

Break the Silence, Eliminate the Violence: 16 Days of Activism against Gender based Violence

Gender-based violence, unfortunately, is not a concept we are unfamiliar with. In fact, according to UNICEF, gender-based violence is the most pervasive yet least visible human rights violation in the world. It includes physical, sexual, mental or economic harm inflicted on a person because of socially ascribed power imbalances between males and females. It also includes the threat of violence, coercion and deprivation of liberty.

KrayonMag, a social storytelling platform that aims to promote activism through art and culture, has taken a unique approach to express their strong stance in the fight



against gender-based violence through a 16-day campaign named "Break the Silence, Eliminate the Violence (Nirobotar Papchokro)," which is filled with a plethora of thought-provoking activities and events. Their partners in the event are: Backpage PR, Naripokkho, iCan, Children & Women Vision Foundation, Volunteer Opportunities and EMK Centre.

The first event began on 25 November, which is commemorated throughout the world as the International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women and closed on the 10 December, which marks the International Human Rights Day.

To make the movement known across all platforms and make more people aware, KrayonMag also organised a thematic photoshoot representing violence against women in black and white where five



renowned personas participated as models.

"The idea was to portray a crucial social issue in a unique thematic manner and make the power of the voice against violence known," said Tanzir Dilshad Ditan, founder of KrayonMag.

With the theme and campaign slogan "Orange the World" in mind, the photography and concept was done by Avishkek Bhattacharjee, while the photoshoot was modelled by Meher Afroz Shaon, Azra



Mahmood, Bulbul Tumpa, Ayreen Khan, and Sadia Roshni Soochana.

On Day 1 of the campaign, a webinar was conducted by Ayreen Khan, founder of the iCan Foundation. A panel discussion was held on the issue of violence against women and the society's stance on it amongst distinguished personalities like Asif Uddin Ahmed, Acting Director of EMK Centre;

Mehrin Mustafa, lawyer and senior news presenter; Sarah Zita, National Consultant of UNDP Bangladesh; and Azra Mahmood, media personality.

After the end of this webinar, the panellists and participants all changed their social media profile photos to the black and white photos of the campaign to show solidarity towards the same movement.

On 28 November, KrayonMag organised a Culture Awareness Program at Rabindra Sarobar. The event consisted of a live painting session called "Becoming" by Ayreen Khan, musical performances and poetry recitals.

Ditan expressed inspiringly that it was very empowering to see politicians and cultural activists coming together for the same cause. Moreover, a theatrical work was also demonstrated where the participants were holding "dari palla" or the scales of justice in their hands.

The whole concept focused not just on serving justice right, but more about reducing societal victim shaming.

"We stood there with the scales until someone else came up and took the scales from us, to kind of signify that they share our sorrow and stand in solidarity with us," explained Ditan in details. Almost 500 people attended this soul-stirring event and it ended after sunset with the lighting of candles.

Sabrina Munni photographed the event.

A panel discussion on "Violence against Women on Cyber Space" was held on 1 December, conducted by Sadia Roshni Soochana, where esteemed panellists including Meher Afroz Shaon, Tanzir Dilshad Ditan, Barrister Ahsan Bhuiyan, Azra Mahmood, Advocate Neshat Unzum Lopa, Mithun Das Kabbo and Mahfuza Mala participated. Cyber bullying has been a burning issue since the rampant rise in the usage of and reliance on social media. Women, specifically, have faced some sort of bullying or harassment on cyber space and the dialogue was aimed to address these very issues, enhance social awareness and discuss ways to resolve them.

KrayonMag has been working towards raising awareness towards crucial social causes surrounding us for some time now and this year, their goal is to create a dialog, instead of staying silent about pressing sensitive issues like gender-based violence.

"When we remain mum about these problems when they happen, we are passively normalising them," said Ditan.

"We want to break the silence by speaking up; we are doing so in this event through telling stories, expressing ourselves through art, drama and music and bringing people from different walks of life together for the same unified cause," she elaborated with enthusiasm. Through this unique collaborate and art/culture-based approach, KrayonMag aims to continue raising awareness and with proper funding and sponsors, they plan to do more series of events and even spread across to outstation activities in the coming year.

The event will continue virtually from the 10 December until 17 December, in which a photography exhibition will be held on the online platform of EMK Centre. The exhibition will end with a closing webinar.

By Nafisa Faruque
Photo: KrayonMag

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