

WOMEN'S STRUGGLES ON OCCASSION OF 100 YEARS OF INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY

Odhikar, UBINIG and Narigrantha Prabartana jointly organised a 3 day (6-8 March, 2010) programme on women's struggles on the occasion of the 100th celebration of International Women's Day.

Under the title '**The direction of the women's rights movement**', a roundtable meeting was held in the National Press Club on 6th March, 2010. More than 100 women activists working in different parts of the country attended the meeting and discussed the constraints and achievements of their work in the society. Executive Director of UBINIG, Farida Akhtar talked about the Women Development Policy. She said that the government must consult grassroots people before framing the policy. The women rights activists criticised the title of the Women Development Policy insisting that the government should formulate the policy focusing on how to establish the rights of women rather than the 'development of women'. Taskin Fahmina, Programme Coordinator of Odhikar said 'Acid violence, rape, dowry, domestic violence, eve teasing, early and forced marriage and unequal wages are widespread in the society. Access to justice for women is still far away and patriarchal concepts are deep rooted in the society.' She added, 'Awareness building in the society, making the law enforcement agencies accountable and strengthening the judiciary are the keys to create positive changes for women in the society.' TV anchor Kazi Jesin criticised the fact that women in the media are portrayed as a commodities. Women from grassroots levels from different districts talked about not only their achievements, but also the health issues of women, violence and non cooperation.

On the evening of the 6th March **women in black** gathered on Sir Syed Road, Dhaka with oil lamps in their hands. The black they wore was symbolic of the discrimination and struggle of women and the lights in their hands were the symbols of an enlightened future where discrimination and violence will retreat through women's struggles and unity. 'Women in Black' is an international event organised by women since 1991, for peace and against violence.

The tribunal '**Salute to Women's Struggles**' was held at the National Press Club on 7th March 2010. The tribunal heard testimonies of women's struggles in order to raise the issues that are still affecting women's lives. Women from different sections of the society such as farmers, workers, human rights activists gave their testimonies. Nishi Dewan from the Hill Women's Federation said 'What was the fault of Kalpana Chakma? She disappeared 13 ago and still no investigative report

has been released. Her mother died as she could not bear her daughter's disappearance'. She also added that 'Kalpana Chakma was a leader of hill women. She was always outspoken against any kind of violence against women'. Tamanna Sarker a human rights defender, talked about the struggle of human rights activists while working in the field. Nine women gave testimony in the tribunal. The jurists were Professor Jahanara Haq; sculptor Maleka Khan; womens' rights activist Farida Akhter and journalist Munni Saha. After the hearing the jurists commented that 'In this people's tribunal, women got justice. Our judicial system is still unable to prosecute all the incidents of violence against women. Sometimes investigations take place, however, reports of most of the cases are not released and most of the women are deprived of justice. We need to have more outspoken, strong women in our society.'

From 6 to 8 March an **exhibition** was also organised in the Prabartana complex in Mohammadpur, Dhaka. Publications, photos, videos and other documentation related to women and their struggles were on display in the exhibition hall. A long quilt which was prepared by women from all over the country was on display in the exhibition hall as well.



Round Table



Exhibiting Quilt



Women in Black



Tribunal