

Regional Seminar
on
Human Rights and Gender:
Core Concepts, Major Debates and Emerging Issues

Bangladesh Legal Aid and Services Trust (BLAST)





Bangladesh Legal Aid and Services Trust (BLAST)

1/1, Pioneer Road, Kakrail, Dhaka-1000

Tel: 880-2-8313689, 9349125

Email: mail@blast.org.bd, web: www.blast.org.bd

Published by

Mohsin Ali Khan
Executive Director
BLAST

Edited by

Shahiduzzaman
Chief Correspondent
New Age

Cover Page Design

Saroar Morshed Manan

Graphics Design

Jahangir Alam

Printed by

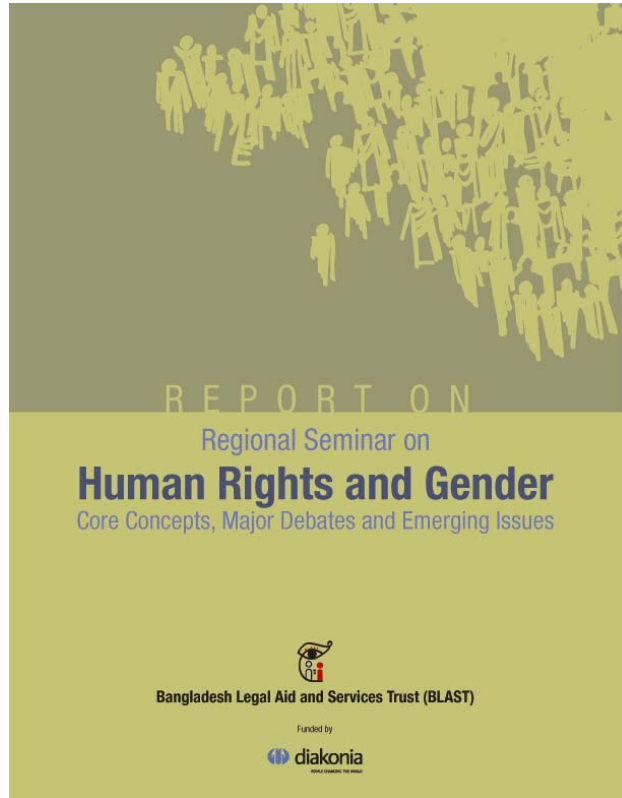


Table of contents

Seminar Report	.....	06-15
List of Annexes		
Concept Note	.....	16
Agenda of the seminar	.....	19
Questionnaires and answers	.....	21
List of Participants	.....	23
Presentation	.....	25
News published in daily news paper	.....	44
Seminar Photo Album	.....	36





Preface



“We also must recognize that women will never gain full dignity until their human rights are respected and protected.”

Hillary Clinton’s Speech of Fourth World Conference, Beijing 1995

This is the report of the three days seminar on Diakonia Asia regional seminar on human rights and gender: core concepts, major debates and emerging issues which was held on October 5-7, 2009 at BRAC Center Inn, Dhaka, Bangladesh. Bangladesh Legal Aid and Services Trust (BLAST) was the organizing agency while the Swedish organization Diakonia Bangladesh was the sponsor of the seminar. Speakers from Bangladesh and abroad made presentations at the seminar which was

coordinated by Dr, Dina M. Siddiqi and moderated by Mr. Anish Barua.

Representatives of Diakonia partner NGOs from different countries of South and Southeast Asia took part in this seminar and expressed their views and stressed on the issues to reduce discrimination and gap between man and woman.

The objectives of the seminar were to discuss human rights and gender issues as well as the links between these two. Another important aim was to build up a networking with NGOs working for strengthening human rights and women rights in different countries in the Asia region.

Speakers and the participants of the seminar was academician, lawyers, journalists and women’s human rights activists, including those directly engaged in women’s front line organizations and those working directly on issues to enforce the rights through the law.

The seminar discussed the multiple levels and relations of power through which gender inequalities are created and sustained, and how these relate to practices at the grassroots level all over the world.

Diakonia has a vision of a world where all women and men can live in the society with dignity and equality in social and economic sphere.

Key themes and debates included the relationship between international law and state practice; HIV/AIDS and gender equality, community ethnicity caste (cultural relativism versus universalism); plural legal systems and women’s rights (ethnic and class conflicts); human rights of women; religion, power and gender; gender and sexual orientation based violence and emerging masculinities; and sexual and reproductive rights.

At the opening session speakers highlighted that the state couldn’t provide security for women in the present society. They also observed that women in society face not only socio economic disparities but also religious fundamentalist and patriarchal attitude.

Participants shared views on struggle, resistances and successful campaigns for human rights and gender equality. All participants expressed their hope to create a discrimination free society where all human being will be treated as equal.

The participants emphasized the need to build up a strong human rights network among the participating countries and they felt that they could play a key role in eliminating gender discrimination, sexual harassment in work place and violence against women in the Asia region.

Finally, for the sake of national and international development, we need to ensure women’s participation in every sphere of the state. The rights of the women must be ensured by the democratic states. We hope this seminar would make a positive contribution towards establishing human rights and gender equality in the society.

Mohsin Ali Khan
Executive Director, BLAST



Introduction

“The human rights of women and of the girl-child are an inalienable, integral and indivisible part of universal human rights. The full and equal participation of women in political, civil, economic, social and cultural life, at the national, regional and international levels, and the eradication of all forms of discrimination on grounds of sex are priority objectives of the international community.”

----- The Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action 1993, Part 1, para 18.

CONTEXT

The premise that women’s rights are human rights achieved its general acceptance following the Vienna Declaration adopted by the World Conference on Human Rights in Vienna on June 25, 1993. A historic document in multiple respects, the Declaration helped to push the language of rights into gender and development policy discussions. Nevertheless, women’s rights and human rights movements still tend to find themselves functioning in mutually exclusive spheres. The human rights world continues to be associated with fighting violations of individual and collective rights by the state, while women’s rights activists tend to focus on rights violations that centre on women as a social group. Moreover, in terms of relative ranking, the latter is often marginalised in relation to the former.

Such distinctions cannot sustain in practice, not least because gender is a cross-cutting issue, given form through other inequalities in society. On the one hand, achieving substantive gender equality requires addressing issues that appear to be conventional human rights concerns; by the same token, human rights goals can never be attained in its entirety without engaging with questions of gender inequality.

With this concept note, the BLAST organised the regional seminar. The concept note takes the mainstreaming of social and economic justice, which is built into Diakonia’s work, as a point of reference and examines gender and human rights within this framework. Thus the central focus of the seminar was supposed to be on the interlinked and gendered nature of social, economic, and cultural rights in relation to gender (in) equality. Discussion of civil and political rights was to be explored in relation to the indivisibility and interdependency of universal human rights. For instance, the right to information has been seen to be a critical means of exercising the right to food in some contexts.

ABOUT BLAST

Bangladesh Legal Aid and Services Trust (BLAST) is a national legal aid and human rights organization. It was established in 1992 as a non-profit Trust, following a proposal at a national conference of lawyers held in 1992 under the auspices of the Bangladesh Bar Council. It was incorporated in May 1993 with the Registrar of Joint Stock Companies as a company limited by guarantee, and was registered in December 1993 with the NGO Affairs Bureau of the Government of Bangladesh.

BLAST’s Board of Trustees comprising eminent jurists and former judges of the Bangladesh Supreme Court. It has a core staff but works primarily through a network of panel lawyers in various District Bars and also in the Supreme Court. It has 19 Unit Offices in five divisional headquarters — Dhaka, Chittagong, Rajshahi, Khulna and Barisal. It also operates in the Chittagong Hill Tracts.



Within just over a decade, BLAST has emerged as the largest specialized legal services organization in Bangladesh, and in a comprehensive and holistic approach, combining access to non-formal dispute resolution as well as judicial remedies right across the legal system, from the lower courts to the apex court. It has obtained some of the most landmark judgments from the Supreme Court in public interest litigations, including on safeguard against abuse of power of the police to arrest people on suspicion and torture on the people remanded in custody, rights of slum dwellers and issues of gender discrimination in public employment and juvenile justice. It has also undertaken systematic legal aid programmes on women's rights (including maintenance, dower, and disputes on custody of children), land rights (including for indigenous people) and provided defence to criminal indigents including children in detention (again obtaining landmark judgments on these issues). It is the only national legal services organization which provides mediation and litigation as well as advisory service in the labour sector. It has engaged in legislative and policy advocacy for institutional reforms on the rights of the poor and marginalized. The issues in which BLAST engaged in policy advocacy include the establishment of the National Human Rights Commission, proposed Domestic Violence (Protection And Prevention) Act, the proposed reforms to the Police Act, establishment of the rights of the homeless (regarding slum dwellers rights to housing as well as proposed amendment to the Vagrancy Act).

Page-3

BLAST initially received financial support from the Ford Foundation and the Asia Foundation, then NOVIB, DFID-B, NORAD, DANIDA, Oxfam GB, Academy for Educational Development (AED), AusAid and now does so from OXFAM- NOVIB, DANIDA and Diakonia and as well as private donations from philanthropic organisations and individuals both in Bangladesh and abroad.

In light of the relevance of these issues, Diakonia Bangladesh in conjunction with BLAST organized an regional seminar on gender and human rights in Dhaka, Bangladesh in 5-7 October 2009.

Bangladesh Legal Aid and Services Trust (BLAST) was the organizing agency while the Swedish organization Diakonia Bangladesh was the sponsor of the seminar entitled "Regional Seminar on Human Rights and Gender": Core Concepts, Major Debates and Emerging Issues". Speakers from home and abroad made presentations at the seminar coordinated by Dr, Dina M. Siddiqi and moderated by Mr. Anish Barua.

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

The main objective of the seminar was to discuss human rights and gender as well as the links between them. Another primary objective was that the participants might gain a solid understanding of the ways larger structural factors (such as environmental degradation and certain trade agreements) articulate with national and local contexts to produce or intensify gender inequality. The seminar aimed for showing the multiple levels and relations of power through which gender inequalities are created and sustained, and how these relate to practices at the grassroots level. For those involved in the development arena and working toward social and economic justice, the topic was of greater significance than ever given the current global economic crisis and its fallout.

The seminar also aimed for providing the participants with an overview of core international human rights treaties and relevant policies, which directly and indirectly engage with women's rights. The treaties and policies include the UDHR, the ICPD, CEDAW, the Beijing Platform for Action and the MDGs (especially MDG 3 with its stated objective to promote



gender equality and empower women). Formal rights, aimed for examining, include those enshrined in international human rights conventions, as well as constitutional rights, and those in national legislation. The seminar would explore the intersection of these formal rights with the everyday realities of women whose lives are shaped by structures of global political economy, gender inequalities and poverty, plural legal systems and cultural norms. It will examine the role of existing legal frameworks on gender equality and look at institutional mechanisms and obstacles to implementation that exist.

Seminar objectives include helping participants develop conceptual clarity about key terms and concepts including gender justice, globalization, citizenship and rights.

CONTENTS

Over the course of the seminar, participants were engaged with key themes and major debates on the issues of gender and human rights. These include the relationship between international law and state practice; the rights of individuals against the claims of family, community/ethnicity/caste (cultural relativism versus universalism); plural legal systems and women's rights (ethnic and class conflicts); "sweatshop" and migrant labour rights; gender and sexual orientation based violence and emerging masculinities; and reproductive rights.

Finally, the seminar themes explored struggles, resistances and successful campaigns for human rights and gender equality. The content of the project of the seminar also included assessment of emerging challenges and strategies for overcoming gendered human rights abuses.

Case studies drawn from relevant countries and communities were used to turn abstract theoretical points into real life situations that resonated with the participants' own experiences.

COURSE MATERIALS

Course materials included a reader prepared for all participants including information on international human rights laws relating to women's human rights, copies of relevant extracts of national constitutions from the South Asia/South East Asian region (particularly the countries represented by participants), extracts of relevant academic articles and newspaper articles on key cases and events related to women's human rights in the region (for example, custodial torture and rape, safety at the workplace, including freedom from sexual harassment, community violence including 'fatwa' violence, or the violence meted out in jirgas or panchayats, and 'honour' related violence; domestic violence including forced and child marriages; rights and entitlements at work for formal and informal sector workers; access to health; violence against marginalised groups and communities, with a focus on issues of disability and sexuality).

Feature/Documentary films on women's human rights were also screened during and after the sessions in the evening programmes.

Participants were also introduced to website-based materials on women's human rights and familiarised with some internet tools for activism.

PARTICIPANTS

The participants for the course were drawn from among Diakonia's partners in South Asia and South East Asia, who have a range of areas of expertise and experience in the protection and promotion of women's human rights and in working on issues of gender equality and



non-discrimination, as well as on issues of livelihood. In selecting participants, emphasis was given to those who have had hands on experience and engagement with such activities and initiatives. Priority was also given to ensuring diversity of representation in the selection of participants, with preference being given to women, and further to those from marginalized or excluded communities, and also to persons with disabilities.

The representatives from Diakonia partner NGOs from different countries of South Asia and Southeast Asia took part in this seminar were as below:

Country	Female	Male	Total
Cambodia	1	1	2
Myanmar	2		2
Srilanka	2		2
Thailand	4	1	5
Sweden	1		1
Bangladesh	12	19	31
	22	21	43

At the inaugural session, the special guest was Swedish Ambassador to Bangladesh Ms. Britt Hagstrom. Executive Director of BLAST Mohsin Ali Khan also delivered his valuable speech at the inaugural ceremony. The other notable speakers were Ms. Mirjam Dahlgren, Policy Advisor on Gender Equality and HIV/AIDS at Diakonia's head office in Sweden, Dr Dina Mahnaz Siddiqi, Seminar Coordinator and Visiting Professor, Centre for Gender, Sexuality and HIV/AIDS, James P. Grant School of Public Health, BRAC University. All dignitaries express their hope to create a discrimination free society, where all human being will be treated as equal. They also expected that the outcome of this seminar would bring some important thinking and sharing what would help us all to fight for protecting human rights and gender equality.

SPEAKERS

Proposed resource persons for the Course include academics, lawyers, journalists and women's human rights activists from Bangladesh, including those directly engaged in women's front line organisations, including in formal and informal sector worker's organisations, and those working directly on issues of enforcement of rights through the law. A particular effort was made to identify speakers who could discuss different strategic approaches to realizing rights, whether through legal protection, media advocacy, political representation or grassroots mobilization.

Major Area of Discussion

Key themes and debates included the relationship between international law and state practice; the rights of individuals against the claims of family, HIV/AIDS and gender equality, community ethnicity caste (cultural relativism versus universalism); plural legal systems and women's rights (ethnic and class conflicts); human rights of women; religion, power and gender; gender and sexual orientation-based violence and emerging masculinities; and sexual and reproductive rights.

Below is a brief description of gradual ceremony of the seminar in follows:



Opening ceremony

At the inaugural session, the chief guest was Advocate Sultana Kamal, former adviser of caretaker government of Bangladesh and Executive Director of Ain o Salish Kendro. The other notable guests were Swedish Ambassador to Bangladesh Ms. Britt Hagstrom, Ms. Mirjam Dahlgren, Policy Advisor on Gender Equality and HIV/AIDS at Diakonia's head office in Sweden, Dr Dina Mahnaz Siddiqi, Seminar Coordinator and Visiting Professor, Centre for Gender, Sexuality and HIV/AIDS, James P. Grant School of Public Health, BRAC University. The opening ceremony was chaired by Executive Director of BLAST Ambassador (Retd.) Mohsin Ali Khan.



At the opening session, Dr. Dina Siddiqi, the Seminar Coordinator, briefed the audience on the background and objectives of the seminar. She quoted a paragraph from the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action 1993, in which women's rights was officially recognised as human rights. She said the seminar would explore the intersection of formal rights with women's everyday realities and the case studies drawn from relevant countries and communities would be used to turn abstract theoretical points into real life situations.



Mirjam Dahlgren, Policy Advisor on Gender Equality and HIV/AIDS at Diakonia's head office in Sweden, in her speech, reminded the audience that gender does not refer only to women. Gender work is also men's work. Therefore it is critical to involve men in human rights work, for instance, in reproductive and sexual rights, a domain which is often quite contentious. She underlined the need to change macro structures and to strive for the greater involvement of young people. She pointed out the links between HIV/AIDS and women's inequality in society.



The Swedish Ambassador to Bangladesh, Ms. Britt Hagstrom spoke next. She noted that Swedish development priorities included many of the issues supposed to be discussed at the seminar, including gender equality, reproductive rights and HIV/AIDS issues. She also pointed to the significance of civil society groups in bring about change.



The Chief Guest, Advocate Sultana Kamal, depicted the human rights situation in the country. She said even though there is a democratic government at present, the law and order situation is fairly dismal. The reactions of the government to violence in society are not what one expects from an elected democratic government. The National Women's Development Policy is still in a state of limbo. The government cannot provide security for women in society. Women in society face not only socio economic disparities but also religious and other forms of fundamentalisms, and patriarchal ideologies. The struggle over reforming Hindu and Christian personal laws is one example.



In reference to Article 10 of the Constitution, Sultana Kamal noted that unless women have equality in the private sphere, they would never be able to establish their equal rights in public and national life, guaranteed to them by the Constitution.

She noted the distance between ordinary people and the laws, treaties and conventions that are designed to protect human rights. She ended with a call for inculcating a sense of ownership of laws by the people, rather than treating the law as an abstraction unrelated to real life.



Finally, Executive Director of BLAST Ambassador (Retd.) Mohsin Ali Khan noted how much the concept of human rights had expanded over the years, and the corresponding recognition of gender for promoting and operationalizing human rights. He urged all concerned to promote and protect the human rights and also attach importance to gender equity issues

Emerging issues regarding HR & Gender

The seminar was moderated by Mr. Anish Barua, Executive Director of Communica, Dhaka.

The participants who took part in this session listed their primary concerns and priorities around questions of human rights and gender. Through a method known as PLESTO (Political, Legal, Economical, Social, Technical and Operational) analysis, participants came up with factors that impede gender equality:

- Lack of women leadership
- Gender imbalance
- Corruption
- Discriminatory laws
- Highly expensive legal and justice delivery system
- Lack of awareness
- Discriminatory inheritance system
- Lack of economical empowerment
- Inequality in wages
- Limited women mobility
- Religious fundamentalism
- Lack of access to information
- Women as victims of technological crimes
- Lack of implementation of human rights measures

Presentation of the speakers



Dr Faustina Pereira presented on gender, law and human rights. She described that Justice is a complex idea, which has everything to do with everyone being treated fairly. But the theory of justice must be concerned with the systematic assessment of how to reduce injustice in the world, rather than concern ourselves with what a hypothetical "perfectly just society" would look like. She showed seven types of gender inequality (mortality, natality, basic facility, special opportunity, professional, ownership and



household) exist in our society. According to her view, women as perpetual minors in citizenship, acquisition, retention and transfer of property, decision making over resources, children, decision making over own body, mobility and legal identity, separate from father's or husband's. She said different moderate countries are concerned about women's rights. In Morocco, New Islamic Family Code 2004 has recognised the women's right to determine legal matters without guardianship of a male and consent from both parties to dissolve marriage. She also mentioned that Domestic Violence Legislations had been made in Malaysia, Ghana, Pakistan and India. According to her, laws and policies are important instruments for social change. She quoted from Hillary Clinton's Speech delivered at the Fourth World Conference, Beijing in 1995 where Hillary said, "We also must recognize that women will never gain full dignity until their human rights are respected and protected."

" ... As long as discrimination and inequities remain so commonplace around the world - as long as girls and women are valued less, fed less, fed last, overworked, underpaid, not schooled and subjected to violence in and out of their homes - the potential of the human family to create a peaceful, prosperous world will not be realized."



Meghna Guhathakurta presented on caste, class, ethnicity, sexuality and other differences.

She divided discrimination in two types — denial of rights and denial of identity. According to her view, denial of rights includes:

- Legal rights
- Political and civil rights
- Economic rights and
- Social rights

And on the other hand, denial of identity includes:

- Religious
- Ethno/racial
- Caste
- Class and
- Gender/sexuality

She highlighted links between gender and other issues:

- Class and gender
- Class and ethnicity/race
- Religion/caste and class
- Religion/caste and gender
- Race/Ethnicity and gender
- Sexuality and class



Mirjam Dahlgren, made presentation on reproductive and sexual rights. Ms. Dahlgren is the Policy advisor on Gender equality and HIV/AIDS at Diakonia HQ in Sweden. She gave a brief outline about gender equality and HIV/AIDS work of Diakonia. She said the overall goal for all programmatic work is defined as “to change structures on inequality — political, economic and social — that generates poverty, oppression and violence”. According to her, to reach dignified circumstances for people, structures must be changed in order to allow people infected with HIV and those who suffer from AIDS-related diseases to enjoy social and economical equality. The goal for the gender equality and HIV&AIDS work is that Diakonia shall increase its capacity in the mainstreaming process of Gender Equality and HIV&AIDS. She said Diakonia has a vision of a world where all women and men can live their lives in dignified circumstances, in a fair and sustainable world, free from poverty. Human dignity means that we are created – male and female – in God’s image. Human dignity is God-given and therefore inherent in every human being – regardless of class, gender or ethnicity.



Dr. Hameeda Hossain made presentation on the struggle of reform of personal laws. In her presentation, she discussed about historical background of Muslim Family Laws Ordinance-1961 and some laws enacted after the independence of Bangladesh protecting women rights. She emphasized on religious practice regarding women’s equal rights in the family. She identified some factors challenges to women’s struggles are as follows:

- Ulema and religious leaders
- Religion-based political parties
- Exploitative economic systems
- Conservative administrative establishment
- Military



Dr. Dina M Siddiqi depicted community violence and the policing of marginalized bodies. She interlinked within social power and gender relations. The quality of gender relations does not derive from religion, rather from patterns of social power-customs, legal norms including property laws traditions etc. that societies produce and reproduce through which religions are interpreted and re-interpreted. She said that across rural South Asia, informal village tribunals (salish, jirga and informal panchayat) are instrument of class, caste and gender domination. Informal village tribunals conventionally regulate female sexuality through rulings; central to maintenance of class and gender domination. She argued that how religion is interpreted is a direct reflection of the ideologies and social structures on the ground. Religion is always politicized. Women’s sexuality is now given Islamic veneer through Fatwa.



Barrister Sara Hossain made presentation on public interest litigation on violence against women: guidelines to prevent sexual harassment and extrajudicial penalties in arbitration. She gave a brief outline on state obligation to address violence against women, legal frame work, sexual harassment, extrajudicial penalties and public interest litigation. She described the constitutional rights of women, and international human rights instruments, including CEDAW elaborately. She also briefly discussed personal laws including Christian, Hindu and Muslim family laws and how these laws discriminate women. Some NGO's like BLAST, BNWLA, Bangladesh Mohila Parishad, ASK etc. actively work with this issues. In her presentation, she described traditional dispute resolution system of Bangladesh where extrajudicial punishment like *Fatwa* is happened. But This *Fatwa* is strictly prohibited by the High Court and court directed the government to implement the law and to disseminate the court order to all local government bodies.



Salma Khan presented core international treaties and policy documents to establish human rights of women- implications for South and South-East Asia. She defined key elements of human rights as follows:

- Non-discrimination
- Fundamental freedom
- Universality
- Trans boundary values
- Interdependency
- International standards
- International concern

She showed specific differences between treaty and charters as well as discussed about seven core human rights treaties in her presentation. The treaties are:

- CEDAW (Convention on the Elimination of All Form of Discrimination against Women)
- CAT (Convention against Torture)
- CRC (Convention on the Rights of Child)
- ICCPR- (International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights)
- ICESCR (International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights)
- ICERD (International Convention on Elimination of Racial Discrimination)
- CPRMW (Convention on Rights of Migrant Workers and Their Families)

Lesson learnt

Participants of six countries were divided into several groups according to country and they shared there views with others on lesson learnt at the end of the seminar and they also gave country updates.





On the basis of previous discussions, the seminar moderator Anish Barua found five factors crucial for establishing women rights and development:

1. Leadership capacity development
2. Economic empowerment
3. Political participation of women
4. Uniform civil law
5. Access to information on legal rights

Plenary session

The 3rd day plenary session was addressed by Ms. Mirjam Dahlgren, from Diakonia's head office in Sweden, Dr Dina Mahnaz Siddiqi, Seminar Coordinator, Ms Sultana Begum, Regional Adviser of Diakonia, and Mr. Nurul Kabir, Editor of daily New Age. The session was chaired by Executive Director of BLAST Ambassador (Retd.) Mohsin Ali Khan.

Ms Sultana Begum began by thanking the participants for attending the seminar. She also conveyed her gratitude to BLAST for organizing the seminar perfectly. She said it was an important topic for a seminar to share about human rights and gender issues in the contemporary world.

The seminar coordinator Dina Siddiqi hoped that human rights activists would take time to reflect their strategies, the language that they use and even their end goals, in addition to their everyday struggles against rights violations. .

The chief guest, Mr. Nurul Kabir said in the patriarchal society, male always dominates women. He placed emphasis on democratization, gender sensitivity, gender neutral language and social change for establishing violation-free society. He also observed that although the government has introduced various laws to protect women's rights, Non-Government Organizations are also playing a significant role to eradicate rights violations from our society. He stated if we change our mind than we may change the world for our comprehensive betterment. He believes that for the sake of national and international development, we need to ensure women's participation in every sphere of the state. The liberty of women must be ensured by the democratic state. He hoped this seminar would make a positive contribution toward establishing human rights and gender equality.

Mr. Mohsin Ali Khan, the Executive Director of BLAST expressed his concluding remarks. He emphasized the need to build up a strong human rights network among the participant countries. He expected that this network would play a key role to eliminate gender discrimination, sexual harassment in work place and violence against women in the Asia region.

Conclusion

At the end of the seminar participants from South and South East Asian countries came together to share their experiences in establishing gender equality in their respective countries. They shared views on struggle, resistances and successful campaigns for human rights and gender equality. All dignitaries express their hope to create a discrimination free society where all human being will be treated as equal. They also expected that the outcome of this seminar will bring some important thinking and sharing what will help us all to fight for protecting human rights and gender equality.

The regional discussions provided participants with an overview of core international human rights treaties and relevant policies that involve rights of women. The seminar emphasized the need to build up a strong human rights network among the participant countries; this network could play a key role in eliminate gender discrimination, sexual harassment in work place and violence against women in the Asia.



Annexure-1

CONCEPT NOTE

The human rights of women and of the girl-child are an inalienable, integral and indivisible part of universal human rights. The full and equal participation of women in political, civil, economic, social and cultural life, at the national, regional and international levels, and the eradication of all forms of discrimination on grounds of sex are priority objectives of the international community.

(The Vienna Declaration and Program of Action 1993, 18.)

1. CONTEXT

The premise that **women's rights are human rights** achieved general acceptance in policy and human rights circles following the Vienna Declaration at the World Conference on Human Rights in 1993. A historic document in multiple respects, the Declaration helped to push the language of rights into gender and development policy discussions. Nevertheless, even now women's rights and human rights movements tend to see themselves as functioning in mutually exclusive spheres. The human rights world continues to be associated with fighting violations of individual and collective rights by the state, while women's rights activists tend to focus on rights violations that center on women as a social group. Moreover, in terms of relative ranking, the latter is often marginalized in relation to the former.

This concept note assumes that such distinctions cannot be sustained in practice, not least because **gender is a cross-cutting issue**, one that is given form through other inequalities in society. On the one hand, **achieving substantive gender equality requires addressing issues that appear to be conventional human rights concerns**; by the same token, **human rights goals can never be fully attained without engaging with questions of gender inequality**.

The note takes the **mainstreaming of social and economic justice – which is built into Diakonia's work -- as a point of reference** and examines gender and human rights within this framework. Thus a central focus of the seminar will be on the **interlinked and gendered nature of social, economic, and cultural rights in relation to gender (in) equality**. Discussion of civil and political rights will be explored in relation to the indivisibility and interdependency of universal human rights. For instance, the right to information has been seen to be a critical means of exercising the right to food in some contexts.

2. AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

To this end, the seminar will emphasize **links between systems of power**. A primary objective will be for participants to **gain a solid understanding of the ways larger structural factors (such as environmental degradation and certain trade agreements) articulate with national and local contexts to produce or intensify gender inequality**. That is, the seminar will show the multiple levels and relations of power through which gender inequalities are created and sustained, and how these relate to practices at the grassroots level. For those involved in the development arena and working toward social and economic justice, the topic is of greater significance than ever given the current global economic crisis and its fallout.

The seminar will also provide participants with an **overview of core international human rights treaties – and relevant policies** -- that directly and indirectly engage with women's rights. These include the UDHR, the ICPD, CEDAW, the Beijing Platform for Action and the MDGs (especially MDG 3 with its stated objective to promote gender equality and



empower women). Formal rights to be examined include those enshrined in international human rights conventions, as well as **constitutional rights**, and those in **national legislation**. The seminar will explore the **intersection of these formal rights with the everyday realities of women** whose lives are shaped by structures of global political economy, gender inequalities and poverty, plural legal systems and cultural norms. It will examine the **role of existing legal frameworks on gender equality** and look at **institutional mechanisms and obstacles** to implementation that exist.

Seminar **objectives** include helping participants develop **conceptual clarity** about key terms and concepts including **gender justice, globalization, citizenship and rights**.

3. PROPOSED CONTENT

Over the course of the seminar, participants will engage with **key themes and major debates** on the subject of gender and human rights. These include the relationship between **international law and state practice**; the rights of individuals against the claims of **family, community/ethnicity/caste (cultural relativism versus universalism)**; **plural legal systems and women's rights (ethnic and class conflicts)**; **“sweatshop” and migrant labor rights**; **gender and sexual orientation based violence and emerging masculinities**; and **reproductive rights**.

Finally, the seminar **themes** will explore **struggles, resistances and successful campaigns** for human rights and gender equality. As a collective, we will assess **emerging challenges and strategies for overcoming gendered human rights abuses**.

Case studies drawn from relevant countries and communities will be used to turn abstract theoretical points into real life situations that will resonate with participants' own experiences.

4. COURSE MATERIALS

Course materials would include a reader prepared for all participants including information on international human rights laws relating to women's human rights, copies of relevant extracts of national constitutions from the South Asia/South East Asian region (particularly the countries from which participants will be represented), extracts of relevant academic articles and newspaper articles on key cases and events related to women's human rights in the region (for example, custodial torture and rape, safety in the workplace, including freedom from sexual harassment, community violence (including 'fatwa' violence, or the violence meted out in jirgas or panchayats, and 'honour' related violence), domestic violence including forced and child marriages; rights and entitlements at work for formal and informal sector workers; access to health; violence against marginalised groups and communities, with a focus on issues of disability and sexuality).

Feature/Documentary films on women's human rights would also be screened during or after the sessions in the evening programmes.

Participants would also be introduced to website based materials on women's human rights and familiarised with some internet tools for activism.

5. PARTICIPANTS

Participants for the Course will be drawn from among Diakonia's partners in South and South East Asia who have a range of areas of expertise and experience in the protection and promotion of women's human rights and in working on issues of gender equality and non-discrimination, as well as on issues of livelihood. In selecting participants, emphasis will be given to those who have had hands on experience and engagement with such activities and initiatives. There will also be priority given to ensuring diversity of representation in the



selection of participants, with preference being given to women, and further to those from marginalized or excluded communities, and also to persons with disabilities.

6. SPEAKERS

Proposed resource persons for the Course include academics, lawyers, journalists and women's human rights activists from Bangladesh, including those directly engaged in women's front line organisations, including in formal and informal sector worker's organisations, and those working directly on issues of enforcement of rights through the law. A particular effort will be made to identify speakers who can discuss different strategic approaches to realizing rights, whether through legal protection, media advocacy, political representation or grassroots mobilization.

5. ABOUT BLAST

Bangladesh Legal Aid and Services Trust (BLAST) is a national legal services and human rights organization. It was established in 1992 as a not for profit Trust, following a proposal at a national conference of lawyers held in 1992 under the auspices of the Bangladesh Bar Council. It was incorporated in May 1993 with the Registrar of Joint Stock Companies as a company limited by guarantee, and was registered in December 1993 with the NGO Affairs Bureau of the Government of Bangladesh.

BLAST's Board of Trustees comprising eminent jurists, lawyers, and former judges of the Bangladesh Supreme Court. It has a core staff but works primarily through a network of panel lawyers in various District Bars and also the Supreme Court. It has 19 Unit Offices in five divisional headquarters i.e., Dhaka, Chittagong, Rajshahi, Khulna and Barisal, and also operates in the Chittagong Hill Tracts.

Within just over a decade, BLAST has emerged as the largest specialized legal services organization in Bangladesh, and in a comprehensive and holistic approach, combining access to non-formal dispute resolution as well as judicial remedies right across the legal system, from the lower courts to the apex court. It has obtained some of the most path-breaking and landmark judgments from the Supreme Court in public interest litigation – including on protection from police violence, rights of slum dwellers and issues of gender discrimination in public employment and juvenile justice. It has also undertaken systematic legal aid provision on women's rights (including on maintenance, dower, and custody disputes), land rights (including for indigenous peoples) and provided defence to criminal indigents including children in detention (again obtaining landmark judgments on these issues). It is the only national legal services organisation which provides mediation and litigation as well as advice service in the labour sector. It has engaged in legislative and policy advocacy for institutional reforms on the rights of the poor and marginalized, including for example on the establishment of the National Human Rights Commission, on the proposed Domestic Violence (Protection And Prevention) Bill, on the proposed reforms to the Police Act, on reforms for the rights of the homeless (regarding slum dwellers rights to housing as well as proposed amendments to the Vagrancy Act).

BLAST initially received financial support from the Ford Foundation and the Asia Foundation, then Novib, DFID-B, NORAD, DANIDA, Oxfam GB, Academy for Educational Development (AED), AusAid and now does so from OXFAM- NOVIB, DANIDA and Diakonia and as well as private donations from philanthropic organisations and individuals both in Bangladesh and abroad.



Annexure-2

AGENDA

Day-1: Monday, October 5

Opening Session

- 08:30-09:30 *Welcome tea and Registration*
- 09:30-09:40 Address of Welcome
- Ambassador (Retd) Mohsin Ali Khan, Executive Director, BLAST
- 09:40-09:55 **Opening Remarks by Special Guest**
- Mirjam Dahlgren
Policy Advisor Gender Equality, HIV & Aids Method and Program,
Diakonia Head Office (Sweden)
- 09:55-10:15 **Speech by Chief Guest**
- Advocate Sultana Kamal, Executive Director, Ain o Salish Kendra (ASK),
Former Adviser, Caretaker Government.
- 10:15-10:30 **Briefing on Seminar Background and Objectives by Seminar
Coordinator**
- Dr Dina Mahnaz Siddiqi, Visiting Professor, Centre for Gender, Sexuality
and HIV/AIDS, James P. Grant School of Public Health, Brac University.
- 10:30-11:00 *Tea/Coffee Break*

First Session: Icebreaking Session

- 11:00-12:00 **Introduction of Participants, Work Process & Expectation Setting**
Moderator: Anish Barua, Executive Director, Communica
- 12:00-01:30 **PLESTO Analysis**
Moderator: Anish Barua, Executive Director, Communica
- 01:30-02:30 *Lunch Break*

Second Session: Gender and Human Rights: Core Concepts

- 02:30-03:00 **Gender, Law and Human Rights**
- Dr Faustina Pereira, Advocate, Bangladesh Supreme Court and Director,
Human Rights and Legal Services, BRAC
- 03:00-03:30 **Caste, Class, Ethnicity, Sexuality and Other Differences**
- Meghna Guhathakurta, Executive Director, Research Initiative Bangladesh (RIB)
- 03:30-04:00 Seeking clarifications by Participants
- 04:00-05:00 **Poster Session on Country/Organizational Presentations**
Participants walk around and discuss (*Tea Break included*)
- 05:00-05:30 **Messages picked up during gallery walk**
- 05:30-06:00 **Daily Reflection** (flagging concepts that need further clarification)
- 7:00 **Video Screening** (Stories of Change)

Day-2: Tuesday, October 6

08.45- 09:00 **Recap**

Session One: Panel Discussion - The Intersection of Formal Rights with Everyday Realities

- 09.00-09:30 **Reproductive and Sexual Rights**
- Mirjam Dahlgren, Policy Advisor Gender Equality, HIV & Aids Method and
Program, Diakonia Head Office (Sweden)



09:30 - 10:00 **Participants experiences and expectations on RSR**

10:00 - 10:30 **Responses by Mirjam Dahlgren**

10:30-11:00 *Tea break*

Session 2 Culture, Community and Nation: The Major Debates

11:00-11:30 **The Struggle for reform of Personal Laws**

- Dr. Hameeda Hossain, Chairperson, Ain o Salish Kendra (ASK).

11:30-12:00 **Community Violence and the Policing of Marginalized Bodies**

- Dr Dina Siddiqi, Visiting Professor, Center for Gender, Sexuality and HIV/AIDS, James P. Grant School of Public Health, BRAC University

12:00-12:30 **Question and Answer among Participants & Panel**

12:30-01:30 **Further Exploration of Issues by Participants**

Moderator: Anish Barua, Executive Director, COMMUNiCA

01:30-02:30 *Lunch Break*

02:30-03:00 **Reflection by Dr. Dina Siddiqi, Seminar Coordinator**

03:00 *Tea break → Free time.*

Day 3: Wednesday, October 7

08:45-09:00 *Recap*

Session One Struggles, Resistances and Successful Campaigns

9:00-9:30 **Recent High Court Judgments on Sexual Harassment and Extra-Judicial Penalties in Shalish: Seeking Guidelines to Prevent Violence against Women**

- Sara Hossain, Bar- at-law, Advocate, Supreme Court of Bangladesh

9:30-10:00 **Core International Treaties and Policy Documents: Implications for South and South East Asia**

- Salma Khan, President, Women for women

10:00-11:00 **Question and Answer Session with speakers**

11:00-11:30 *Tea break*

11:30-01:00 **Sharing 'Lessons Learnt' by selected participants (4/5 x 15m)**

01:00-01:30 **Summing up**

01:30-02:30 *Lunch Break*

Session two Emerging Issues/Challenges Ahead

02:30-03:45 **Soul Searching for Common Actions/Campaigns → Consensus Building**
Moderator: Anish Barua, Executive Director, COMMUNiCA

03:45-04:30 **Plenary Session**

- Nurul Kabir, Editor, New Age

- Mirjam Dahlgren, Policy Advisor Gender Equality, HIV & Aids Method and Program, Diakonia Head Office (Sweden)

- Dina Siddiqi, Visiting Professor, Center for Gender, Sexuality and HIV/AIDS, James P. Grant School of Public Health, BRAC University

4:30-4:40 **Concluding Remarks**

- Ambassador (Retd) Mohsin Ali Khan, Executive Director, BLAST

4:40 **Refreshments & Leave-taking**



Annexure-3

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR PARTICIPANTS

Name _____
 Job title _____
 Name of Organization _____
 Contact Details _____

(Address, Telephone, Email & Fax) _____

Country _____

Your dietary preference (✓): Non-Vegetarian Vegetarian

Additional Dietary Information in any: _____

From the list below, please mark (✓) **three** areas that in your view are the most priority issues in relation to women's human rights:

- Access to information about legal rights
- Access to formal and non-state forms of justice
- Recognition of Ethnic/Religious /Minority Rights of Men and Women
- Women's political participation in parliament, local councils and municipalities / representation of women in administrative and public positions
- Economic empowerment of women/Creating labor opportunities for women
- Economic and Social Justice for men and women
- Leadership capacity building`
- Learning more about experience and work done on the international level
- Other:

What do you see as major obstacles to implementing women's human rights, including implementing CEDAW? Please (✓) tick off **three** issues from the list below.

- Gender discriminatory laws
- Prevalence of violence against women and state unwillingness to address the issue
- Prevalence of discriminatory cultural, "customary" and "traditional" practices
- Overall political instability
- Poverty
- Structural Adjustment, "Free" Trade Agreements and neo-liberal policies
- The belief that women's rights are an imported issue from the West
- Gender Stereotypes
- Legal illiteracy
- Lack of communication with the global and international level
- Relative lack of resources of NGOs' working with gender
- Other:



Annexure-4

LIST OF REGIONAL PARTICIPANTS

Country	Organisation	Participants
1. Sweden	Diakonia Head Office	Ms Mirjam Dahlgren, Policy Advisor Gender Equality, HIV & AIDS
2. Thailand	Diakonia Regional Office	Carolina Poggio , Regional Adviser
3. Burma	Myanmar Baptist Convention	Ms Augusta Na Fa, Associate Director
4. Burma	Diakonia	Ms Nang San Kham, Country Representative
5. Cambodia	Diakonia	Mr Chan Sambath, our Gender Advisor
6. Cambodia	NGO Forum	Ms Ky Nimol
7. Thailand	Diakonia	Ms Kaesai Isi, Country Representative
8. Thailand	Upland Holistic Development Project	Mr Bunsak Tongdi, Co-Director
9. Thailand	Diakonia	Ms Kanlaya Chularattakorn, Country Representative
10 Thailand	Peace Way Foundation	Ms Thulei Paw
11 Sri Lanka	Diakonia	Ms Malathi Bodinagoda Ratwatte, Project Officer
12 Sri Lanka	Centre for Policy Alternatives	Ms K.M.L Iromi Perera

List of In-Country Participants

Country	Organisation	Participants
1 Bangladesh	ADESH, Savar	Mr Subrato Dey, Executive Director
2 Bangladesh	ADESH, Savar	Mr Yeakub Nabi, Coordinator
3 Bangladesh	AKOTA, Gaibandha	Mr Md Lutfor Rahman Mondol, Executive Director
4 Bangladesh	AKOTA, Gaibandha	Ms Most. Sabera Islam, Project Manager
5 Bangladesh	MKP, Thakurgaon	Mr Rabiul Azam, Director
6 Bangladesh	MKP, Thakurgaon	Ms Mousumi Rahman, Documentation Coordinator
7 Bangladesh	OWDEB, Chittagong	Ms Shyamoli Mazumder, Chief Executive
8 Bangladesh	OWDEB, Chittagong	Mr Mahmudul Hoque, Area Officer
9 Bangladesh	Palok, Kushtia	Adv Nargis Chowdhury, Executive Director
10 Bangladesh	PARTNER, Rajshahi	Mr Md Abdus Sobhan Meah, Executive Director





	Country	Organisation	Participants
11	Bangladesh	PARTNER, Rajshahi	Ms Alima Khatun, Director (Program)
12	Bangladesh	SARA, Mymensingh	Mr Tushar Daring, Executive Director
13	Bangladesh	SARA, Mymensingh	Mr Shahid Ullah, Deputy Director
14	Bangladesh	Come to work, Dinajpur	Mr Matiur Rahman, Executive Director
15	Bangladesh	Dipti, Jessore	Ms Begum Afroz, Director
16	Bangladesh	SEVA, Comilla	Md Salauddin Ahmed, Executive Director
17	Bangladesh	PDF, Pirojpur	Md Rafiqul Islam, Executive Director
18	Bangladesh	BLAST, Dhaka	Mr. Md. Taufiqul Islam, Staff Lawyer
19	Bangladesh	BLAST, Dhaka	Ms. Taposhi Rabaya, Assistant Coordinator
20	Bangladesh	BLAST, Dhaka	Mr Mohsin Ali Khan, Executive Director
21	Bangladesh	BLAST, Dhaka	Ms Farida Yeasmin, Deputy Director (Legal)
22	Bangladesh	BLAST, Dhaka	Ms Shahriar Parveen, Assistant Director (Admin)
23	Bangladesh	BLAST, Dhaka	Mr Imtiaz Hossain Nafiz, Project Coordinator
24	Bangladesh	BLAST, Dhaka	Mr. Bablu Ghosh, Jr. Monitoring Officer
25	Bangladesh	BLAST, Dhaka	Mr. Mazharul Anwar, Jr. Accounts Officer
26	Bangladesh	BLAST, Dhaka	Mr. Ali Mortuza, Office Assistant
27	Bangladesh	Diakonia Bangladesh	Ms Sultana Begum, Regional Gender Adviser
28	Bangladesh	Diakonia Bangladesh	Ms Khodeja Sultana Lopa, Country Representative
29	Bangladesh	Diakonia Bangladesh	Mr Waheduzzaman (Santanu), Finance and Administration Officer
30	Bangladesh	Seminar Coordinator	Ms. Dina M. Siddiqi
31	Bangladesh	Communica, Moderator	Mr. Anish Barua,



Annexure-5

POWER POINT PRESENTATION

Gender, Law and Human Rights

A Presentation by
Dr. Faustina Pereira
Advocate, Bangladesh Supreme Court, Director, Human Rights
and Legal Services, BRAC

Diakonia Asia Regional Seminar on
Human Rights and Gender: Core Concepts, Major
Debates and Emerging Issues
BRAC Centre Inn, Dhaka.
October 5, 2009

1

The Idea of Justice

- Justice is a complex idea which has everything to do with everyone being treated fairly
- But the theory of justice must be concerned with the systematic assessment of how to reduce injustice in the world, rather than concern ourselves with what a hypothetical "perfectly just society" would look like.
- Assessment of the Law – Gender equality as essential indicator of an environment of justice

2

The Many Faces of Gender Injustice

- One Hundred Million Missing Women – from the womb to the grave
- Seven types of Gender inequality (mortality, natality, basic facility, special opportunity, professional, ownership, household)

3

The Many Faces of Gender Injustice

- Household as a unit of cooperation as well as of inequality and internal discrimination
- State – household writ large
- Law – the sanction and lubrication for inequality dynamics in pub/pvt – state/household

4

It's an unequal world

Legal subordination – Women as perpetual minors

- (a) citizenship (b) acquisition, retention and transfer of property (c) decision making over resources, children (d) decision making over own body, mobility (e) legal identity, separate from father's or husband's

5

How Change Happens

Pathways -

- Transforming the Law to yield Rights
- Transforming Rights to yield Empowerment

How -

- Active citizenship
- Accountable State
- Interlinkages between gender equality – rule of law – development policies

6



We organise, therefore we are ...

- Morocco – New Islamic Family Code 2004 (women’s right to determine legal matters without guardianship of a male, consent from both parties to dissolve marriage)
- Domestic Violence Legislations (Malaysia, Ghana, Pakistan, India)
- Gender budgeting – Women in Development
- Law Reform and Policy Advocacy as important instruments of social change

7

Laws and policies are important instruments for social change ...

- They impact positive changes in gender relations, the elimination of discriminatory practices based on gender, and empowerment of women and girls.
- Despite Constitutional guarantees of equality and nondiscrimination, it may be necessary to either enact statutes on gender equality or equal opportunity, or have established national policies or action plans to promote gender equality.

8

Laws and policies are important instruments for social change ...

- Introduce laws, or amendments to existing laws, to eliminate discrimination in personal status, citizenship, land, property, inheritance, contracts, taxation, employment, and elections.
- Laws to address harmful practices such as child marriage, domestic violence, and human trafficking.

9

Laws and policies are important instruments for social change ...

- Public interest litigation as a tool to annul discriminatory laws and encourage gender reforms in laws and policies.
- Women’s organizations’ role in promoting law and policy reforms through campaigns, lobbying, and litigation.

10

Women’s Rights Are Human Rights

Excerpts from Hillary Clinton’s Speech at Fourth World Conference, Beijing 1995

“ ... We also must recognize that women will never gain full dignity until their human rights are respected and protected.”

11

Women’s Rights Are Human Rights

Excerpts from Hillary Clinton’s Speech at Fourth World Conference, Beijing 1995

“ ... As long as discrimination and inequities remain so commonplace around the world - as long as girls and women are valued less, fed less, fed last, overworked, underpaid, not schooled and subjected to violence in and out of their homes - the potential of the human family to create a peaceful, prosperous world will not be realized.”

12



“Caste, Class, Ethnicity, Sexuality and other differences”

Meghna Guhathakurta
Executive Director, Research Initiative
Bangladesh (RIB)

Diakonia Asia Regional Seminar on Human Rights and
Gender
BRAC Centre Inn, Dhaka.
October 5, 2009

Discrimination:

- Denial of rights
- Denial of identity
- Multiple Denial of Rights:**
 - Legal rights
 - Political and civil rights
 - Economic rights
 - Social rights
- Multiple Denial of Identity Religious**
 - Ethno/racial
 - Caste
 - Class
 - Gender/sexuality

Discrimination and Identity politics

- Denial of one particular identity may lead to construction of identity along singular lines e.g. examples from CHT and Dalit issues in Bangladesh
- Problems relating to the above
- Ways forward; some best practices

Some problems :

- Class and gender
- Class and ethnicity/race
- Religion/caste and class
- Religion/caste and gender
- Race/Ethnicity and gender
- Sexuality and class

Discrimination and identity politics ways forward

- Incorporation of multiple identity perspectives into struggle
- Incorporation into the rights movement
- Rights based development and service delivery efforts
- Cultural diversity and international standardization of human rights
- Mainstreaming vs. Diversity management/inclusive governance

A fair way to manage diversity

• If we could shrink the earth's population to a village of precisely 100 people, with all the existing human ratios remaining the same, it would look like this. There would be:

- 61 Asians
- 12 Europeans
- 14 from the Western Hemisphere, both north and south
- 13 Africans
- 50 would be female
- 50 would be male
- 74 would be nonwhite
- 26 would be white
- 67 would be non-Christian
- 33 would be Christian

A fair way to manage diversity

• If we could shrink the earth's population to a village of precisely 100 people, with all the existing human ratios remaining the same, it would look like this. There would be:

- 89 would be heterosexual
- 11 would be homosexual
- 6 people would possess 59% of the entire world's wealth and all 6 would be from the United States
- 80 would live in substandard housing
- 14 would be unable to read
- 33 would die of famine
- 1 would be near death;
- 1 would be near birth
- 7 would have a college education
- 8 would own a computer





ASIA
REGIONAL SEMINAR ON
HUMAN RIGHTS AND GENDER
Bangladesh 5-7 October 2009

Mirjam Dahlgren
Policy Advisor Gender Equality, HIV & Aids
Method and Program,
Diakonia Head Office (Sweden)



" Compassion is one of the most important characteristics for giving your life a meaning. It is the source for happiness and joy and it cultivates a good heart which will wish to act to help"

Dalai Lama



Overall goals and objectives for
Gender Equality and HIV&AIDS work

The overall goal for all programmatic work is defined as "to change structures on inequality, both political, economic and social, that generate poverty, oppression and violence"

To reach dignified circumstances for people – structures must change in order to allow people infected with HIV and those who are ill with AIDS-related diseases to enjoy social and economical equality.

The goal for the Gender Equality and HIV&AIDS work is that Diakonia shall increase its capacity in the mainstreaming process of Gender Equality and HIV&AIDS



DEFINITION OF MAINSTREAMING
in Diakonia work

- Making analysis on the basis of our mandate and role and each theme, which help us to identify specific responsibilities and elaborate strategies and activity plans relevant for our local contexts



Overall strategies-tools for mainstreaming
Gender Equality Policy
HIV/AIDS Guidelines, including mainstreaming matrix
PME Handbook
Strategic Plan

Number one strategy:

Contextual analysis; assess partner's need, what work is already covered by other actors, find Diakonia's role and follow the policy and s-plan.

Number two:

Identify strategic and resource partners



Examples of thematic integration

CAJ – Conflict and Justice:

UNSCR 1325/1820

HIV/AIDS:

SRHR (including LGBT-related issues)

Men's involvement

PRIORITIES

Mens involvement

Youth – young boys and girls

Convention on the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women (CEDAW)

UNSCR 1325/1820

SRHR– through a HR perspective

Vision and wish : initiate a "Mens network "between Diakonia staff and partners





Statement by Koffi Annan

We must make sure that girls – who run a particular risk of infection (HIV and STI's) – have all skills, the services and the self-confidence to protect themselves. Across all levels of society, we need to see a deep social revolution that transforms relationships between women and men, so that women will be able to take greater control of their lives – financially as well as physically. And we must encourage men to replace risk-taking behaviour with taking responsibility



The UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights

emphasise the rights and entitlements of the individual and defines a life in dignity in a coherent way.

Diakonia has chosen to work with a rights based approach.

All of the human rights in the UN Declaration are universal, indivisible and equally valuable. They are interdependent and are all necessary to allow each individual the possibility to a life in dignity.

The conventions are founded in an understanding of each individual's inherent dignity and value.



Access to human rights?

- Women's and men's human rights are in today's world violated in a number of ways.
- One fundamental problem is the fact that many poor and oppressed women and men are unaware of their rights, nor have they the opportunities and possibilities to claim their rights.
- States, on the other hand, have the responsibility to uphold human rights and human security, but often end up deliberately violating these same rights or having too weak institutions to be able to guarantee them or provide even basic levels of physical security to their citizens.



Poverty-injustice-human rights?

More than one billion people across the world live in extreme poverty, forced to survive on less than 1US\$ a day.

70% of them are women of which many are bereaved of their right to own property, access resources, training, credit and services, and are discriminated by the legal systems.

The richest 20% of the population is using 80% of the world's resources, and 50 % of the world's income goes to 20 % of the world's population and the gaps are widening.



At family and community level *unequal* access to resources and opportunities for women is a major obstacle for development.

In many countries culture and tradition and even legislation put serious obstacles to women's access to resources (land, credits etc) and social services (health, education). Women are not always allowed to participate in the labour market and when they do it is generally under more precarious conditions than men.

This is why women do 66% of all work but receive only 10% of the wages and control only 1% of total assets. Women belonging to ethnic groups may be discriminated twice



Conflicts continues to be a major source of human rights violations leading to high levels of insecurity and in the end increasing poverty levels.

Abuse of human rights often leads to conflict, and conflict typically results in human rights violations. When rights to adequate food, housing, employment, and cultural life are denied, and large groups of people are discriminated from decision-making processes, social unrest and insecurity easily follows.





The UN Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) has now been ratified by 179 countries, but discrimination against women is still blatant in most of the countries in the world.

Gender based violence constitutes one of the most serious and widespread violations of women's human rights, and is often sanctioned by society.

It is the biggest cause of injury and death to women world-wide and causes more deaths and disability among women aged 15 to 44 than cancer, malaria, traffic accidents, and war together. A group that has been particularly exposed to discrimination and gender based violence are lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGTB) persons.



CEDAW

- Has your country signed the convention?
- Is there any shadow report?
- Do you have organisations in your country who advocate towards your government on the implementation of CEDAW?



HUMAN RIGHTS AND GENDER

Diakonia has a vision of a world where all women and men can live their lives in dignified circumstances, in a fair and sustainable world, free from poverty

Human Dignity means that we are created – male and female – in God's image. Human dignity is God-given and therefore inherent in every human being – regardless of class, gender or ethnicity



SEXUAL REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH AND RIGHTS

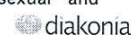
A sexual healthy life

Rights to each ones sexuality and sexuality education

Reproductive health and rights

Women and men, irrespective of marital status, sexual orientation, religious beliefs, should have the right to enjoy a safe and satisfying sexual life. People should be able to avoid illness and disability in their reproductive lives and be able to have the number of children they wish at the time they wish to have them.

There is an international recognition that human rights have a gender dimension and that gender inequality is a major obstacle to sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR).



BACKGROUND

Some facts regarding SRHR:

Ten million women are lost in every generation. In 42 percent of all pregnancies, the woman suffers complications. In 8 percent of all pregnancies, the complications are life-threatening. Women survival rates vary between rich and poor countries and between the rich and poor within these countries.

One in 29800 women in Sweden will die of complications related to pregnancy.

One in 16 women in Sub-Saharan Africa will die as a result of pregnancy or child-birth.

One in 6 women in Afghanistan and Sierra Leone die from pregnancy-related complications.

What about your country?



INJUSTICE-UNHEALTHY LIFE

Every year 210 million women and girls become pregnant. Of these pregnancies, 85 million are unwanted and 8 millions suffer from serious complications. In turn, this results in 50 million abortions, of which 20 million are unsafe.

WHAT CAN WE AS CITIZEN DO ABOUT THAT?





Lack of sexual and reproductive health, combined with the incapacity to control the number of children and the spacing between births, are another serious obstacle to peoples and specially women's capacity to control their situation, have a healthy life and contribute to the development of their society.

Issues like safe abortions and sexual preference are growingly under attack by religiously motivated governments and organisations. Women world wide are still struggling for the right to autonomy over their own bodies – to keep a good health and be able to contribute to the wealth of their families.



SEXUAL RIGHTS

Sexual rights embrace human rights that are already recognized in national laws, international human rights documents and other consensus statements. That includes the rights of all persons, free of coercion, discrimination and violence, to achieve the following:



- The highest attainable standard of sexual health, including access to SRHR services
- Seek, receive and impart information related to sexuality
- Sexual education
- Respect for bodily integrity
- Choose their partner
- Decide to be sexually active or not
- Consensual sexual relations
- Consensual marriage
- Decide whether or not, and when, to have children
- Pursue a satisfying, safe and pleasurable sexual life



WHAT IS A MEN? WHAT IS A WOMAN?

What is your role and responsibility as a man, as a woman in:

- Home-family
- Society
- Traditions-culture
- Government-political
- Work place
- Community
- Law-judicial system

WHAT DO YOU WANT TO IMPROVE IN THE RESPONSIBILITIES AS A MAN AS A WOMAN?

- At home
- At work
- At society
- Politically
- In your traditions-culture



Examples of responses

- Men engaging more in the care of the children from early childhood
- Peers discussing male identity and sexual health
- Students deal with oppose sexual harassment.
- School-based sexual education incl. discussion on males role
- Laws and implementation of laws in place that see rape and sexual violence as a sever crime, irrespective of circumstances
- Actions focused on combating inequality gender norms
- Youth Clinics – including counselling on SRHR-related issues



Changing the strucure

Capacity building and advocacy on the implementation of existing laws for.ex:

Convention on the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women (CEDAW)

UNSCR 1325/1820

National laws regarding family, citizen's rights, PLWHA's rights etc.





Women's Struggles for Reform of Personal Laws

Dr. Hameeda Hossain
Chairperson, Ain o Salish Kendra (ASK)

Diakonia Asia Regional Seminar on
Human Rights and Gender: Core Concepts,
Major Debates and Emerging Issues
October 6, 2009

RELATIONS WITHIN FAMILY and WOMEN'S LIVES

- Religious and traditional practices
- Sanctioned by
 - : Family hierarchies
 - : Social hierarchies
 - : Community

Expectations from State

- Create opportunities for advancement in public life
- Eliminate discriminatory laws/practices
- Equal rights in marriage, divorce, inheritance
- Change relations within the family
- Enable women to become active citizens

Women's Campaigns

- A legal framework that would guarantee women's equal rights in the family
- Application of laws in practice
- Judicial Remedies

Challenges to Women's Struggles

- Ulema and religious leaders
- Religious political parties
- Exploitative Economic systems
- Conservative administrative establishment
- Military

Contest for Rights

- Law reforms for equal rights within family (APWA, Mahila Samitis in East Bengal)
- 1954: Charter of Rights submitted to Parliament (rts under Islamic Personal Law)
- 1951/53 Ulema Conventions
Islamic State, laws based on Quran and Sunnah
- Constitutional drafting
Islamic Provisions in Constitution



Outcome of Women's Campaign

- Justice Rashid Commission to examine existing laws of marriage, divorce, maintenance, custody
- Included 2 ulema
- Strong dissenting vote

Muslim Family Laws Ordinance- 1961

- Succession of grandchildren to parental inheritance in grandparents' property
- Recorded registration with Nikah registrar
- Polygamy conditional to consent by first wife and permission from Arbitration Council
- Divorce-Wife can be delegated right of divorce
- Intervening marriage, before spouses can remarry after an irrevocable divorce
- Maintenance
- Dower

Bangladesh Contradictions

- Constitution: Principle of secularism
Equal rights in the public sphere, not personal life
Freedom of each community to religious practice

1977 Amendment: "ideals of absolute faith in Allah", repeal of art 12 allowing religion in politics

1987 Amendment: Islam as a state religion

1980/90's Contradictions

- Ratification of CEDAW with reservations
- Women in Development, NGO Activities
- Beijing Plan of Action
- Mosque based politics encouraged
- preachings against women's rights
- Compulsory religious education
- Growth of madrassahs
- Religious Affairs Ministry

1980/90s Women's Campaigns

- Proposal for a Uniform Family Code
Bangladesh Mahila Parishad
- 1987 Eight Amendment
Case filed in High Court
Protests/demos against amendment
- Monitoring violence and violations of rights
Legislation: Anti Dowry Act/Nari Nirjatan Act

Ongoing Strategies

- Campaign for political commitment to UFC
- Advocacy for specific reforms for each community
- Awareness of legal rights
- Understand limitations of laws and need for reform
- Judicial directives promoting human rights
- Full ratification and implementation of CEDAW



Community Violence and the Policing of Marginalized Bodies

Dina M Siddiqi
Visiting Professor, Center for Gender, Sexuality and HIV/AIDS, James P. Grant School of Public Health, BRAC University

Regional Seminar on Human Rights and Gender

6 October 2009

Religion, Power and Gender

The quality of gender relations does not derive from religion but rather from patterns of social power – customs, legal norms, including property laws, traditions etc. – that societies produce and reproduce, through which religions are interpreted and reinterpreted.

Fatwas punishing women (sexuality issues) in rural Bangladesh

- Not just signs of rising fundamentalism – too reductive. Every case is enmeshed in local power struggles and relations of domination, influenced by national and international contexts.
- Almost never exclusively about the right to interpret religious meanings.

Regulating Bodies

- Communities regulate all kinds of bodies, people who don't conform in one way or the other, and who are therefore out of place. Who threaten the accepted social order.
- Eg. Single women who don't abide by the rules of "modesty" or people of different sexual/gender orientations (hijras, LGBT). All threatened by Section 54 of the CrPC.
- Women's bodies are central to the making of class and caste identity and so to maintaining domination.

Regulating Bodies

- Women's bodies as markers of community honor, cultural and ethnic boundaries.
- Therefore control of Sexuality and Marriage
- Control over property is a significant factor, in regulating marriage, though not the only one. Ties in nicely with ideologies of purity and honor.
- [Male response to UCC debates in India and Bangladesh similar]
- Forced marriages in Bangladesh as much about who not to marry as being forced to marry.

Caste (Class) and Gender: Impossible to disentangle

- Cross caste marriages have incredibly violent social sanctions, especially if a scheduled caste or Dalit man is involved with an upper caste woman.
- This threatens the entire social structure and relations of domination. Upper caste men have sexual access to poor/Dalit/SC women. This is part of maintaining caste domination.
- The other way around, if public, visible and demanding social recognition, not tolerated.



South Asian Patriarchies

- Across rural South Asia, informal village tribunals (the shalish, the jirga and the informal panchayat) are instruments of class, caste and gender domination.
- Religion is not necessarily the issue (re: Pereira and the law) How religion is interpreted is a direct reflection of the ideologies and social structures on the ground. Similar forms of violence.

Politicizing Religion

- Religion is always politicized; it is critical to understand the specific “*complicating contexts*” in which politicization occurs (eg Shahbano case).
- only looking at religion obscures power relations and struggles
- Politics of gender/sexuality and religion not freestanding. Understanding fundamental linkages essential – eg anti-poor and anti-women actions go hand in hand in Bangladesh. Not just culture versus rights.

Complicating Context (I) The Global

- The demonization of Islam ushered in by contemporary geopolitics creates a feedback loop.
- Islamophobia internationally fuels right wing movements nationally and locally; language of anti-imperialism

Complicating Context (II) National Neo-Liberal Regime

- Neoliberalism, increased inequality, conflict make anti-imperialist identity politics appealing
- The state has also appropriated the language of religion – selectively -- plays a double role needs women’s wage labor
- political parties try to “out-Islamize” one another.

Complicating context (III) Local Power Struggles

- Informal village tribunals conventionally regulate female sexuality through rulings; central to maintenance of class and gender domination.
- Older forms of policing women’s sexuality now given Islamic veneer through fatwas.
- Marginalized elites trying to reassert relations of domination through language of Islam.
- Ironically, the language of feminist attention has given obscure right wing parties a degree of national recognition and authority they would not have otherwise.

Resistance and Feminist Strategy I

- Women’s groups demand for ban on fatwas.
- 2001 High Court recommended “banning” fatwas (so that only the courts could issue fatwas).
- Effectively vested the state with much more power than before to determine what was authentically Islamic.
- Potentially dangerous (and paradoxical) move, depending on what party is in power.



Resistance and Feminist Strategy I

- Fatwas only a legally informed opinion, not legally binding.
- Immediate backlash, including court case claiming that right to religious freedom, as guaranteed by the constitution, had been undermined.
- National and international publicity was good for right wing parties.
- Number of fatwas remained constant.

Rethinking Feminist Strategy

- 2009 -- Cases of brutal tribunal punishments against women and men, sometimes with the active cooperation of local government officials.
- Including a woman who caned and fined for daring to file a complaint of rape. Another woman was whipped for refusing a powerful relative's sexual advances.

Rethinking Feminist Strategy

- These cases at least were not about religion but challenging soceal hierarchies
- 4 women's groups petition courts to prevent "extra-constitutional and extrajudicial punishments."
- High Court issued a directive to state and local govt. authorities to "take effective measures to prevent the imposition and execution of extra-legal penalties" that violate fundamental rights to life, liberty, equality and non-discrimination.

Rethinking Feminist Strategy

- Feminist and High Court text intentionally made no mention of the word fatwa but targeted instead the extraordinary administrative failure that allowed these punishments to be executed.
- Absolutely not a word from the right wing -- no scope for political appropriation.
- Feminists and the Courts have begun to shift the terms of the debate. Now more scope to ask a different set of questions about power struggles, local inequalities etc.

Lessons

- Not arguing that we should avoid critiques of religion at all costs
- Rather, if we address underlying interplay of forces and how they are connected, then reductive and essentializing arguments won't hold up.
- We need intersectional analyses and alliance building with other social movements.

Lessons

- Lessons for donors – drop the idea of Islam as the only organizing force of all social relations. Eg. Idea of rural Bangladesh as a mosque-based society is completely misleading.
- Leads to progams on DV that focus *primarily* on imams etc., vesting them with more power than they ever had and marginalizing women's groups that work on these issues.



Core International Treaties and Policy Documents to Establish Human Rights of Women- Implications for South and South-East Asia

Salma khan

Former Chairperson
Committee on the Elimination of Discriminations
Against Women (CEDAW)

&
President, Women for Women

Paper presented at the

Regional Seminar on Human Rights and Gender :
October 5-7, 2009, Dhaka.

Background

Universal Declaration of Human Rights 1948.

- Contains moral affirmation by the member states of common standards and understandings of human rights of all people.
- The broad guarantees of the fundamental human right is undertaken through various multilateral treaties that are often given different names e.g. charter, covenant, convention, protocol.
- The human rights promotion and protection at international level takes place within the framework of Treaty based mechanism.
- There is another comprehensive set of human rights under Charter based mechanisms.

Treaty and other documents

- Treaties are enforceable human rights laws having implementation monitoring mechanisms where as charters and resolutions (documents) are basically international agreements, the words of which are not self-enforcing.
- Under the Charter based mechanism, specific bodies commission and sub-commission are also created (ECOSOC, CSW), but these are policy making bodies, not enforceable laws.

What is human right?

- > Rights which one enjoys simply because she/he is a human being. Traditional view of human rights was limited to civil and political rights.
- > Human rights views are expanded now.
- > Civil and political rights now also include social, economics and cultural rights.
- > Women and children's rights are also included in the concept of human rights.

Key elements of human rights

- Non-discrimination
- Fundamental freedom.
- Universality
- Trans boundary values
- Interdependency
- International standards
- International concern.

Treaty – based Mechanisms

What is a treaty:

- Human rights treaties are mechanism to realize human rights norms and standards in the lives of concerned group of people.
- Parties to the treaties (state parties) are obligated to implement the provisions of the particular treaty.





Specific differences between treaty and charters

- Treaties carry the duties and obligation of states.
- Recognition of state to fulfill the claims of right holders;
- State has to ensure the enjoyment of these rights;
- Global commitment like World Conference are important but have no obligatory mechanism or tool for implementation.

Specific differences between treaty and charters

- Commitments may be short-term;
 - May change with change of govt.;
 - Has no force of law;
 - No monitoring mechanism;
- On the other hand
- Treaties set the standard of HR;
 - Obligates govt. to implement
 - Provide monitoring mechanism
 - Rights are claimable by right holders;

Core Human Rights Treaties

There are Seven core human rights treaties:

1. CEDAW - Convention on the Elimination of All Form of Discrimination against Women.
2. CAT - Convention against Torture
3. CRC - Convention on the Rights of the Child
4. ICCPR - International Covenant on Civil and Political Right
5. ICESCR - International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights
6. ICERD - International Convention on Elimination of Racial Discrimination
7. CPRMW - Convention on Rights of Migrant Workers and Their Families.

Why we need a special treaty for women

- a) All other treaties do not recognize gender as an important dimension of human rights.
- b) All core treaties except CEDAW is gender neutral. So do not have mechanisms like Affirmative actions, Equal Opportunity Act, Ombudsman, special support services for women.
- c) The languages of CEDAW articulate human rights of women.

Why we need a special treaty for women

- d) Legitimate claims can be articulated with more authority in a special treaty like CEDAW which other approaches (e.g. PFA) lack.
- e) CEDAW carry not only MORAL FORCE but also LEGAL VALIDITY.
- f) Being an international Human Rights Treaty, CEDAW has a force of law.
- g) Once a treaty is formally accepted by a state (by ratification or accession) it is considered to be legally binding.

CEDAW

- Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) was adopted in 1979 and came into force in 1981.
- CEDAW is a multilateral human rights treaty aimed at establishing substantive equality of women with men removing all forms of discrimination based on sex.
- The constituents of CEDAW consists of 16 (sixteen) substantive articles, General Recommendations and Concluding Comments made by the committee based on the review process of the country report





The Convention covers three dimensions relevant to the situation of women

- I. Women's civil rights and legal equality
- II. Reproductive rights of women
- III. Cultural factors perpetuating discriminations against women

Significance of CEDAW

- Recognizes that additional means for women are necessary.
- It has Temporary Special Measures.
- To accelerate women's actual equality in society and in workplace the Convention provides for temporary special measures.
- The CEDAW thus reaches beyond the narrow concept of formal equality and sets its goal as equality of opportunity and quality of outcome.
- Covers rights in all spheres of life
- The Convention explicitly recognizes the goal of actual in addition to legal equality of women both in public and private spheres.

The Convention is based on three principal

1. Principle of non-discrimination
2. Principle of substantive equality
3. Principle of State obligation.

Characteristics of CEDAW Convention

- Characteristics of CEDAW Convention CEDAW uniquely defines what constitutes discrimination against women based on her sex.
- CEDAW is the only treaty which covers all five categories of human rights civil, political, economic, cultural and social rights, (because it combines provisions under ICCPR and ICESCR)
- CEDAW provide for both formal equality and real equality

So we can summarize that

- CEDAW is not gender neutral
- An international human rights treaty which defines discrimination
- It is non-discriminatory in nature
- Ensures substantive equality (de facto equality in practice)
- Covers both private and public spheres of lives
- Requires application of international norms and standards
- Emphasizes on the need for temporary special measures
- Is legally binding on the state party
- Makes state responsible for violation of women rights both by public authority and private person or organization
- Being an international treaty CEDAW has a force of law.

Implications of Becoming a State Party to CEDAW for South and South East Asian countries, (3 obligations)

a) Legal Obligations-

- Through ratification of the Convention a country (state party) voluntarily accepts a range of legally binding obligations to eliminate discriminations against women and bring about equality.
- The State party enters into a contract with all other State parties to the Convention that it will abide by norms and standards collectively agreed upon (Art 29)

Legal Obligations-

- State is obligated to act to remove discriminations against women by the State itself, organizations or private individuals
- The State must take appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination without delay.
- To accelerate the process of de facto equality, State should introduce temporary special measures.
- It is mandatory to the state Party to submit report to CEDAW Committee on schedule.



b) Reporting Obligation-

- It agrees to offer it self to a scrutiny by an international expert committee on the basis of collectively agreed norms and standards.
- State party is obliged to present a report on the basis of given guidelines at determined periods.
- The report should contain the measures taken to establish equality of women and actions it intends to take to remove all obstacles to this end.
- The periodic reports must address the recommendations made in concluding comments of the previous reports.
- The periodicity of report must be maintained.

c) Obligation to Implement CEDAW on the basis of the Concluding Comments :

- In the Concluding Comments (CC) major overarching reasons for non-implementation and legal impediments are critically analyzed by the Committee.
- CCs are mirrored by recommendations to the State party.
- State parties should formulate policies and programmes based on CCs.
- Wide dissemination of Concluding Comments to all stakeholders, action plan to be prepared based on recommendations and monitoring mechanisms must be set up.

Purpose Served through the Reporting Process

Reporting obligation can be seen as meeting variety of objectives:

The report allows the State party to take stock of existing relevant issues, prepare a comprehensive baseline report (initial report) and make situational analysis of status of women. The report serves as an internal planning instrument.

Major barriers to implementation of CEDAW in South and South East Countries

- Lack of political commitments and understanding of the Convention.
- Reservation to substantive articles of CEDAW.
- Weak national machinery and lack of resources.
- CEDAW not incorporated in domestic law.
- Pluralistic legal system
- Gender stereotyped social attitudes.
- CEDAW over shadowed by MDGS.

Reservation to CEDAW

- Reservations have potential to limit significantly the obligations of State.
- Reservation on substantive articles relating to non-discrimination (in family, legal capacity, citizenship etc.) goes against the object and purpose of the Convention.
- Recommendation by the Committee to withdraw the reservation (in the Concluding Comment) should not be perceived by the State party as an intrusion on State Sovereignty

Preparation of Report

- The national machinery for women (e.g. Women's Ministry, Justice Ministry, Women's Cell, etc.) should play the role of coordinator.
- The report should not be on the situation of women as such but primarily on action taken to redress.
- Periodic report should no be lengthy (limited to 50 pages approx), it should be focused and should emphasize on how appropriate measures were taken by the State party and concrete results achieved.



Preparation of Report

- Statistical indicators relevant to specific articles or issues are extremely important to monitor the implementation of the Convention.
- NGOs must be consulted during the report writing process. So, State parties should always keep in touch with the local and national NGOs.
- At the local level UN agencies may be involved to provide technical support in report preparation.

Some Specific Recommendations For Full implementation of CEDAW

- Each country to identify its priority and develop national strategy to minimize the gender gaps.
- Countries holding reservations on substantive articles must withdraw those with immediate effect.
- Existing discriminatory laws must be repealed.
- Countries should maintain regularity in reporting and wide dissemination of Concluding Comments.
- Sharing of best practices within the region.

Specific Recommendations

a. Preparation of Action Plan

- Action Plans should be updated periodically
- Implementations of CEDAW should be the road map of the Action Plan (rather than PFA or MDGs).

Specific Recommendations

b) Set up Appropriate Institutional Mechanism

- The national machinery must be an independent agency highly positioned and well-resourced with field staffs.
- The national machinery must have a capacity to advise all ministries
- Change in law and policy must be accompanied by appropriate institutional mechanism out intend. Institutional bias in the administration of justice-in dispersing justice must be eliminated.

Specific Recommendations

c) Allocations of Resources

- Normally Women's programmes are the first ones to get cuts in governments expenditures resulting from economic restructure.
- Adequate resources must be allocated to women's development.
- National development programme must have women's specific programmes as well as gender mainstreaming (to address challenges related to broader economic and social issues).
- Proper gender budgeting and gender audit must be introduced

Specific Recommendations

d) Publicity of the Convention

- Often the Convention is not well known to government officials, judges, police forces etc.
- Public information programmes and human rights education are essential.
- State parties should undertake human rights education campaigns.
- National women's Organizations and NGOs can play critical role to disseminate the Convention.



**Public Interest Litigation on
Violence against Women:
Guidelines to Prevent Sexual Harassment
and
Extra-Judicial Penalties in Arbitration**

Sara Hossain, Bar-at-Law,
Advocate, Supreme Court of Bangladesh

Regional Seminar on Human Rights and Gender
7 October 2009

Outline

1. State Obligations to Address Violence against Women
2. Legal Framework
3. Sexual Harassment
 - Context
 - Campaigning/ Lobbying
 - Public Interest Litigation
4. Extra-Judicial Penalties in Arbitration
 - Context
 - Campaigning/ Lobbying
 - Public Interest Litigation
5. Lessons Learned

Legal Framework

- Personal Laws
 - Christian
 - Hindu
 - Muslim
 - Indigenous Peoples
- Majority Act
- Child Marriage Restraint Act
- Penal Code
- Suppression of Violence against Women and Children Act

**State Obligations to Address
Violence against Women**

- Constitutional of Bangladesh
- Fundamental Rights
 - Fundamental Principles of State Policy
 - Right to enforcement of Fundamental Rights through Writ Petitions
- International Human Rights Law
- Customary Law
 - Treaty Obligations, including under
 - International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights
 - Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women
 - Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women

Constitutional Framework

- | | |
|----------|--|
| Part III | |
| Arts 26 | All laws inconsistent with FR will be void |
| Art. 27 | Equality before Law |
| Art. 28 | Non-discrimination (sex, gender, race, religion, caste, place of birth)
Women and men equal in state and public sphere
Special Measures for advancement of 'women, children' |
| Art. 31 | Right to be treated in accordance with law |
| Art. 32 | Right to Life/Liberty |
| Art. 39 | Right to Freedom of Expression |
| Art. 43 | Right to Privacy of Home |
| And.... | |
| Art. 41 | Right to Freedom of Religion |
| Art. 2A | Islam as a state religion..... |

Sexual Harassment- Background

- History of Incidents (Dhaka, JU etc)
Jahangirnagar University Students Movement,
No systematic action, political interference,
Draft Policies prepared but not adopted by any University or Govt
- Attacks and Threats on Victims
- Inquiry Process at JU –
 - > Findings of misconduct
 - > Final Syndicate decision that 'allegations not proved beyond reasonable doubt'
 - > Teacher Not Suspended



Sexual Harassment – Public Campaign and Advocacy

- Women's organisations eg Mohila Parishod, in support of victims
- Eminent citizens support demand for reinvestigation condemn final Syndicate decision
- University Grants Commission, following Mohila Parishod Initiative, sets up Drafting Committee, works on *Draft Guidelines to Address Sexual Harassment*, holds consultations with civil society

Sexual Harassment – PIL

- Bangladesh National Women Lawyers Association v Bangladesh**
- Guidelines for prevention and punishment of sexual harassment following case of Vishaka v Rajasthan (Indian Supreme Court) – see www.lwraw-ap.org
- Sirajul Islam Chowdhury and others v Bangladesh**
- Holding that University had failed to take into consideration clear findings of misconduct, and that it was not entitled to use standard of beyond reasonable doubt
 - Direction to hold fresh inquiry based on new court guidelines
 - Direction to University not to expel named victims or witnesses who were party to the petition

Extra- Judicial Penalties in Traditional Dispute Resolution ('Fatwa' /Shalish Cases)

- Repeated reports of 'fatwa' issuance in village shalish
- Penalties imposed of whipping/lashing /caning
- Penalties imposed for 'offences' which do not exist under Bangladesh law
- Penalties imposed by individuals who do not have any authority under law

Campaigns/Advocacy

- Legal /Social Support to victims (BLAST, BRAC, Nijera Kori)
- High level government intervention (PMO's Office) to ensure medical support, victims in OCC, security
- Press Conferences
- Lobbying of MPS (demand for circular to be issued)

PIL on Extra-Judicial Penalties

Court directed the Government (Local Government, Home, Information, Womens Ministry) :

- to show cause why issuance of extra-judicial penalties should not be held to be without lawful authority and in violation of fundamental rights to be treated in accordance with law, to equality, and to protection from inhuman and degrading treatment or punishment and why information should not be disseminated on Radio/TV in this connection
- To take immediate action to investigation any complaint regarding any such penalty, to take action against those responsible, and to provide security to victim and
- To disseminate court order to all local government bodies (Union Parishad, Paurashava, Municipality)

Lessons Learned

- Legal Action as part of multi-sectoral approach
 - Campaigning including in media (to raise public awareness, and sensitise courts and policy makers)
 - Support /monitoring of individual cases
 - Medical/Social Support for victims
 - PIL to frame standards OR enforce existing legal duties of officials
 - Lobbying of Government/Parliament/Local Bodies
 - Coordinated action by NGOS!





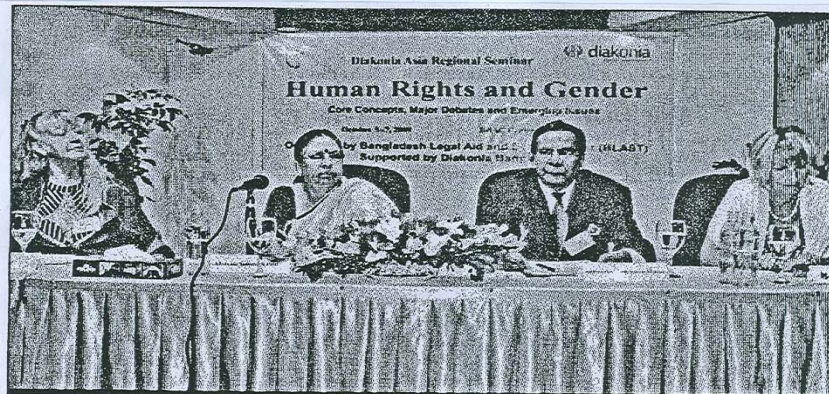
diakonia

PEOPLE CHANGING THE WORLD

Annexure-6

NEWAGE

Tuesday, October 06, 2009



Guests attend the inaugural session of a two-day seminar on 'Human Rights and Gender' organised by BLAST at the BRAC Centre Inn in Dhaka on Monday. — New Age photo

Regional seminar calls for gender equality to address HR concern

Staff Correspondent

STAKEHOLDERS on women and gender issues at a seminar on Monday called for achieving substantive gender equality addressing issues that appear to be conventional human rights concern and implementing local and international polices and treaties.

They suggested examining the role of existing legal frameworks on gender equality and scrutinising the institutional mechanism and obstacles to their implementation.

At a three-day regional seminar on 'Human Rights and Gender: Core Concepts, Major Debates and Emerging Issues' that kicked off on Monday at BRAC Centre Inn, representatives from South and South East Asian countries have come together to share their experiences in establishing gender equality

in their respective countries.

Rights defender Sultana Kamal inaugurated the seminar jointly organised by the Bangladesh Legal Aid and Services Trust and the Diakonia. The ambassador of Sweden in Dhaka, Britt Hagström, Diakonia policy adviser Mirijam Dahlgren and BLAST executive director Mohsin Ali Khan also spoke at the inaugural session.

Sultana Kamal lamented the government's apparently indifferent attitude in implementing the Women Development Policy and in fighting the existing religious and cultural fundamentalism in Bangladesh.

She said in Bangladesh there are legal frameworks to protect women's rights and the constitution of the country clearly states that all citizens were equal but those frameworks were least implemented.

She said there were

some campaigns to ensure gender equality in public life, but its absence in private life makes it ineffective.

Social discrimination, patriarchal culture, religious bigotry and bad law and order situation has led to denial of women's rights in Bangladesh, she said. Sultana said a move to ensure rights of the Hindu women got stalled due to resistance from religious leaders.

Dina Mahnaz Siddiqi of James P Grant School of Public Health, BRAC University, emphasised on understanding the structural factors and local contexts that produce or intensify gender inequality.

Two papers — 'Caste, Class, Ethnicity, Sexuality and Other Differences' by Meghna Guha Thakurta and 'Gender, Law and Human Rights' by Faustina Pereira — were presented on the first day of the seminar.



প্রথম প্রাপ্তো

বৃহস্পতিবার, ০৮ অক্টোবর, ২০০৯

দিয়াকোনিয়া সেমিনারের সমাপনী দিনে বক্তারা জেডারকে গুরুত্ব দিয়ে আঞ্চলিক নেটওয়ার্ক গড়ে তোলা জরুরি

নিজস্ব প্রতিবেদক

মিয়ানমার, কম্বোডিয়া, শ্রীলঙ্কা, থাইল্যান্ড, বাংলাদেশ এমনকি সুইডেনের মতো দেশেও মানবাধিকার, জেডার, নারীর অধিকার বিষয়গুলোতে প্রায় একই ধরনের অবস্থা বিরাজ করছে। মিয়ানমারের প্রতিনিধিরা জানালেন, মানবাধিকার কাকে বলে, তা তারা অনুধাবন করতে পারেন না। সুইডেনের নারীরা প্রজনন অধিকারসহ বিভিন্ন অধিকার সহজেই পান। তার পরও পিতৃতান্ত্রিক মনমানসিকতা ধাওয়া করছে দেশটিতে। পারিবারিক পর্যায়ে নারী নির্যাতনে অতিষ্ঠ প্রায় সবগুলো দেশ। নারীর প্রতি সব ধরনের বৈষম্য বিলোপে জাতিসংঘের সনদ বা সিডও সনদ বাস্তবায়নও হতাশাজনক। তাই এ ধরনের পরিস্থিতি মোকাবিলায় একটি আঞ্চলিক নেটওয়ার্ক গড়ে তোলা জরুরি।

গতকাল বৃহবার নগরীর ব্র্যাক সেন্টার ইন-এ মানবাধিকার ও জেডারবিষয়ক আঞ্চলিক সেমিনারের সমাপনী দিনে বক্তারা এ বিষয়টিতে একমত হন।

হিউম্যান রাইটস অ্যান্ড জেডার: কোর কনসেপ্টস, মেজর ডিবেটস অ্যান্ড ইমার্জিং ইস্যুজ' শীর্ষক দিয়াকোনিয়া এশিয়া আঞ্চলিক সেমিনারটির আয়োজন করে বাংলাদেশ লিগ্যাল এইড অ্যান্ড সার্ভিসেস ট্রাস্ট (ব্লাস্ট)। এতে সহায়তা করে দিয়াকোনিয়া বাংলাদেশ। তিন দিনব্যাপী এ আঞ্চলিক সেমিনারে মিয়ানমার, সুইডেন, কম্বোডিয়া, শ্রীলঙ্কা, থাইল্যান্ড ও বাংলাদেশের প্রতিনিধিরা অংশ নেন।

গতকাল সেমিনারে আঞ্চলিক নেটওয়ার্ক তৈরির জন্য জলবায়ু পরিবর্তন, জেডার, পারিবারিক নির্যাতন প্রতিরোধে আইন তৈরি ও আইনের বাস্তবায়ন, মানবাধিকার এবং জেডার পরিস্থিতি পর্যবেক্ষণ ও মূল্যায়নের কৌশল নির্ণয়, আঞ্চলিক উদ্যোগে ফেলোআপ কর্মসূচি পালনের বিষয়গুলো গুরুত্ব পায়।

গতকালের সেমিনারে আন্তর্জাতিক সিডও কমিটির সাবেক চেয়ারপারসন এবং এনজিও উইমেন ফর উইমেনের চেয়ারম্যান সালমা খান তাঁর প্রবন্ধে আন্তর্জাতিক বিভিন্ন দলিল যেখানে নারীর মানবাধিকারকে গুরুত্ব দেওয়া হয়েছে, সেগুলো নিয়ে আলোচনা করেন। একই সঙ্গে এ দলিলগুলো দক্ষিণ ও দক্ষিণ-

পূর্ব এশিয়ায় কতটুকু বাস্তবায়িত হচ্ছে, তা নিয়েও বিস্তৃত আলোচনা করেন। তিনি তাঁর প্রবন্ধে সিডও বিষয়টিকে বেশি গুরুত্ব দেন।

সালমা খানের মতে, উন্নয়ননীতি বা বিভিন্ন প্রকল্পে অন্যান্য বিষয় গুরুত্ব পেলেও জেডার ডাইমেনশনকে গুরুত্ব দেওয়া হয় না। এর পেছনে ইচ্ছা-অনিচ্ছার চেয়ে নীতিনির্ধারকদের দৃষ্টিভঙ্গি বড় ভূমিকা রাখে।

সুপ্রিম কোর্টের আইনজীবী সারা হোসেন নারী নির্যাতন প্রতিরোধে বিভিন্ন আইন এবং যৌন হয়রানি প্রতিরোধে হাইকোর্টের দেওয়া যুগান্তকারী রায় বিষয়ে আলোচনা করেন। চলতি বছর ২৩টি ফতোয়ার ঘটনা ঘটেছে উল্লেখ করে তিনি বলেন, এ ঘটনাগুলোর বেশির ভাগই গ্রাম্য সালিসের মাধ্যমে মীমাংসার চেষ্টা চালানো হচ্ছে। তিনি নারী নির্যাতন প্রতিরোধে গণমাধ্যম ও আইন-সংশ্লিষ্টদের সচেতনতা বৃদ্ধি এবং এনজিও ও সরকারের কার্যক্রমের মধ্যে সমন্বয় বাড়ানোর ওপর গুরুত্ব দেন।

ব্লাস্টের নির্বাহী পরিচালক সাবেক রাষ্ট্রদূত মহসিন আলী খান বলেন, বিভিন্ন দেশের অভিজ্ঞতা থেকে শিক্ষা নেওয়া, এ শিক্ষাগুলো দেশে এবং আঞ্চলিকভাবে কাজে লাগিয়ে ভবিষ্যৎ কর্মপন্থা নির্ণয় এবং আঞ্চলিক পর্যায়ে থেকে বিষয়গুলো নিয়ে ফেলোআপের জন্য নেটওয়ার্কের মাধ্যমে কাজ করার বিষয়ে একমত হওয়া

ছিল সেমিনারের মূল উদ্দেশ্য।

দিয়াকোনিয়ার এশিয়া অঞ্চলের জেডার উপদেষ্টা সুলতানা বেগম বলেন, সমাজে নারী ও পুরুষের বৈষম্য বিলোপে পুরুষ এবং যুবসমাজের মধ্যে সচেতনতা তৈরি ও অংশগ্রহণ জরুরি বিষয়।

গতকাল সেমিনারে নিউ এজ পত্রিকার সম্পাদক নুরুল কবীর, সুইডেনে দিয়াকোনিয়া প্রধান কার্যালয়ের জেডার ইকুয়ালিটি, এইচআইডি/এইডস মেথড এবং প্রোগ্রামের পলিসি উপদেষ্টা মিরজাম ডহলগরেন,

ব্র্যাক বিশ্ববিদ্যালয়ের জেমস পি গ্র্যান্ট স্কুল অব পাবলিক হেলথের অধ্যাপক এবং সেমিনারের সমন্বয়কারী দীনা সিদ্দিকী বক্তব্য দেন। সেমিনারে সঞ্চালকের দায়িত্ব পালন করেন এনজিও কমিউনিকার নির্বাহী পরিচালক অনীশ বড়ুয়া।

সমাজে নারী ও
পুরুষের বৈষম্য
বিলোপে পুরুষ এবং
যুবসমাজের মধ্যে
সচেতনতা তৈরি ও
অংশগ্রহণ জরুরি
বিষয়।

মঙ্গলবার, ০৬ অক্টোবর, ২০০৯

জেভার ও মানবাধিকার সেমিনারে বক্তারা নারী-পুরুষ সমতা প্রতিষ্ঠিত হলে সহিংসতা প্রতিরোধ সম্ভব

নিজস্ব বার্তা পরিবেশক

মানবাধিকার প্রতিষ্ঠা করতে লিঙ্গবৈষম্য দূর করতে হবে। সমাজে নারী-পুরুষের সমতা প্রতিষ্ঠিত না হলে নারীর প্রতি সহিংসতা রোধ করা সম্ভব নয়। মানবাধিকার রক্ষায় গৃহে ও কর্মস্থলে যৌন নিপীড়নসহ নারীর প্রতি সবধরনের সহিংসতা রোধ করতে হবে।

গতকাল রাজধানীর মহাখালী ব্র্যাক ইন সেন্টারে বাংলাদেশ লিগ্যাল এইড এন্ড সার্ভিসেস ট্রাস্ট (ব্লাস্ট) এবং ডায়াকনিয়া বাংলাদেশ আয়োজিত 'এশিয়া অঞ্চলের জেভার এবং মানবাধিকার' শীর্ষক সেমিনারে বক্তারা এসব কথা বলেন। তিন দিনব্যাপী সেমিনারে উদ্বোধনী অনুষ্ঠানে প্রধান অতিথি ছিলেন তত্ত্বাবধায়ক সরকারের সাবেক উপদেষ্টা এডভোকেট সুলতানা কামাল। বিশেষ অতিথি ছিলেন বাংলাদেশে সুইডিস রাষ্ট্রদূত ব্রিটি হাজস্টম ও সুইডেনের ডায়াকনিয়া হেড অফিসের পলিসি এডভাইজার মিরজাম ডহিলজেন। স্বাগত বক্তব্য রাখেন ব্লাস্টের নির্বাহী পরিচালক সাবেক রাষ্ট্রদূত মোহাম্মদ আলী খান। সেমিনারে সঞ্চালক ছিলেন ব্র্যাক

ইউনিভার্সিটির সেন্টার ফর জেভার, সেক্সুয়ালিটি এন্ড এইচআইভি এইডস-এর ডিজিটিং প্রফেসর ড. পিনা মেহনাজ সিদ্দিকী। এডভোকেট সুলতানা কামাল বলেন, দেশে শক্তিশালী গণতান্ত্রিক সরকার থাকলেও আইন-শৃঙ্খলা পরিস্থিতির তেমন উন্নতি হয়নি। এর ফলে একে অনিশ্চিত জীবনের সঙ্গে মানুষ বাস করছে। এ অনিশ্চিত জীবনের প্রথম নারী-পুরুষ: পৃ: ২ ক: ৭

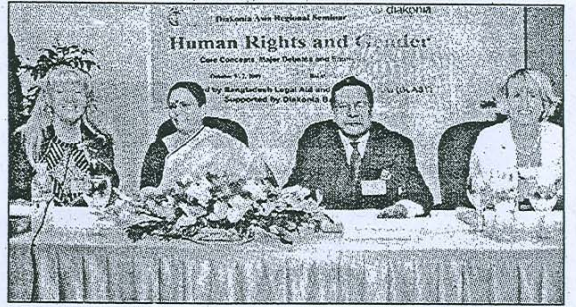
নারী-পুরুষ : সাহিংসতা (১২ পৃষ্ঠার পর)

শিকার নারীরা। বর্তমান সরকারের নারী উন্নয়নের বিভিন্ন দিক তুলে ধরে তিনি বলেন, সরকার নারী উন্নয়নে বেশ কিছু কাজ করলেও নারী উন্নয়ন নীতিমালা বাস্তবায়নে কোন উদ্যোগ নেয়নি। সংবিধানে নারীর সমঅধিকার দিলেও বাস্তবায়িত হয়নি বলে তিনি জানান। রাষ্ট্রদূত ব্রিটি হাজস্টম বলেন, সুইডেন সরকার জেভার সমতা, মানবাধিকার রক্ষা ও এইচআইভি এইডস নিয়ন্ত্রণে কাজ করে যাচ্ছে। সুশীল সমাজের সংগঠনগুলোর উচিত এসব বিষয়ে বর্তমান অবস্থার পরিবর্তনে কাজ করা। ডায়াকনিয়া পলিসি এডভাইজার মিরজাম ডহিলজেন বলেন, মানবাধিকার নারী-পুরুষ, ধনী-গরিব সবার জন্য নিশ্চিত করা প্রয়োজন। তবে নারীর অধিকার নিশ্চিত করা না হলে মানবাধিকার বাস্তবায়ন করা যাবে না। সরকারগুলো যৌন নির্যাতনে কঠোর শাস্তির ব্যবস্থা করলে নারী প্রতি সহিংসতা অনেক অংশে কমে আসবে বলেও তিনি জানান।

ব্লাস্টের নির্বাহী পরিচালক সাবেক রাষ্ট্রদূত মোহাম্মদ আলী খান। সেমিনারে সঞ্চালক ছিলেন ব্র্যাক

রক্ষা ও এইচআইভি এইডস নিয়ন্ত্রণে কাজ করে যাচ্ছে। সুশীল সমাজের সংগঠনগুলোর উচিত এসব বিষয়ে বর্তমান অবস্থার পরিবর্তনে কাজ করা। ডায়াকনিয়া পলিসি এডভাইজার মিরজাম ডহিলজেন বলেন, মানবাধিকার নারী-পুরুষ, ধনী-গরিব সবার জন্য নিশ্চিত করা প্রয়োজন। তবে নারীর অধিকার নিশ্চিত করা না হলে মানবাধিকার বাস্তবায়ন করা যাবে না। সরকারগুলো যৌন নির্যাতনে কঠোর শাস্তির ব্যবস্থা করলে নারী প্রতি সহিংসতা অনেক অংশে কমে আসবে বলেও তিনি জানান।

মঙ্গলবার, অক্টোবর ০৬, ২০০৯



এশিয়া রিজিওনাল সেমিনারে বক্তব্য রাখছেন এডভোকেট সুলতানা কামাল, রাষ্ট্রের নির্বাহী পরিচালক মোহাম্মদ আলী খানসহ অন্যান্য কর্মকর্তা -ইত্তেফাক

রাষ্ট্রের সেমিনারে অভিমত আইন-শৃঙ্খলা স্বাভাবিক না হলে মানবাধিকার অরক্ষিত থাকবে

..। ইত্তেফাক রিপোর্ট ..।
“এশিয়া রিজিওনাল সেমিনার অন জেভার এন্ড হিউম্যান রাইটস” শীর্ষক দুইদিনব্যাপী এক আঞ্চলিক সম্মেলনে বক্তারা বলেছেন, মানবাধিকার সুনিশ্চিত করা না হলে দেশের আইন-শৃঙ্খলা পরিস্থিতির উন্নতি হবে না। যতদিন আইন-শৃঙ্খলা পরিস্থিতি স্বাভাবিক হবে না ততদিন মানুষের জানমালের নিরাপত্তাসহ মানবাধিকার অরক্ষিত থাকবে। বক্তারা লিঙ্গ বৈষম্য বিরোধে নিরসনে নারী উন্নয়ন নীতিমালা বাস্তবায়নের দাবি জানান। বাংলাদেশ লিগ্যাল এইড এন্ড সার্ভিসেস ট্রাস্ট (ব্লাস্ট) আয়োজিত দুইদিনব্যাপী এই আঞ্চলিক সম্মেলন গতকাল সোমবার মহাখালীস্থ ব্র্যাক সেন্টারে শুরু হয়। সম্মেলনের উদ্বোধন করেন তত্ত্বাবধায়ক সরকারের সাবেক উপদেষ্টা এডভোকেট সুলতানা কামাল। অনুষ্ঠানে মূল নিবন্ধন উপস্থাপন করেন রাষ্ট্রের নির্বাহী পরিচালক ও সাবেক রাষ্ট্রদূত মোহাম্মদ আলী খান। অনুষ্ঠানে (১৫শ পৃঃ ৩-এর কঃ প্রঃ)

আইন-শৃঙ্খলা (১৬শ পৃঃ পর)

বক্তব্য রাখেন সুইডিস রাষ্ট্রদূত মিস ব্রিক হ্যাগসটন, সুইডেনের ডায়াকনিয়া হেড অফিসের পলিসি এডভাইজার মিরজাম ডহিলজেন, ব্র্যাক ইউনিভার্সিটির অধ্যাপক ড. দিনা সিদ্দিকী। অনুষ্ঠানে আইন সালিশ কেন্দ্রের সভাপতি ড. হামিদা হোসেন, ব্যাকসিআর সারা হোসেনসহ সুইডেন, কানাডা, থাইল্যান্ড, মারানমর ও ভারতের ‘খিলাফ’ খাজিরা উপস্থিত ছিলেন। সম্মেলনের উদ্বোধনী অনুষ্ঠানে এডভোকেট সুলতানা কামাল বলেন, জাতীয় নারী উন্নয়ন নীতিমালা বাস্তবায়ন না হওয়ায় নারী-পুরুষের বৈষম্য বাড়ছে। সুনির্দিষ্ট নারী নীতিমালা না থাকায় সরকার নারীদের নিরাপত্তা নিশ্চিত করতে পারছে না। তিনি বলেন, সংবিধানে ১০ নম্বর অনুচ্ছেদে নারীর সমঅধিকারের কথা বলা হলেও নারীরা ব্যক্তিগত ও রাষ্ট্রীয় জীবনে সমঅধিকার থেকে বঞ্চিত হচ্ছে। তিনি বিচার বহির্ভূত হত্যাকাণ্ডের নিন্দা জানিয়ে বলেন, গণতান্ত্রিক সরকারের আমলে সন্ত্রাস দমনে সরকারের এমন পন্থা গ্রহণযোগ্য নয়। সুইডিস রাষ্ট্রদূত মিস ব্রিক হ্যাগসটন নারীর বৈষম্য দূর করতে সুশীল সমাজকে এগিয়ে আসার আহ্বান জানান। দুইদিনের সম্মেলনের আজ মঙ্গলবার শেষ দিন।

লিঙ্গ বৈষম্য বিরোধে নিরসনে নারী উন্নয়ন নীতিমালা বাস্তবায়নের দাবি জানান। বাংলাদেশ লিগ্যাল এইড এন্ড সার্ভিসেস ট্রাস্ট (ব্লাস্ট) আয়োজিত দুইদিনব্যাপী এই আঞ্চলিক সম্মেলন গতকাল সোমবার মহাখালীস্থ ব্র্যাক সেন্টারে শুরু হয়। সম্মেলনের উদ্বোধন করেন তত্ত্বাবধায়ক সরকারের সাবেক উপদেষ্টা এডভোকেট সুলতানা কামাল। অনুষ্ঠানে মূল নিবন্ধন উপস্থাপন করেন রাষ্ট্রের নির্বাহী পরিচালক ও সাবেক রাষ্ট্রদূত মোহাম্মদ আলী খান। অনুষ্ঠানে (১৫শ পৃঃ ৩-এর কঃ প্রঃ)

বাড়ছে। সুশীল সমাজ না থাকায় সরকার নারীদের নিরাপত্তা নিশ্চিত করতে পারছে না। তিনি বলেন, সংবিধানে ১০ নম্বর অনুচ্ছেদে নারীর সমঅধিকারের কথা বলা হলেও নারীরা ব্যক্তিগত ও রাষ্ট্রীয় জীবনে সমঅধিকার থেকে বঞ্চিত হচ্ছে। তিনি বিচার বহির্ভূত হত্যাকাণ্ডের নিন্দা জানিয়ে বলেন, গণতান্ত্রিক সরকারের আমলে সন্ত্রাস দমনে সরকারের এমন পন্থা গ্রহণযোগ্য নয়। সুইডিস রাষ্ট্রদূত মিস ব্রিক হ্যাগসটন নারীর বৈষম্য দূর করতে সুশীল সমাজকে এগিয়ে আসার আহ্বান জানান। দুইদিনের সম্মেলনের আজ মঙ্গলবার শেষ দিন।



NEWAGE

Thursday, October 08, 2009

Regional seminar on human rights, gender concludes

Staff Correspondent

A THREE-DAY regional seminar on human rights and gender ended in Dhaka on Wednesday, sharing views on struggle, resistances and successful campaigns for human rights and gender equality.

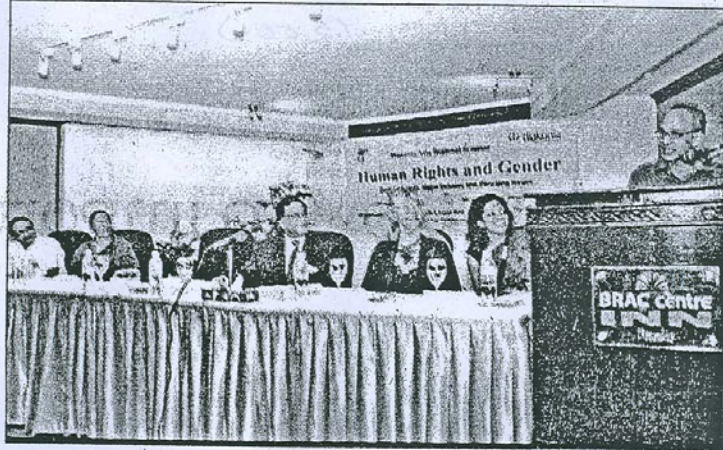
The Diakonia Asia Regional Seminar on Human Rights and Gender was organised by the Bangladesh Legal Aid and Services Trust at the BRAC Centre Inn.

The regional discussions provided participants with an overview of core international human rights treaties and relevant policies that involve rights of women.

Human rights activists of South and South East Asia attended.

New Age editor Nurul Kabir spoke as chief guest in the concluding session that was also addressed by Anish Barua, executive director of Communica, Mirjam Dahlgren, policy adviser of Diakonia head office, and Dina Minhaz Siddiqi, visiting professor, centre for gender, sexuality and HIV/AIDS, James P Grant School of Public Health of BRAC University.

Mohsin Ali Khan, executive director of the Bangladesh Legal Aid and Services Trust, presided over the session.



New Age editor Nurul Kabir speaks while, from left to right, Anish Barua, executive director of Communica, Shahnaj Begum, regional adviser Diakonia, Mohsin Ali Khan, executive director BLAST, Mirjam Dahlgren, policy adviser of Diakonia head office and Dina Minhaz Siddiqi, visiting professor at BRAC University attend a seminar on human rights and gender at the BRAC Centre Inn in Dhaka on Wednesday.

— New Age photo

The Daily Star

Tuesday, October 06, 2009

Women worst victims of HR violations'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Political instability and worsening law and order situation are linked to the violations of human rights in the country and the worst victims of HR violations are women, said Sultana Kamal, a former adviser to the caretaker government, at a seminary yesterday.

Though a democratic government is now in power, political stability and law and order are yet to be ensured, she said as the chief guest at the inaugural session of the three-day seminar titled 'Human rights and gender: core concepts, major debates and emerging issues' at Brac Centre Inn in the city.

The state machinery have failed to provide justice for women who are abused

sexually, mentally and physically," she said.

Women do not have access to proper healthcare services, they are suffering from acute malnutrition, and they even don't have the right to information, she said.

The constitution grants equal rights to women and men, but women do not have enough access to all public facilities, she added.

Bangladesh Legal Aid and Services Trust (BLAST) organised the seminar with the support of Diakonia, a Swedish NGO. Representatives from partner NGOs of Diakonia from South Asia are taking part in the seminar to share their experiences on gender and human rights issues.

Mirjam Dahlgren, policy

adviser to Diakonia, was present as a special guest.

She said human rights involve all sections of people - rich and poor, men and women and children and the aged. To ensure human rights of women, men have to come forward and involve themselves more.

To curb violence against women, the government must ensure that the culprits do not go unpunished, she added.

The speakers also said human rights cannot be ensured without addressing the gender equality issues.

Swedish Ambassador Britt F Hagström, Executive Director of BLAST Mohsin Ali Khan, seminar coordinator Dina Minhaz Siddiqi and Sultana Begum of Diakonia Bangladesh also spoke.



Seminar Album



Asia Regional Seminar on Human Rights and Gender



Regional Seminar on Human Rights and Gender: Core Concepts, Major Debates and Emerging Issues



Bangladesh Legal Aid and Services Trust (BLAST)
1/1, Pioneer Road, Kakrail, Dhaka-1000