

National News

Women's empowerment is paramount for sustainable development and good governance: TIB on International Women's Day

Virtual workshop for female UNOs held marking the day

Dhaka 8 March 2021: Without active participation of women in leadership, it is impossible to achieve sustainable development and good governance, Transparency International Bangladesh (TIB) said in a statement marking International Women's Day on March 8, 2021.

Similarly, ensuring gender equality is unachievable if women, who represent half the population of Bangladesh, are left behind, the statement said.

Referring to recent surveys, TIB also stated that just as women are victims of corruption, women are also being used as a medium and facilitator of corruption.

Therefore, TIB believes that women's empowerment and good governance must be ensured to effectively prevent corruption, thus accomplishing sustainable development.

Placing an eight-point demand in the statement, TIB called for ensuring a conducive environment for women's empowerment, gender equality, and leadership in all areas.

Referring to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic in the statement, TIB Executive Director Dr. Iftekharuzzaman said that women in Bangladesh contributed to tackling the pandemic alongside men. "But even at such times, violence against women or oppression of women has not stopped. A recent study found that 30.54 percent of women were physically abused, 22.99 percent were sexually harassed, 76.53 percent had their daily lives controlled, 35.4 percent were financially abused during the pandemic, and 43.75 percent have been victims of both physical and sexual abuse," said the Executive Director.

He also said Sustainable Development Goal-5 emphasises equal rights and empowerment for women and girls. Objective-17 calls for the prevention of corruption, good governance, justice and the establishment of the rule of law.

Therefore, sustainable development is impossible without the active participation of women at all levels, including leadership and equal rights and empowerment of women, concluded Dr. Zaman.

This year, TIB celebrated the day through various programmes locally and nationally under the theme "Sustainable Development and Good Governance: Women in Leadership and Equality".

In addition, various programmes, including online discussion meetings, quiz competitions and content writing competitions, were held nationally and locally with the participation of youth volunteers- Youth Engagement and Support (YES) members across the country.

Virtual workshop for female UNOs marking the day

Earlier, on 3-4 March 2021, TIB, with the collaboration of the Cabinet Division, organised a two-day workshop at the national level for female Upazila Nirbahi Officers of 24 Upazilas of the country.

The objective of the virtual training workshop, the 4th such event since 2018, was to strengthen the capacity of the government officials to play an effective role in ensuring good governance through implementing the gender-related targets in SDGs.

Sheikh Manjur-E-Alam, Director- Outreach and Communication (O&C) of TIB, conducted the opening session. Human rights activist Advocate U. M. Habibun Nessa made a detailed presentation on 'Empowerment of women and the current perspective'.

During a presentation, TIB Executive Director Dr. Iftekharuzzaman emphasised development for all while ensuring justice, functional institutions in a democracy, free access to information and protection of fundamental freedoms, and design and implementation of anti-corruption anti-bribery measures.

ULAB YES observed International Women's Day

To mark International Women's Day 2021, YES Club-University of Liberal Arts Bangladesh (ULAB) organized on 08 March 2021.

Dr. Kaberi Gayen, Professor & Chairperson of Department of Mass Communication and Journalism, University of Dhaka joined the event as the keynote speaker while Sheikh Manjur-E-Alam, Director, O&C, TIB graced the event as a guest.

One hundred twenty YES members and students from different educational institutions including seventy females and twenty from marginalized communities registered to attend the event.

CCCs Observed International Women's Day **Women's participation in leadership roles is vital for achieving SDGs**

Participation of women in leadership role and ensuring their empowerment can lead a country towards sustainable development, said speakers on International Women's Day on 8 March 2021 at the events in different districts organised by CCCs. Due to COVID-19 pandemic the events were organised in a limited scale but active participation of local administrations was remarkable.

The speakers said ensuring legal and institutional obligations, and awareness of equal rights for women along with men is crucial. Women's rights movement and anti-corruption movement are not different as they both tend to lead a country towards a better future and sustainable development. So, equal rights of male & female need to be ensured for empowering women which are pre-requisites to meet SDGs.

With the theme ‘Sustainable Development and Good Governance: Women in Leadership and Equality’, Committee of Concerned Citizens (CCCs) observed the International Women’s Day jointly with the local administration and the Department of Women Affairs while organizing and participating in different activities including discussions.

A concept note with an eight-point demands was shared in the discussion meetings and disseminated among relevant stakeholders where TIB asked authorities to take necessary steps for ensuring women’s participation and leadership in access to services and decision making process, especially in health & income-generating services; develop and enact specific plan to restraint violence against women & children by 2030 focusing SDGs - 5 & 16; make accountable authorities responsible for ensuring access to justice to domestic violence victims; ensure rule of law and equal rights which is a pre-requisite for establishing women empowerment.

At the events, the speakers also added that patriarchal attitude and corruption is hindering the process of women development.

Hence, establishing good governance is inevitable in every sector to resist corruption of our society and achieve the desired development for women.

Speakers emphasized on ensuring gender-sensitive atmosphere at all service delivery institutions. Members of CCC, SWAJAN, YES and YES Friends attended the events.

Monira Sultana Moni, honorable Member of the Parliament (Mymensingh-326 reserved), was present as chief guest in a discussion meeting held in Mymensingh.

In other events, Deputy Commissioners (DC) of respective districts, Superintendent of Police, locally elected representatives including municipality mayor, Upazila Nirbahi Officers (UNO), public officials, different professionals, civil society members, media representatives and young people were present.

Power abuse, collusion and incompetency shroud Forest Department: TIB on International Forest Day

TIB calls for transparency and accountability in forest conservation and management

Collusion and incompetence of a class of officials, and the abuse of power by the Forest Department is one of the major set-backs to sustainable forest development, Transparency International Bangladesh (TIB) said by issuing a statement on International Forest Day on 21 March, 2021.

“The misuse of power by the Forest Department and the collusion and incompetence of a class of officials in the forest-centric corruption have become one of the obstacles to sustainable forest development. The Department of Forests has not been able to use both the powers and the powers vested in it to protect public forest lands and to ensure the traditional land rights of forest people,” the statement said lambasting the Forest Department.

Marking the day, TIB also called for ensuring transparency, accountability and effective supervision in forest conservation and management of the country. This year’s theme is "Forest Restoration: A path to recovery and well-being".

In addition, TIB's placed a 12-point demand in the statement that include-- the enforcement of existing laws in accordance with the constitutional obligation to provide protection to all forests and wildlife; a total halt to the use of reserved forest land in the name of development, ensuring prior consent of the Forest Department before any deforestation or forest land use, even for the state needs; and proper completion of an error-free environmental impact assessment.

Reminding the background of observing the day nationally and internationally, TIB in the statement said, "Although the importance of forests and forest land in maintaining the balance of nature and environment is immense, there is a lack of effective measures for forest conservation and development."

The statement also said, "Multifaceted risks for deforestation have been created by those who have been conducting unplanned development activities on forest land, constructing coal-fired power plants near protected forests including the Sundarbans, allocating land around forests for the construction of public and private industries and establishments, and allowing corruption and encroachment on forest land. This is endangering wildlife and increasing the decay of forest land and resources."

"According to the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, the annual deforestation rate in Bangladesh is almost double than that of the global average. In the last seventeen years, about 66 square kilometers of tropical rain forests have been destroyed in Bangladesh, which is a matter of concern. And as per the forest department, 2,87,453 acres of forest land have been occupied all over the country. Of this, 1 lakh 38 thousand acres are reserved forest land," the statement says.

The statement pointed out that the absence of forest policies, the lack of goodwill from the Forest Department and the 94-year-old Forest Act present various challenges in law enforcement on forest and its conservation.

The statement also said that although a new Forest Act was drafted in 2019, experts termed it as a renaming of the 1927 Forest Act.

"The government has set a target of reducing carbon emissions by 80% by 2050. However, in the name of critical technology, industrial plants, including anti-life coal and LNG-based power plants are being set up in the vicinity of the Sundarbans and in environmentally critical areas, which is a clear violation of section 5 of the Conservative Environment ACT-1995," TIB stated.

TIB's stall in Amar Ekhushey Book Fair 2021

In the wake of COVID-19 pandemic this year, the country's biggest book fair Amar Ekushey Granthamela could not be organized during the usual time in February. However, Bangla Academy decided to organize the fair from 18 March to 14 April 2021 upon the request of the publishers struggling to maintain proper health safety measures.

Although TIB participated in the fair as usual, TIB management decided to close its stall at the fair on 24 March 2021 considering the uprising situation of the pandemic afterwards.

During the participation period, TIB's publications were displayed and sold in the stall and anti-corruption sticker and flyers were distributed among the visitors. Members of the Dhaka YES groups acted as the volunteers and shared their activities with the visitors.

Union Parishad seeks CCC's cooperation to fight corruption

Dulahazara Union Parishad Chairman of Chakaria upazila of Cox's Bazar district sought cooperation from Committee of Concerned Citizens (CCC) to fight against corruption by strengthening transparency and accountability and to increase the quality of services.

The chairman of the union parishad Alhaz Nurul Amin asked for the cooperation in an opinion sharing meeting with the CCC held on 07 March 2021 at his office.

Seeking support from the local level watchdog of TIB, the Union Parishad Chairman said, "The parishad is trying to meet its commitment by implementing different development projects."

"We can ensure transparency and accountability in our work by getting support and guidance from the CCC. The union parishad is committed to preventing corruption for the betterment of its services," he added.

Representatives of the CCC shared that CCC will change their intervention strategy in the upcoming days and will provide technical support to the union parishad for increasing the quality of its services. They said union parishad should display its updated information regarding budget and development projects in publicly as part of its accountability. Respective authority needs to ensure proactive disclosure so that citizens can get access to the information.

CCC appreciated different initiatives of the union parishad for ensuring citizen's participation in its development projects. The meeting decided to publish a publication on the UP's development activities of the last five years.

Chairman Alhaz Nurul Amin presided over the meeting while Panel Chairman Alhaz Shawkat Ali, Vice President of CCC, Chakaria Ranendu Bikash Dey, Convener of the Local Government sub-committee of the CCC Zia Uddin, Secretary of the UP Humayun Kabir, elected members of the UP were present in the meeting among others.

Quality service falls short at a district level hospital: CCC finds

CCC calls for transparency and quality services

The authority of Kishoreganj General Hospital admits that lack of manpower, medical equipment and other medical-related facilities hinder in providing quality services to the patients during the ongoing corona pandemic.

The 250-bed hospital Superintendent Dr. Helal Uddin shared that 84 positions are now vacant in this hospital. Only 24 doctors are serving against 65 sanctioned positions which created a backlog in discharging their duties.

The authority shared the information in an online opinion sharing meeting with Committee of Concerned Citizens (CCC), Kishoreganj held on 02 March 2021.

Dr. Helal Uddin said the referred patients suffer immensely from lack of ambulance services which are out of service. However, the authority is trying to increase its manpower, equipment and facilities for extending support to the citizens.

CCC of Kishoreganj chapter asked the authority to increase transparency and accountability for its services.

CCC representatives suggested the authority to increase the quality of services for fighting COVID-19, prepare extensive plan to fight COVID-19, ensure all type of health services regarding COVID-19 with free of cost, organize training for doctors, nurses & health workers, ensure proper management of medical wastage, ensure transparency and accountability, etc.

Authority assured to take measures considering the recommendations. Among others, members of the CCC, SWAJON and YES group were connected online.

The Superintendent of the hospital Dr. Helal Uddin was present as chief guest while Saiful Haque Mollah Dulu, president of the CCC presided over the opinion sharing meeting.

Nationwide content writing competition held

20 educational institutions participated in the event by the Development Studies YES Group

To mark the International Women's Day, YES group- the Department of Development Studies of the University of Dhaka organized a nationwide content writing competition in Bangla and English following a discussion on SDG, Good Governance and Women Empowerment on 8 March 2021. The competition began on 21 February and concluded on 05 March. Before the competition, a workshop on content writing was conducted by the group.

This workshop was facilitated by Ashfaquzzaman, a journalist from The Daily Prothom Alo and Ashfaul Haque Chowdhury, a research analyst from the World Bank Bangladesh. A total of 33 participants from 20 institutions submitted their content in 8 burning issues and 6 of them were awarded.

To announce the result of this competition and celebrate the day, the group organized a discussion on SDG, Good Governance and Women Empowerment, where Dr. Atiur Rahman, former Governor of the Central Bank of Bangladesh was the key speaker.

Besides, Imran Hossain Bhuiyan, Assistant Professor, Department of Development Studies, University of Dhaka; and Najia Kabir, Lecturer of the same Department were guest speakers. The winning content was on Corruption Perception Index (CPI) 2020, SDGs and Bangladesh, Development and Corruption and Women Empowerment in Bangladesh. This event was live broadcasted on the TIB's Facebook page and more than 5 thousand viewers watched it.

DSDU YES Group organized a workshop on Policy Making

To enhance the knowledge of the youths on policymaking, YES group of the Department of Development Studies, University of Dhaka (DSDU) organized a workshop on Policymaking on 27 March 2021.

The workshop was supported by Transparency International Bangladesh in association with Youthpoles.

More than 50 students from the different institutions of the country, and the YES members participated in the two-hour long workshop.

The workshop was designed to help the participants learn about a proper policy reformation and critical thinking towards a policy.

Dr. Nazneen Ahmed, Research Fellow of BIDS and Dr. Asif Shahan, Associate Professor of the Department of Development Studies, University of Dhaka conducted the workshop.

Following the workshop, a policy-making competition will be organized in the next months on Sustainable Development Goal (SDG).

Imran Hossain Bhuiyan, Assistant Professor of Development Studies, University of Dhaka and Adviser of the YES group attended the workshop as guests. The event was broadcasted live on the event page of the group.

Stamford YES celebrated National Independence Day 2021

YES Group- Stamford University organized a Quiz Competition on 18 March 2021 to celebrate the National Independence Day. A total of 50 students from all over the country participated in this competition and 5 of them were awarded by the group.

Apart from this competition, the group also organized a discussion titled “50 years of independence: Youths Perception on Good Governance” on 27 March 2021 to announce the result of the Quiz Competition.

Six young leaders from different sectors presented their thoughts on the issue.

The key speakers were ----Dr. Mohsin Tonmoy, Adviser of the Chinese Student Union; Dr. Shohag Hawlader, a BCS doctor; Rahat Hasan, winner of the Queens Young Leaders Award 2017; Mahbub Alam, former leader of JU YES group; Delowar Hossain, former leader of Stamford YES; and Zayed al Araf Shihab, Leader of the Stamford YES.

Supa Sadia, Head of Public Relations- Stamford University; Rehena Akter, Adviser of the Student Welfare- Stamford University; Mohsinul Karim, Assistant Professor, Department of Economics; and Adviser of the YES group of Stamford University also attended the event as special guest.

Corruption is against the Spirit of Our Liberation War

With an aim to observe the Independence Day of Bangladesh, UAP YES Club organized a webinar titled 'Corruption is against the Spirit of our Liberation War' on 27 March 2021.

Eminent Jurist Dr. Shahdeen Malik, Advocate Bangladesh Supreme Court and Member, Board of Trustees Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD) was the keynote speaker.

Air Commodore Ishfaq Ilahi Choudhury (Retired) Treasurer and Director, Directorate of Students Welfare (DSW), University of Asia Pacific (UAP) joined as a chief guest while Sheikh Manjur-E-Alam, Director, Outreach and Communication, Transparency International Bangladesh (TIB) attended as a special guest. One hundred and twenty participants registered for the event.

Youth must know the real liberation war history: ULAB YES calls upon youths

YES Group-University of Liberal Arts Bangladesh made a video documentary as a part of celebrating the Independence Day.

YES members uplifted and glorified the glorious role played by the freedom fighters of the country, especially the youth, in our great liberation war in 1971. Their valiant sacrifices and contributions for our independence would remain etched in golden letters in the history of Bangladesh.

Reminding that ninety-five percent of the freedom fighters were youths, YES Group also urged the youth to be informed more about the real history of our liberation war and shape out their future aim and responsibilities to work for the nation.

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