

Essay on The Role of Women in Nation Building

Hints: Introduction, What is nation-building? Role of women in nation-building, Situation of women, Development plans of women for nation-building, Constitutional provisions for women, Constraints to women in nation-building, Women's objective in nation-building, Conclusion.

Introduction

In the words of Kazi Nazrul, "What is a wonderful achievement in the world has been half done by women and the rest half by men". These words of the poet bear the testimony that women play a vital role in the building of a nation. If they are left out of the mainstream of development activities, our nation will not be able to prosper at all. Bangladesh is a developing country. It achieved independence on the 16th December 1971. More than thirty-eight years have passed, Despite that, there has been very little progress in the economic condition of the country. One of the main reasons behind this is that our women's force is not utilized properly. Napoleon once said, "Give me a good mother, I will give you a good nation." So to speak the truth, what is true is that women can contribute a great deal to the building of a nation if they are given that opportunity.

What is nation-building?

In the true sense of the term, nation-building means those kinds of activities that help a nation to be built up as a prosperous nation. It can be said that nation-building is the task of the government, NGOs, and the general people irrespective of male and female.

Role of women in nation-building

About 50 percent of the total population and almost half of the potential labor force of Bangladesh are women. They are co-builders of the nation. Substantial participation of women labor in family-based nutritional agriculture, livestock and fisheries, homestead forestry and domestic fuel in the informal sector and tea plantation and processing, export-oriented garments, electronics, frozen fish, small and cottage industries in the organized sector have made it imperative to integrate women into the mainframe of planning and nation-building. According to BBS (Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics), 40 percent of women work in rural areas and 20 percent in urban areas. 15 percent of women work as wage laborers, 16 percent self-employed, 13 percent day laborers, and 13 percent unpaid family workers. These women are performing a great role in nation-building.

Situation of women

Various indicators reveal that the status of women is much lower than that of men. Excess mortality of women has resulted in a negative sex ratio in the population whereby there are 105 men for every 100 women. The nutritional status of women and girls is marked by sharp differentials between men and boys. Early marriage, repeated pregnancy, long childbearing spans have serious implications for women's low nutritional status and high maternal mortality rate.

Women death due to unnatural causes (suicide, murder, burn, snake bite, poisoning, accident, and drowning) is almost three times higher for women than pregnancy-related causes.

Women's visibility in the public service has been negligible. Their participation in institutional development and decision-making is also minimal. The incident of divorce, desertion, and widowhood has been growing. 15 percent of all rural households are female-headed and 25 percent of all landless households are headed by women showing

strong links between gender disadvantage and poverty. Female-headed households earn 30 percent less income than male-headed households.

Women are generally pushed into the unskilled labor force primarily because of the obstacles women and girls face in acquiring marketable skills.

Development plans of women for nation-building

Women are considered as the distinctive target group in the development plans of the country. The first plan (1973-1978) emphasized a welfare-oriented approach and focused on the rehabilitation of war-affected women. The two years plan (1978-1980) was characterized by a shift from welfare to development efforts, the second plan (1980-1985) emphasized creating a congenial atmosphere for women's increased participation in development through expanding opportunities for skill development, credit, and entrepreneurship development programs. The third plan (1985-1990) had specific objectives to reduce the imbalance between the development of men and women.

The fourth plane (1990-1995) placed women with the context of a macro framework with multi-sectoral trust and focused more on the development of the poor and disadvantaged women. However, consideration of women's development issues was not made an integral part of the process of formulating, implementing, and evaluating incorporate an understanding of differences between men and women in situations and benefits and reduction of gender disparities while some projects include specific targets or objectives for women's development.

Constitutional provisions for women

In the constitution, women's rights to equality and affirmative action in support of equality are guaranteed. The fifth plan aims at realizing the constitutional goal of equality between all citizens, women, and men. Thus, a major thrust of the fifth plane will be the integration of WID concerns and gender issues in the mainstream of development. According to the constitution of Bangladesh, all citizens are equal before the law and are entitled to equal protection of law [Article-27]; The state shall not discriminate against any citizen on the grounds of religion, race, caste, sex, or place of birth [Article 28]; Women have equal rights with men in all spheres of the state and public life (Article -28]; Nothing shall prevent the state from making special provision in favor of women or for the advancement of any backward section of the population (article-9]; Three women members are maintained to the Union Parishads and Municipal Councils. Provision has also been made for forty-five reserved seats for women in the parliament (Article-65).

Constraints to women in nation-building

Women in the mainstream of nation-building have been observed in the following major constraints:

Official statistics have failed to capture women's participation in economic activities. The substantial contribution made by women especially in agriculture, livestock, poultry, and fisheries has remained unrecognized and due to such inadequacy women have so far been left at the periphery of economic development.

Due to gender inequality and inferior status, women inside and outside the family remain vulnerable, subordinate, and dependent. Traditional social institutional norms, customs, and beliefs deter women from participating in socio-economic activities.

For inadequate databases, it is difficult to design a multi-sectoral or multi-ministerial approach in respect of programs to

mainstream women.

Female literacy is half that of males which limits their opportunity for training and skill development.

There is a lack of general awareness regarding the concept of WID leading towards sectarian and gender-differentiated approaches in economic activities and employment.

Women's objective in nation-building The following major objectives of women in development has been formulated with the need for full and optimal utilization of the potentials of women

To increase women's participation in the public sector decision-making both at the national and local level.

To integrate women in the mainstream economic activities to reduce gradually the gender disparity in all socio-economic spheres.

To raise the productivity and income opportunity of the female labor force through skill development and training.

To reduce population growth at a faster rate through enhancement of the socio-economic status of women.

To reduce substantially the male-female literacy gap.

To raise female nutrition levels and improve the provision of health services to women.

To enhance the participation of women in nutrition-based agriculture and maintenance of ecological balance.

To reduce substantially infant and mortality rates.

To ensure participation of poorer 50 percent women in the development process more effectively.

Conclusion

For the welfare of the women, the government has formed two committees; "The Standing Committee of the National Council for

Women's Development" and "The Executive Committee of the National Council for Women's Development". The main task of the standing committee will be to monitor and evaluate the women's development projects, to identify the main constraints and potentials of women's development, and to take up necessary steps for the protection of the legal rights of women. The tasks of the executive committee will be the formulation of macro-policies, inter-sectoral coordination of WID programs. Thus, the women of our country play a great role in nation-building.