

National Development Requires Women's Empowerment alongside Good Governance

Dr. Prosannajid Sarkar¹ and Mustain Billah²

¹ Begum Rokeya University, Rangpur, Rangpur-5400, Bangladesh

Received: 15 December 2015 Accepted: 1 January 2016 Published: 15 January 2016

Abstract

The purpose of this paper is to examine the necessity of good governance and women's empowerment for national development of Bangladesh. The study finds that establishing women's right on land and natural resources, fair wage, especially for women workers and women leadership and participation in decision making in every steps will be ensured alongside good governance and finally this will make sure the national development.

Index terms— good governance, women's empowerment, women's right, women leadership and national development.

1 Introduction

he ultimate meaning of democracy is 'people'. The summary of the accent delivered by Abraham Linkon in the year 1863 was that the first and ultimate meaning of democracy is 'people'. Democracy doesn't divide such important issue named as 'people', although an imperceptible societal thought has divided people into two parts across space and time of which one is male and the other is female. Not only people have been divided in every case like state, society and family etc, much discrimination has been made among them also. As a result, the contemporary state, society or the family cannot assure the equalization of one with another.

Our country, Bangladesh has been able to be advance in pace in all development index, at the same time, she has been successful in decreasing the discrimination between men and women. The people here are advancing toward development by deleting the identity labeled as men or women. According to Amarta Sen, the Nobel laureate economist, in spite of absence of developed infrastructure and political stability, Bangladesh has succeeded to gain such economic growth because of women empowerment only (An Uncertain Glory, India and its Contradictions 2013).

2 a) Objective of the Study

? To develop an understanding on perspectives, issues and concerns connected with good governance as well as women empowerment which make sure the national development.

II.

3 Literature Review

The word governance derives from the Greek verb ???????? [kubernáo] which means to steer and was used for the first time in a metaphorical sense by Plato (Kjaer, A.M. 2005).

The World Bank defines governance as: "The exercise of political authority and the use of institutional resources to manage society's problems and affairs" (World Bank, 1991).

"Governance presumes a perspective on politics and government, a way of thinking about how things happen in a polity" (March, J.G. and Olsen J.P, 1995, pp. 7).

Good governance is an indeterminate term used in international development literature to describe how public institutions conduct public affairs and manage public resources. Governance is "the process of decision-making and the process by which decisions are implemented". The term governance can apply to corporate,

international, national, local governance or to the interactions between other sectors of society. The concept of "good governance" often emerges as a model to compare ineffective economies or political bodies with viable economies and political bodies. The concept centers around the responsibility of governments and governing bodies to meet the needs of the masses as opposed to select groups in society. Because the governments treated in the contemporary world as most "successful" are often liberal democratic states concentrated in Europe and the Americas, those countries' institutions often set the standards by which to compare other states' institutions when talking about governance. Because the term good governance can be focused on any one form of governance, aid organizations and the authorities of developed countries often will focus the meaning of good governance to a set of requirement that conform to the organization's agenda, making "good governance" imply many different things in many different contexts.

Empowerment is a strategy to help the disadvantaged and the marginalized to gain power to change the quality of their lives. This requires active participation in decision making process. Women are one of the target groups for such an empowerment strategy as a means to realization of Good Urban Governance, which "strives to eradicate all forms of exclusion" (UNCHS, 2000a, p. 198). This would also enable carrying out an inclusionary and participatory planning approach. Their contribution can change the urban management through reduced corruption (Barry, Honour & Palnitkar, 1998). Women are more concerned with environmental issues, sustainability, education, quality of neighborhoods, and basic services.

In the process of empowerment, women have experimented various ways to gain control of their lives. In a comprehensive study, Hainard & Verschuur distinguish three different strategies so that woman can gain power in three different parts of the world. It seems that the Iranian case is best fit with the strategy of "appropriating power in a subtle manner without setting themselves explicitly and openly against the social norms in force, which are obviously favorable to men. This is "the strategy of non-competition with the men folk, of non-contestation of customs" (Hainard & Verschuur, 2003, p. 481).

In the 90's, the government of Bangladesh has started taking positive steps in making development policies for women and implementing these policies because of the impacts of fast women's movement and active programmes of NGOs in the country, and the global agenda for gender equality in Beijing conference. As a result, a silent revolution starts regarding women empowerment which World Bank called it 'From Whisper to Voices' in 2008.

Eliminating poverty was the first effort to empower women in Bangladesh. In the 80's, taking loan from the micro-credit programme of Grameen Bank, the rural women found the effective way of earning to deal poverty. Later, BRAC and other NGOs have also been playing vital role in eliminating poverty through their micro credit programmes. 26 million poor people have got their effective ways to earn by taking loan from the micro credit programmes of Grameen Bank, BRAC and other organizations. (Source: BRAC). More than 97% of those people are women whose endeavors and hard working reduced the rate of poverty by 1.7 % in 2010 from 1991. The recent Global Hunger Index shows that Bangladesh is ahead of most countries of south Asia including India and Srilanka in eliminating hunger, poverty, and malnutrition. Alongside eliminating poverty, the women of Bangladesh realize the importance of education for their children also.

4 III.

5 Methodology of the Study

This study is descriptive in nature and based on secondary data as well as author's perceptions. Secondary information's have been collected from related journal and books for this study.

6 a) Descriptions

Continuous successes like Unthinkable advancement in women education within little period of time, bringing gender equity in primary education, and the presence of girls more in number than boys in secondary school has reduced the fertility rate of women by more than 50% and declined the death rate of child by 72%. It not only has set an example to be followed but also has got recognition of United Nations as 1st along with Cambodia in achieving the MDGs. According to the Human Development Report (2011), the education rate of female, aged between 15 to 24, is 78% whereas this rate of their counterpart is 75%.

Naturally, the next step of these women who are the craftsmen of the unthinkable transformation in Human Development index was to change their fate by taking sustainable livelihood. To achieve this goal, they haven't confined themselves only in the activities of earning by taking micro credit loan, they also have taken initiatives to enter the very competitive wage labour market alongside men. In this connection, dealing with the barrier of familial and societal views was the main challenge for women.

Basically, women started entering into the institutional wage labour market in 80's. Many researchers have shown that in spite of having capability to enter into the institutional labour market, the participation of women of Bangladesh is low (36%) due to social restriction in compare with other countries in south Asia, however the rate is increasing every year because of the necessity of livelihood.

It is to be noted in this regard that women labourer are given priority in those non agriculture institutional sectors where cheap labourers are needed for the repetitive tasks requiring long working hour. As a result, more women labourers are seen in ready-made garments, frozen shrimp, handicrafts, and tea industries which are main sources of our export earnings. So, the lion's share of our export earnings is a contribution of women's labour.

Regardless of gender, women employment in the mainstream labour market is not yet socially recognized, though the multidimensional development of non agriculture sector has been seen during last two decades. Consequently, only one of every five women gets the opportunity to enter the non agricultural sector. Though Bangladesh is more advanced in industrialization than in agriculture, women's participation in non agriculture sector has reduced to 14.1 percent from 19.1 percent which is a major obstacle to women empowerment. The corporate sector shows the same scenario in this connection. Only 14 officers are women among 87 who are working at the executive level in the 10 largest multinational companies situated in Bangladesh. There are only 44 members are women among 515 members in the board of directors of 41 government, private and specialized banks in the country. Among the 515 secretaries and additional secretaries in the higher level of government administration, only 15 persons are women.

Reasonably, the position of Bangladesh in the global statistics is noteworthy regarding the proportional rate of participation of male-female in political power which is the most important determinant for establishing gender equality. According to the Gender Gap report, 2013 published by the world economic forum, the position of Bangladesh ranked 75 th among 136 countries in reducing gender discrimination which denotes 11 step progresses in last 10 years. However, Bangladesh ranks eighth in the world as regards women's empowerment in politics only because of two female political leaders who have been periodically in power as the head of the government since 1991 and because of 20% increase of women's participation in the parliament. But, in practice, it is seen that the political culture of taking position for women rights has not been developed as most of the women parliament members are not elected directly and democracy is not in practice within the party and in the leadership.

Overall analysis of major developments in more than two decades shows that the progress of the country regarding social transformation is not so much satisfactory in compare with the achievement of economic growth and human development. Generally, the society contains the patriarchal values and applies it in attitudes, though 50% of the total population is women. The majority of people see the women empowerment as exception, not as a part of mainstream. Women of Bangladesh, driving by self confidence are winning Himalayas, going to war by joining army at one hand and expending more hours than man in unpaid household work, at other. They are playing a vital role in industry, business, administration, and politics. In spite of these, they don't dare to protest boldly against familial and social discrimination and they fail to choose an alternative option in life freely. So, alongside men, women couldn't achieve empowerment in parallel. As an important driving force to the economic growth of the country, women, though have achieved the independence in mobility and visibility, womenfriendly norms and policies have not been established in social views and behavior.

From the historical analysis, it is seen that the incitement of women progress occurred after 1947 because of the movement for equal rights of women by female leaders Sufia Kamal, Noorjahan Begum and others which later built the platform for NGO based women movement.

However, we see that violence against women has increased by 15% in the country which is rapidly growing up in human development index due to the socio-economic contribution of women. Violence against women in public is getting social acceptance by breaking the human rights of women by means of rape, sexual harassment and by issuing Fatwa. Bangladesh ranks 3 rd in the world regarding child marriage where the this rate is 66% and school going girls are forced to get married , even after Bangladesh has achieved the top position in women education in south Asia. Though Bangladesh is having many potentialities she cannot open all the windows possibilities because of slower pace of women development. Even after four decades of independence, the effective culture of challenging the discriminating patriarchal views has not yet been established in the country. Besides, misinterpretation of religion and some discriminating laws are trying to confine women into social barriers.

To bring the harsh path of women empowerment in parallel alongside men, gender equality has to be ensured in the eye of the law in every spheres of life. In this regard, complete approval of CEDAW charter and its implementation is a pre condition. At the same time, to change the patriarchal structure, equal participation of women in every step should be obvious and mandatory which will encourage women to achieve their rights. To keep the economic growth sustainable and long lasting which is praised by the world, we have to build strong socio-economic base by eliminating gender discrimination and through establishing liberal democracy and good governance. Then, the rate of economic growth and Gross Domestic Product (GDP) will increase, and women, being half percent of the population, will be able to take decision according to their will in every step of life in the state and their family by achieving self regulation. As a result, there will be structural and qualitative change regarding the relation between men and women. The empowerment of women in parallel alongside men will bring the potentials of the country in reality.

When the MDG was proposed at the millennium summit of the United Nations in the year 2000 with a view to ensuring the security and giving the priorities of poor people around the world 189 countries (now 193) and 23 international organizations promised to work for achieving the MDGs. On the whole, the achievements of the MDGs are not less. Generally, the MDG emphasized on the development of living standard along with human resource development, infrastructural development, and human rights development including social, economic and political. Emphasis was given specially on development of nutrition, health care, and education. Infrastructure referred to modern information and communication technology along with pure drinking water, electricity, and development of environment. The aims of human rights development were to empower women, reduce violence against them, give freedom to express opinion and to give equal rights to get government job, and secure their

property rights. The purposes of these aims were to increase the ability of a person and to develop capability of his life.

There is a long history of freedom of women in Bangladesh. Starting from the direct participation of women in the war of independence to the progress in empowering women in the country is praiseworthy. The base of women movement has been established firmly because of the strong administrative and legal structure, and the awareness of civil society which has been playing an effective role in establishing women rights and creating women friendly environment. Bangladesh has signed the CEDAW charter from the very beginning to eliminate discrimination against women.

The global development model for the betterment of poor women is now being heavily criticized. The capitalist development structure and planning cannot ensure women's economic, social, cultural and ecological equity, and most importantly, her human rights. The world is now in much worse condition regarding politics, economic, ecology, food safety and poverty than any other times. This is creating inequality in power and wealth, at the same time increasing gender discriminations. Women need a new kind of development model which aims at lessening the inequality of power and wealth between rich and poor, and men and women. The basic principal of development should be ensuring sustainable environment for livelihood of the population.

The new development model, that is creating buzz around the world, has focused mainly on four topics.

Firstly, establishing women's right on land and natural resources. It is found that if women's ownership or control upon land is established, it will ensure food safety for the family and the populations, eradicate malnutrition, and bring sustainable agricultural system. In many countries, women's right on land is restricted by law, family law and marital status. We must remember that land is not only the source of income, it's ownership associated to social and cultural rights. The next planning of 2015 must ensure women's ownership and control over water, natural resources, ecological system, and most importantly 'over land. It is mentionable that the percentage of land grabbing by various commercial institute, of various small land owners, is rising alarmingly, for which eviction of families from homestead is also escalating. It is found in a worldwide research that, in developing countries, the governments and companies are holding 203 million hectors of land. We must have enough data on how much land is owned by women and small farmers.

Secondly, we must not forget about the workers' fair wage, especially of women workers. Without ensuring fair wage and standard working environment for the workers, poverty eradication is not possible. Sorrowfully, it is the truth that most of the female workers who are employed in garments sector, farming, household and domestic institute are working in appalling condition. The situation is deteriorating. All the issues of Growth centered development, profit and capital oriented business, increasing of demand for production, and cheap labour and cost of production have made burden upon women labourers. The wage of labourer doesn't increase, but the target of production increases every day. Because of poverty and debt they are working overtime. As a result, the issues of the health and security of their own and of their family are being neglected. The country needs such a development strategy which can ensure a standard salary scale for a labourer, side by side, can give security to their family and society so that one can live with dignity.

The third thing includes peace, justice, and equality which are very important for sustainable development, especially when the question of the security and rights of women arises. These can have a negative impact on women rights if rule of law is not established or if the good governance is absent. Besides, the issue of violence against women has not been included in the development framework. This issue is clearly considered as violation of human rights which is an obstacle to other rights and development. Women are facing many challenges including homelessness, health related complexities, and insecurity.

Fourthly, women leadership and participation in decision making in every steps will be ensured. These should be practiced from family up to the higher level of government.

Gender equality is a fundamental right. Creating this equality is an actual and effective step for the development of a country. Sustainable development is very important to take the country in the middle income bracket. With a view to resisting violence against women and eliminating it, a strong and complete national plan is necessary.

We should not forget that ensuring accountability of a person or of an institution only cannot establish good governance. Ensuring citizen rights is mandatory to establish good governance in any country of the world. The issue of ensuring citizen rights does not depend on a certain determinant.

Good governance has eight major characteristics. It is participatory, consensus oriented, accountable, transparent, responsive, effective and efficient, equitable and inclusive and finally follows the rule of law (UNESCAP, 2007).

Establishing of democracy and implementation of fundamental human rights are pre condition to reflect the above eight characteristics effectively.

IV.

7 Conclusions

It is, therefore, clear that good governance and women empowerment are closely interlinked. At the beginning, this write-up states Abraham Linkonk's classic statement that the first and ultimate meaning of democracy is 'people' of which 50% are women. Again, at the end, it has been seen that according to the UN standards, democracy and human rights are inevitable for good governance. The 'International Declaration for Human

227 Rights' does not determine any indicators separating men and women. The same rights which are for men have
228 been recognized for women also. Additionally, many clauses of human rights have been taken into account to
229 emphasize the rights of women so that a balanced society can be established by eliminating discrimination between
230 men and women. To sum up, the three deferent contexts i.e. democracy, people, and human rights have merged
231 into one stream named good governance. As good governance is not possible without women empowerment, so
232 is national development without good governance.
233 V.

.1 Acknowledgment

The authors acknowledge Rahmatullah, Coordinator, RDRS Bangladesh, Rangpur.

.2 Conflict of Interests

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interests regarding the publication of this paper.

[Adoption of the Nairobi forward-Looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women to the Year Third World Conference on Women
'Adoption of the Nairobi forward-Looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women to the Year'. *Third World Conference on Women (Nairobi)* 1985. 2000.

[Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women adopted by the UN General Assembly ()]
Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women adopted by the UN General Assembly, 1993.

[Sida (ed.) ()] *Handbook for the integration of a Gender Perspective in the Water Resources Management Sector. Stockholm: Department for Natural Resources and the Environment and the Gender Equality Unit*, Sida . Helen Thomas, Johanna Schalkwyk and Beth Woroniuk (ed.) 1997.

[Making Governance Gender Responsive (MGGR) South Asia Training report ()] 'Making Governance Gender Responsive (MGGR)'. *South Asia Training report* 2007. Fawzia Khondker, National Consultant

[Undp/World and Bank (1993)] *Prepared by Wendy Wakeman. Working Group on Gender issues of the Water and Sanitation Collaborative Council*, Undp/World , Bank . 1993. June. (Gender Issues Sourcebook for the Water and Sanitation Sector)

[Mohanty and Talpade (ed.) ()] *Third World Women and the Politics of Feminism*, Chandra Mohanty , Talpade . Ann Russo & Lourdes Torres (ed.) 1991. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

[Afshar, Haleh ()] 'Women: Development & Survival in the Third World'. *Burnt Mill* Afshar, Haleh (ed.) 1991. Longman Group UK Limited.

[Sida ()] 'Workshop on Gender and Water Resources Management: Lessons learned and Strategies for the Future'. Sida . *Report from the Workshop*, 1994. December 1993. I p. .

[Bank ()] *World Bank Action since Beijing*, World Bank . 2000a. Washington DC: The World Bank. (Advancing Gender Equality)