

## JULY 2017

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We are concluded the following activities, during the period of July 2017 are as follows:

- 1. Discussion meeting:** A discussion meeting about existing barriers and challenges of Women with Disabilities was being organized by Sight Savors' International (SSI), on 5<sup>th</sup> July 2017, in the Auditorium of SSI. Shirin Akhter, Chairperson and Md. Hasanuzzaman, Program Coordinator of WDDF were present in this discussion meeting. Multifaceted barriers and challenges have to face by Women with Disabilities in their daily lives such as infrastructural and informational inaccessibility in all aspects of the society. Besides, appropriate plans and programs in education, health and employment sectors haven't been adopted considering the needs and demands of Women with Disabilities. Due to inaccessible public transport and lack of proper social security a large number of Women with Disabilities are being excluded from social participation and social development. So, the overall situation of Women with Disabilities and the ways of reducing their sufferings are being discussed in this meeting elaborately.
- 2. Thematic committee on 'Rights of Persons with Disabilities and Autism' meeting:** A Thematic committee on 'Rights of Persons with Disabilities and Autism' meeting in order to review National Action Plan on 'Persons with Disabilities Rights and protection Act 2013' was being organized by National Human Rights Commission Bangladesh (NHRCB), at 4.00 PM, on 9<sup>th</sup> July 2017, in the Conference room of NHRCB. Ashrafun Nahar, Executive Director and Md. Hasanuzzaman, Program Coordinator of WDDF were present in this discussion meeting. Actually, this committee formed a working committee in order to formulating a National Action Plan comprising Ten National Action Plans prepared by Ten organizations.
- 3. International Program:** An Annual South Asia Women's Fund (SAWF) Regional Convergence with the participation of partners of South Asia Region was being organized by South Asia Women's Fund (SAWF) from 14 to 16 July 2017, at Soaltee Crowne Plaza hotel, Kathmandu, Nepal. A number of presentations on the challenging issues and success of women in different parts of South Asia were present in the different sessions of three days regional convergence. The agenda of this convergence are as follows: The Current global and regional political climate and its impact on women's and trans\* rights and organising:

A) Understand "right wing" positioning/politics, in all its nuances and shades;

B) Lay out the strengths and challenges of identity politics: particularly from

understanding the minority, marginalized and oppressed communities; as well as building

of the exaggerated nationalist discourse;

C) Examine and understand the participation of women in the above, and its impact on

feminist work in the region.

Strengthening feminist voices:

A) Building Inclusive movement/s;

B) Sustaining feminist women's rights work;

Environment Justice and Women's Rights.

Movement and labour:

A) Reaffirming labour rights of women workers in the unorganised sectors.

B) The importance to engage normative standards as a strategy to claim rights.

Autonomy, Decisions and Sexual Rights:

A) Consent and Decision-making.

B) Understanding sexual rights – Going beyond SRHR.

C) Autonomy and Sexuality in an environment of radicalization.

D) Family laws in South Asia.

E) Access to justice.

F) Collective reflection.

Shirin Akhter, Chairperson and Ashrafun Nahar, Executive Director, WDDF participated in this regional Convergence. As a Women with Disabilities rights activist of Bangladesh and speaker of the convergence, Ashrafun Nahar discussed in a session how the movement of Women with Disabilities has been included with the mainstreaming women movement and discussed the situation of Women with disabilities in the light of abovementioned agenda.

4. **Seminar in Bogra:** A seminar on "**Access to Justice for Women with Disabilities**" is being organized with the initiative of Women with Disabilities Development Foundation (WDDF), **Locally Supported by Bogra Zila Spandon Protibandhi Nari Parisad**, at Rajonigandha hall, Biam Foundation Bogra, on Tuesday, 25th July 2017 from 10 AM to 2 PM. in order to discuss the scenario of access to justice for Women With Disabilities and how their human rights are being violated due to inaccessible and long procedures in justice system. So, we urge for an inclusive, anti discriminatory and Women with Disabilities friendly society for all. WDDF run and led by Women with Disabilities has been working as collective force with the Government, policy makers, representatives of civil society and media for the inclusion of Women with Disabilities in mainstream development process through reducing their challenges and discrimination in the issue of infrastructural and informational accessibility in all aspects including justice system. The seminar was being moderated and keynote paper was being presented by AshrafunNahar, Executive Director, Women with Disabilities Development Foundation (WDDF). In this paper she mentioned about the constitutional and legal rights of Girls and Women with disabilities. Most of the litigations, at the time of witness adopting procedures in Court, sign language interpreter aren't being used for the victim girls or women with Speech and Hearing or intellectual impairments. Police officers and medical officers aren't cooperative to file the litigations of victim girls or women with Disabilities and legal institutions aren't disabled friendly. Most of Women with Disabilities (WWDs) are suffering from inaccessible justice system and deprived from their equal citizen rights. In spite of having been arrived in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, there are no accessibility in Judge courts, District courts, even in Supreme Court for Persons with Disabilities. Most of the laws are formulated and enacted without the inclusion and participation of Persons with Disabilities. So, the scenario of the sufferings of Women with disabilities in the ongoing legal support and services is extremely vulnerable in the existing situation. Though UNCRPD Article-13 'Access to justice' noted that, States Parties shall ensure effective access to justice for persons with disabilities on an equal basis with others, including through the provision of procedural and age-appropriate accommodations, in order to facilitate their effective role as direct and indirect participants, including as witnesses, in all legal proceedings, including at investigative and other preliminary stages. The panel discussants of this seminar shared their challenging experiences and complexity to get justice of Women with Disabilities. They also stated that, though 'Persons With Disabilities Rights and protection Act 2013 and UNCRPD mentioned the issue of getting justice for Persons with Disabilities with very significance, With the strong advocacy and voice raising of Women with disabilities Rights activists, only Three legal aid support providing organizations BLAST, BRAC and BNWLA have come forward with their extensive hand to provide legal services for Women with Disabilities. Without having been enjoyed basic human rights including accessibility right in justice system along with participation, SDGs won't be achieved properly. In the light of realizing this situation, WDDF has organized this seminar due to advancing forward with this issue.

The participants of the open discussion have clearly been stated that, Without having been enjoyed basic rights including accessibility right in justice system along with equal participation, all types of Women With Disabilities haven't been included in the mainstream of development and in this consequence, national development will extremely be interrupted.

Md. Habibar Rahman MP, Honorable Member of Parliament, National Parliament was present as Chief Guest in the program. Besides, Md. Najmul Haque, Chief of Admin (Former Secretary Ministry), Thengamara Mohila Sabuj Sangha (TMSS) was present as special guest as well as a number of lawyers of Judge Court and Supreme Court were present as discussants in the abovementioned seminar. This seminar is being presided over ShirinAkhter, Chairperson, Women with Disabilities Development Foundation (WDDF).

5. **Training:** A day long training with the participation of 24 different types of Women with Disabilities, on 'UNCRPD' (Article 13) and 'SDGs' (Article 16) in order to create easy access to justice was being organized with the initiative of Women with Disabilities Development Foundation (WDDF), **Locally Supported by Bogra Zila Spandon Protibandhi Nari Parisad**, at Surjomukhi hall, Biam Foundation Bogra, on Wednesday, 26th July 2017.

This training was divided in to Two parts:

1. Inaugural session and
2. Core session.

There was One fascilitator and One Co-facilitator to conduct the training theoretically and practically for the Women with Disabilities properly. The representatives from local government were present as Chief Guest and Special Guests in this training.

The inaugural session of this training is being started at 10.00 AM, 26th July 2017, with the welcome remarks of Shirin Akhter, Chairperson, WDDF. After welcome speech, an introductory session of all the participants is being conducted by Ashrafun Nahar and all the participants are introduced with each other in this session. After having introductory session been finished, Ashrafun Nahar, Executive Director of WDDF is being requested to deliver her speech on Significance, purpose including the required information and expected learnings/aims of this training. Then, S. M. Saifur Rahman, Executive Director, Protik Mohila O Sheshu Sangstha (PMSS) is being requested to deliver his speech about the gaps and challenges of Persons specially Women with Disabilities in the issue of access to justice. Followed by the speech of facilitator, Taslima Akter, Program Officer, Women Affairs Department, Bogra and Md. Sahidul Islam Khan, Deputy Director, Social Service Department, Bogra are being requested to deliver their speeches as special Guests about the initiatives have been adopted for Persons with Disabilities as well as their responsibilities and duties to them on behalf of Government to make our activities easy and helpful. After that, Md. Ali Azgar Talukdar Hena, Chairman, Upazila Parisad, Chief Local Government representative in Sub district level is being requested to deliver his speech as Chief Guest. He is very sincere, responsible and also very glad to be invited in this program. He said that, he is agreed with the existing barriers of Persons specially Women with Disabilities in Bogra but with the cooperation of government they are trying to reduce these challenges step by step. He expressed his firm commitment to provide all types of financial and technical cooperation to improve the situation of Women with Disabilities through this organization and he declared Fifty thousand Taka as donation instantly but committed to provide more donation in future.

This inauguration program is being presided over Rebeka Akter, President of **Bogra Zila Spandon Protibandhi Nari Parisad**.

**Core session of the training:** It is noted that, since most of the Women with Disabilities are from very grassroot level and they're participating in this type of training for the first time; So, the core session is being divided in to Three sessions:

1. Initial discussion,
2. 1<sup>st</sup> session and
3. 2<sup>nd</sup> session.
4. Initial discussion: In initial discussion, purpose and importance of this training for Women with Disabilities are being discussed by Ashrafun Nahar, Executive Director and Facilitator of this training.

Followed by this discussion, S. M. Saifur Rahman, Executive Director, Protik Mohila O Sheshu Sangstha (PMSS) and Co-facilitator of this training discussed a number of instructions for the training participants and request them to follow these instructions strictly at training period in order to make this training effective. After that, participants are requested to express their expectation from this training, one expectation per person to analyse their understanding level.

**1st session:** This session is being facilitated by Ashrafun Nahar, Executive Director of WDDF and Facilitator of this training.

The topic of this session is "United Nations Convention on Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD)"

(Article 13 "Access to justice")

This topic includes:

1. What is UN CRPD?
2. II) What is Access? and What is justice?

III) Key speech of this article.

1. IV) Why is this article important to know for us?
2. V) What is the connection between article 13 and obtaining justice?

**2nd session: This session is being facilitated by** S. M. Saifur Rahman, Executive Director, Protik Mohila O Sheshu Sangstha (PMSS) and Co-facilitator of this training.

The topic of this session is “Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)”

(Goal 16 “Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels”)

This topic includes:

What is SDGs?

II) What is Inclusive? and What is Institution?

III) Key speech of this Goal.

IV) Why is this goal important to know for us?

V) What is the connection between goal 16 and obtaining justice?

The facilitators suggested to the participants that, everybody should have proper conception and knowledge about these treaty and document concurrently they should have try to use the specific reference of these treaty and document for utilizing in required area. In case of any requirement, WDDF will always take proper initiative to cooperate to the Women with Disabilities through legal aid service providing organizations. Otherwise, it will be very difficult for them to enjoy their rights through the implementation of these treaty and documents properly.

From the responses of all the participants, it would be noted that, this is an effective and time required training for them. Most of the participants haven't any idea about these treaty and document and they aren't aware about the basic rights for Persons with Disabilities are mentioned in these treaty and document. The participants are also pointed out that, Persons specially Women with Disabilities of remote areas are deprived from Government services and facilities and due to lack of accurate information they are always left behind. So, considering the susceptibility of Persons specially Women with Disabilities, this type of training should be organized in divisional and district level regularly.

**6. Consultation about National Action Plan on 'Persons with Disabilities Rights and protection Act 2013':** A consultation meeting about National Action Plan on 'Persons with Disabilities Rights and protection Act 2013' was being organized by National Human Rights Commission Bangladesh (NHRCB), at 10 AM, on 30<sup>th</sup> July 2017, in the Auditorium of NHRCB. Shirin Akhter, Chairperson and Md. Hasanuzzaman, Program Coordinator were present in this consultation meeting. Actually, it was a review meeting of draft National Action Plan.

**7. Grassroot Women with Disabilities committee meeting:** One Grassroot Women with Disabilities committee meeting was being organized in July.

The aims of forming these grassroot Women with Disabilities committees in remote areas of different districts are as follows:

- I) To introduce Women with Disabilities of the same union with each other as well as to establish a friendly relation among them through regular communication appearing in monthly meetings.
- II) To encourage and motivate Women with Disabilities and their parents through reducing their negative attitude about disability.
- III) To make Women with Disabilities self conscious about their basic rights, contrigution and self dignity in family and society through enhancing their self confidence.
- IV) To build leadership capacity of Women with Disabilities through enhancing awareness among them.
- V) To provide information about disability related Government initiatives, documents along with facilities including NGOs as well as make them experienced on how to obtain these facilities through advocacy in different level.
- VI) To adopt required initiative in order to include Women with Disabilities in local level including women related development process through their regular and active participation.
- VIII) To create space in order to share multifaceted challenges in their daily lives , sufferings as Women with Disabilities including success E.G family conflict or discrimination, family/social violence, any type of torture/harassment and adopting the strategy of reducing these challenges and sufferings.
- Ix) To encourage Women with Disabilities to be self dependent mentally and financially through identifying their hidden capability as well as providing need based technical and financial support E.G training, assistive devise, financial support for small Income Generating Program.

A discussion meeting with the Grassroot Women with Disabilities Committee of 'Gouripur' and 'Baropara' Doudkandi, Comilla was being organized by WDDF, at Mukul Niketan of Gouripur Union at 10.00 AM, on 31st July 2017.

This meeting is presided over Nila Akter, president of grassroot Women with Disabilities Committee and facilitated by Bethi Akter, Secretary of this committee with the observation and cooperation of Shirin Akhter, Chairperson, Masuma Akter, Vice Chairperson and Md. Hasanuzzaman, Program Coordinator of WDDF.

The discussed issues of this meeting were:

- I) Introductory session, significance of organizing and participation in this meeting.
- II) Discussion of last meeting minutes and approved.
- III) Review the name of WDDF and the name of committee.
- IV) Sharing on going problems with each other and discussion about the solutions.
- V) Discussion about types of Disabilities and their problems considering these types.
- VI) Consciousness and responsibilities of parents to make their Daughters with Disabilities active and self dependent through reducing discrimination against them.
- VII) Clear speaking and introduce a Woman with Disability her self without any hesitation.

VIII) Fixing the date of next meeting and so on.

## ABOUT WDDF

The estimated number of Persons With Disabilities (PWDs) in Bangladesh, is around 24 million people, which constitutes 15 % of total population. 15% of Population have a disability.

Half of these are female. This is 12 Million girls and women with disabilities (WWDs).