

**A brief report on Peace Table**  
**Date: 14 October 2015**  
**Venue: Bisshow Shahitto Kendro.**  
**Bangladesh**

The changing nature of war started targeting civilians and has been excluding women from the peace building process; as a result, peace building processes are failing to achieve their goals and failing to demolish conflicts. In order to resolve such threat, in 2005 United Nations Security Council adopted resolution 1325, where they are talking about women, peace and security, while focusing on improving female participation in peace building, peace negotiations, peacekeeping and humanitarian responses in post-conflict and politically unstable countries. However, according to scholars and social workers, no peace can be achieved without knowing the roots of the conflicts. As women are excluded from the peace building process, it is almost impossible to get into the core of any problems. If the core conflicts are not identified and resolved, they stay alive under the shadows of mainstream conflicts. Thus identifying the problems of daily life which have the potential to fuel a larger conflict or have the potential to turn into a greater one is very crucial for our social welfare. The role of women in this process is much more important.

In order to improve women's participation and encourage women representatives to participate in the peace process in Bangladesh, **Peace Women Across the Globe, Sangat, Nijera Kori and Pragroshor** organized a day long Women Peace Table in Dhaka on **14 October 2015**, at Bisshow Shahitto Kendro. One hundred and six (106) participants including students, women leaders, grassroots women, indigenous women and member of the police attended the Peace Table. This event managed to have female participations from different social, economic, educational, religion, age groups and identities. However, this event only invited self-identified female participants because we wanted to inspire women by women for women.

In the welcome speech the co-organizer of this event Fawzia Khondoker said, "Struggles and conflicts are not only limited to state level conflicts and wars." She also added, "Women are fighting several wars in their regular life. They are fighting against their family, state, gender and identity. Our society can never move forward if we don't start recognizing those fights as struggles and if we fail to resolve them".

After the welcome speech Ms. Meghna Guhathakurta presented the keynote paper on women in peace building. According to the keynote speaker Meghna Guhathakurta, conflicts are multidimensional and underlying discriminatory structure forms the roots of different conflicts. She also added that women are not only being discriminated within their families, they are also being discriminated by our constitution and non-gender friendly laws. We should not focus on tradition and suffocate women to keep them alive. On the other hand, she said, indigenous women are facing double victimization due to their gender identities; they are not only being victimized by Bangladeshi settlers, but also by indigenous men.

She shared a few thoughts related to UN Security Council. Ms. Guhathakurda mentioned that the UN Security Council adopted a resolution on women and peace and security on 31st October 2000 with the objective to reaffirm the role of women in the prevention and resolution of conflicts, peace negotiations, peace-building, peace-keeping, humanitarian response and in post conflict reconstruction and stresses the equal participation and full involvement in all efforts to maintain and promote peace and security.



Peace Table

She also initiated the discussion on women and conflict. She said we should focus on Women and Peace issues in the following areas:

1. Economic empowerment: struggles of the marginalized
2. Women's war: home and public space,
3. Communal violence and effect on women and
4. Indigenous women and their rights

In her presentation she mentioned in the peace processes we could see women in three categories: women as victims, women's role and input from civil society during conflict, and finally their contribution as peace-makers.

**Economic empowerment: struggles of the marginalized:** she mainly talked on women's domestic work, women as laborers and women's property.

**Women's struggles: home and public space:** She mainly shared the following issues:

- Domestic violence
- Violence in the public space

- Male dominant society
- Gendered socialization

**Communal Violence and its effect on women:** In the discussion on communal violence she mentioned following:

- The power base of religion
- The location of minority women
- Gender as bridging community relations

### **Indigenous women and their rights**

- Definition of ethnicity
- New landscapes of dominance affecting ethnic women
- Women and militarization
- Ethnic women's world view versus modernity

An open discussion session was held after the key note presentation Ms. Fawzia Khondker facilitated the discussions and she divided the participants into nine Peace Tables to discuss in the group on the above mentioned four key areas. In small groups they identified a) effect on women b) their contribution and finally c) way forward on each areas.



Group work

The diverse groups of participants had represented and talked about conflicts from state to domestic level covering all of the four themes mentioned above. It is important to mention the perspectives of the victims while trying to resolving the problem and it is equally important to understand the trends of different problems. As it is important to learn about

the roots of different problems, it is vital to learn more about different dimensions of problems.

The event was full of amazingly diverse concepts and it has proved that when women take their chances and use their time to talk about themselves, their rights, their achievements and experiences they are able to think and talk about different issues they face in their daily lives. Thus women can represent themselves and they do not need men to solve their problems and talk about their problems.

Songs and slogans were used to energise the participants on Peace.

In the closing session women's rights activist Khushi Kabir said, "As women we have inherited some power, which makes us strong and gives us strength to move forward, change and improve. Privileged women like us should join women who were not born in a privileged setting such as us to exchange thoughts, ideas and experiences because if we fail to help each other we will never be able to move beyond gender binaries."

In the vote of thanks Ms. Muktasree Chakma Sathi emphasized on identity politics, where indigenous men often tend not to recognise and talk against other indigenous men who are committing violence against indigenous women.

*Written by Fawzia Khondker, co-organizer of the event*