

# Bangladesh: Civil society groups bat for women rights

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**A group of 18 civil society networks yesterday demanded that the government must invest part of the tax money to establish women's rights.**

The demand came at a human chain organized in front of the Jatiya Press Club in the city.

Among others, Rezaul Karim Chowdhury of EquityBD, Rehana Akter of Bangladesh Krishani Shova, Badrul Alam of Bangladesh Krishak Federation, Barkat Ullah Maruf of COAST Trust and Mustafa Kamal Akanda of EquityBD spoke at the event.

The speakers placed a charter of demands on the inclusion of domestic work contribution in the national economy and GDP (gross domestic product), no privatisation of education, health, water and energy, which create extra burden on the women in families, abolishing wage disparity between men and women, investments in education and women skill, no VAT (value added tax) on woman-headed families, recognition of caregiving work of women, make tax regime work for women, and ensure women-friendly workplaces and day-care centres for children.

The speakers said men enjoyed the benefits of food, healthcare, education, entertainment and other facilities more than women around the world. The women face discrimination while participating in economic activities, uneven recruitment, promotions and wages, they said. However, the participation of women in both formal and non-formal sectors has been increasing, they added.

According to the speakers, the unpaid care work was not counted in the national economy.

They demanded that the government should recognise women's contribution in the economy. They also urged reducing the burden on women and demanded redistribution of tax revenue with justice aiming at more investments for women empowerment.

Presenting the keynote paper, Ferdous Ara Rumeel of EquityBD said: "Women's participation and contribution in the economy is increasing day by day. However, women participation in the formal sector is not yet accepted. About 80 per cent of women work in the informal sector. But they get lesser wages and other benefits than men performing similar labour. But, these women also have to buy essential goods and public services at the same price."

Women give more time than men in care work, which is not included in the national income, while the monetary value is about 77 per cent of GDP, she added.

According to Rehana Akter, there are no day-care centres in several garments factories as well as most government and non-government organisations in the city.

She urged the government to increase investment in creating a women-friendly environment and day-care centres for equality at work.

Rezaul Karim Chowdhury demanded recognition of women's activities by the government and addressing their monetary value in the country's economy. "It would help change male domination of women and pave the way for establishing women's rights along with their dignity in the family, society and even the country," he added.

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