

An attempt to ensure equal gender participation

Afraim Karim | Published : 15 Mar 2017, 21:42:37



'BRAC Genders Debate' is an annually hosted debate tournament with a theme that addresses the inherent problem within any society still persists in this era. Whichever field of work we go to, we see a lack of female participants, have we ever asked ourselves, 'Why?' Some would say the patriarchal structure disenfranchises women to participate in any work field, some would respond by naming it as security issue. And surprisingly enough, no one is wrong. For a women to get out

of her boundaries and fight to make a difference is a struggle in itself. So the struggle usually goes unnoticed or perhaps unappreciated. The debating community of Bangladesh faces a similar problem of less female participants.

Four years back, BRAC University Debate Club (BUDC) took up the initiative to fight this problem at least within the debating community by hosting BRAC Genders or as previously known BRAC Women's Open. BRAC Genders 2017 took place from March 02 to 04, a week before 'Women's Day' in BRAC University Mohakhali campus. The tournament, in an attempt to promote equal participation of females, makes it mandatory for a team of two to at least have one female member and around this time of the year the circuit goes haywire looking for female debaters.

BRAC Genders 2017 has carried the tradition forward by enforcing the same theme. Being a tournament named 'Genders' they do not just focus on one specific gender, rather address problems regarding all the genders. All the female debaters have new sense of empowerment within the community. To acknowledge the contribution from females, they have given out award categories for the best female speaker of the tournament.

The tournament did not stop at just setting motions that would raise awareness but also hosted successful plenaries conducted by the anthropological faculties of BRAC University. The first plenary was about religion and gender conducted by Samia Huq, an anthropologist and a faculty of BRAC University Economics and Social Sciences (ESS) Department. The plenary was very interactive where the participants raised questions regarding gender identities.

On the final day, another plenary was conducted by Dr. Seuty Sabur which continued for hours where the participants opened up and discussed about the harassment they face in work places or even within their families. Girls shared how they get enforced gender roles and are ordered to follow certain stereotypes even if they do not align with the certain ideologies.

The tournament promoted people coming out of their closet and discussing the problems they face based on their gender which included men as well. The debate club also tried its best to make a debate tournament remarkable. Having food sponsorships from places like Tarka, Madchef they tried to give out the best food possible. With the help of BRAC Bank as their sponsors and Orchidales as their photography partners, BUDC won the hearts of the participants where the participants ended with lovable remarks from the participants such as 'To the wonderful ladies who showed up, those who are new to the circuit, welcome and we hope you continue. Those who returned after quite a long hiatus, we hope you stay back. Those who have been regulars keep on being awesome!' said a debater from the Institute of Business Administration (IBA), University of Dhaka.

The country needs more of such initiatives not only from the debate circuit but from all the circuits around the world. All the workplaces need to realise that the loss of female participation will hamper proper growth

of any nation. When a society wants to grow, growing collectively is vital. Let us hope for a world where we have more females in all the fields.

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Published by the Editor for International Publications Limited from Tropicana Tower (4th floor), 45, Topkhana Road, GPO Box : 2526 Dhaka- 1000 and printed by him from City Publishing House Ltd., 1 RK Mission Road, Dhaka-1000.

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