



## STRENGTHENING CHILD RIGHTS

Despite commendable progress in many sectors, Bangladesh is still fraught with the lack of proper initiatives and institutions essential for children's development. Access to education for all children has yet not been achieved fully. On the other hand, children going to school is overburdened with books and study pressure. Child labour is still pervasive. To promote and protect child rights and wellbeing it is high time Bangladesh established the office of the child ombudsperson.

National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) and BRAC arranged a stakeholder consultation to on March 24 at BRAC Centre Inn in which BRAC director for advocacy, technology and partnership programme KAM Morshed gave the welcome speech on how important is to protect child rights. Moderated by NHRC chairperson Kazi Reazul Hoque, the event was attended, among others, by senior secretary for ministry of social welfare Zuena Aziz, additional secretary for women and children affairs ministry Laila Jesmin and director of BRAC Education Programme Safiqul Islam. Representatives from Save the Children, International Organisation of Migration (IOM), Plan International and other organisations were also present.

The objectives of this consultation were to ensure the best interest of child rights and child protection from abuse. Since Bangladesh is one of the first country to ratify CRC, we have the obligation to ensure the provision of the UN Commission of child rights. In order to prepare an action plan, this consultation was needed. We could share knowledge among the stakeholders from both state and non-state and to prepare the recommendation to submit to the Government as well as human rights council working group and UN committee on CRC through this consultation.

NHRC chairperson Kazi Reazul Hoque said, "We have to do two things first, one, eliminate all forms of child labour, and two, strengthen GO-NGO collaboration."

BRAC Education Programme director Safiqul Islam said, "We are eager to work collaboratively with NHRC to promote the rights of the children."



Ms. Zuena Aziz, senior secretary for ministry of social welfare emphasizing on the significance of child rights protection and the role of government.

*"We have a child population of 46%. To achieve sustainable development goals we have to eliminate child labor from all sectors by 2021. We need to establish an independent institution to protect child rights" said Kazi Reazul Hoque, Chairman, NHRC.*

KAM Morshed focused more on GO NGO collaboration saying "It is not possible by the Government or private sector alone to mitigate issues like Child rights protection. We need to establish a neutral and independent institution".

The National Human Rights commission submitted a draft child commission act in 2016, but the process was slowed down due to last year's parliamentary election. Kazi Reazul also urged the govt to set up a separate child rights commission and to allocate money for it in the upcoming budget.

The National Child Policy 2011 has been a far reaching vision in building the present and future of the children of Bangladesh. In the National Policy for children 2011, it is strictly mentioned to established child ombudsman's office that has not yet been materialized. In section 10.3 of national Policy for Children, it is stated that, "Ombudsman for the Children' shall be appointed under legislation at the national level. For the monitoring implementation of UN convention and maintaining the child right welfare activity in National Action Plan, Ombudsman for the children shall to be played an important role."

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