

Women's economic empowerment to reduce violence

MAHMUDA IMAM

Although women constitute half of Bangladesh's population of approximately 160 million, unfortunately they are not as empowered as their male counterparts.

Violence against women is a manifestation of historically unequal power relations between men and women, which have led to domination over and discrimination against women by men and the prevention of fuller advancement of women.

Women have limited access to education, employment, social security, health care and nutrition. Their right to self expression is curtailed and their participation in the overall development process is impeded. Women's day long household activities have not been included in national statistics and the unemployment rate of women in the formal sectors is 70% in comparison with 12.4% for men. Mostly, women are engaged in agricultural activities but 73% of them are unpaid family labor.

The constitution of the People's Republic of Bangladesh guarantees equal rights for men and women in all spheres of national life. Women, despite having equal rights as men, both under the constitution and most of other laws, their actual legal status and entitlements are greatly influenced by culture, customs, and norms—both social and religious.

Some major acts of violence committed against women include dowry killing, rape, sexual harassment, stalking,



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acid attacks, physical and mental abuses, and sex trafficking. Nearly two out of every three women in Bangladesh are victims of violence. There were 2,981 cases of gender based violence in 2004, but the incidence soared to 4,563 cases in 2012. Ain o Salish Kendra estimates that in the eight months between January and September 2015, 70 women

were physically tortured, 129 women were tortured to death and nine women committed suicides in dowry related cases. But many such incidents go unreported. Many women in Bangladesh fail to report violence committed against them because there persists a stigma surrounding rape, abuse and domestic violence in the country.

If women work for their families, patriarchal values dictate that they are not given control of family wealth and income. Even they are not able to spend the money they earn as they see fit.


There are specific laws which have been enacted by the Bangladesh Government in an effort to prevent violence against women. Some of them

include the 2010 Domestic Violence against women and children (Resistance & Protection) Act. The 2010 Domestic Violence Act criminalises domestic violence. This is a landmark act, because it provides remedy for women facing cruelty in the hands of


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