand and 558 Bangladeshi women are working legally in 143 countries around the world in various professions and helping the country to earn foreign remittances.

Women in domestic work: Some research indicate that a woman's daily working hours on an average is between 16 to 20 hours and she deals with 45 different types of chores. A woman working outside the home has to spend 44 hours whereas the women working at home spends 49.8 hours weekly at domestic chores. A research shows that 81 percent of women are directly doing domestic work whereas men do only 13 percent of the tasks.

Sources

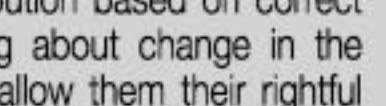
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Women not only want to participate but also take responsibility in all aspect of the society, for which this campaign 'Equality through Dignity' should move forward.


 Rasheda K Chowdhury

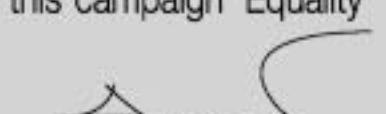
Executive Director, Gonoshokh Obnijan

Campaigning about women's contribution based on correct information is the only way to bring about change in the social attitude towards women and allow them their rightful evaluations.


 Salma Khan

Women leader, Ex chair CDO Committee

The reasons behind of violence against women and their meek social standing is the social disparity, incapability and lack of opportunities to establish herself as a complete human being. To establish her position in the family, society and the State, a woman has to ensure that she gets equal rights and equal opportunities. Thus I am wholeheartedly taking part and giving my support to this campaign 'Equality through Dignity'.


 Sultana Kamal

Executive director, Ain o Salish Kendra (ASK)