

WOMEN STANDING FOR WOMEN

International
Women Human Rights
Defender's Day

29 November 2020

“ZERO TOLERANCE FOR VIOLENCE
AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS”

“Survivor’s resilience”

On occasion of the 16 Days of Activism, Tarango the shelter for GBV survivors in Mirpur of Dhaka, organized an event to celebrate the contribution of female human rights defenders, many of whom were survivors of gender-based violence.

“I experienced continuous mental distress due to the misbehaviour and abuse inflicted by my mother-in-law, who thought I was too black to be beautiful,” said Marium Begum. She is one of the GBV survivors residing at the shelter when given the chance to share her experience on 29 November 2020, International Women Human Rights Defender’s Day.



Marium Begum shared that the violence she experienced because of the colour of her skin.



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the People of Japan



Girls inform community about Covid-19 prevention measures

The program gave opportunity to GBV survivors to tell their stories as well as to hear from influential leaders such as the local Imam, high school principal and Ward Counsellor about their commitment to eliminate GBV and uphold human rights.



Adolescent girls ensured covid-19 prevention measures at the event

Members of adolescent girls club of Tarango facilitated the dissemination of COVID-19 and Gender-Based Violence (GBV) related information. For the first time, discourse was opened with human rights defenders, community elites and survivors present together. They spotlighted the collective suffering of women and girls in their home, school as well as public spaces. Keeping COVID-19 adaptability in focus, coping strategies and health guidelines were also shared.

The women and girls at the shelter suppose that their present reality constitutes safety, protection and belonging. This was not always the case. Many never had the good fortune to attend school or any vocational training.

“Every day, I woke up and put on my school uniform hoping that my husband and in-laws had changed their mind about me attending school,” said Putul who was a child bride at age seven.

Men’s and boys’ engagement



Mr. Firoz Kibria, principal of local School expressed his heartfelt commitment towards ending violence against girls.

Ward Councilor Mr. Abu Taher of Mirpur Ward No-10, Ms. Kohinoor Yeasmin, CEO of Tarango, Mr. Abul Awal, Imam-Lalkuthi Big Mosque and Mr. Firoz Kibria, Principal- Kabi Nazrul School were present at the event. “I urge you to ask yourselves, what is the root cause of violence? Perhaps it is because men and boys don’t learn how to respect women and girls from an early age? Perhaps they don’t see equality, kindness and empathy at home? It is our collective responsibility to engage with this issue. We would be mistaken to think that women’s issues are their own to resolve. It takes an entire community and all generations alive to reverse this pervasive problem. And I commit to do my part by raising awareness within our school community,” said Mr. Firoz Kibria, principal of Kazi Nazrul Islam School.

Local imam urges community's support

“Our Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) was a pioneer of women’s rights! It is outrageous that we are still having to convince society about the worth of the girl child in the so-called modern era we are living in,” stated Mr. Abul Awal, Imam-Lalkuthi Big Mosque.

He expressed deep grievance at the level of violence seen in the community and stressed that this should never be the case. He mentioned that when boys and girls are given equal opportunities, their potential will always equal each other.



GBV survivors participated in the event maintaining COVID hygiene and social distancing rules.

Survivors as agents of change

Rehabilitation has transformed the lives of women and girls living at the women’s shelter. They receive overnight accommodation along with medical care and psychosocial support. Not only are they back on their feet now, they are also fending for their children and standing by other survivors through their dutiful service in the community. The adolescent girls club regularly holds community outreach programs and impart life-saving information on assistance available and regarding essential services in the area. Vocational training such as sewing and knitting, as well as financial literacy and general awareness has given many women the opportunity to not just recover from the trauma of abuse but become financially independent.

Many survivors of GBV are now human rights defenders themselves. Marium Begum and Putul are both providing support to run the shelter. They help new arrivals to adjust. Previously they used to feel victimized but mentioned that they feel rather confident presently. The belief that they can improve others’ lives through their own resilience and effort keep them going. It then came as no surprise that they presented a powerful group dance carrying placards for community awareness on COVID-19 prevention measures and GBV. The place was bombarded with messages on available hotlines and services. The women and girls are calling for urgent community action and responsible behaviour. Their example makes it evident that the empowerment of women and girls benefits a whole community, the fruits of which are enjoyed by all.



Adolescent girls shared important Covid-19 awareness messages, and ensured safety at the entrance of the premises.



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