

Press Release

101st Celebration of International Women's Day March 08, 2012

Connecting Girls, Inspiring Futures was the theme for this 101st Annual International Women's Day, co-sponsored in Mymensingh by **Development Wheel (DEW)** in collaboration with 42 other partner organizations. Part of the mission of **DEW** is a commitment to upholding women's rights throughout society by seeking gender equity and an absolute end to violence against women through the national *We Can Campaign*.

In keeping with this aspiration, on March 08, 2011 at 12:01am, **DEW** and the *We Can* network commemorated International Women's Day with a midnight candle-lighting ceremony at the Townhall Shaheed Minar. The grand opening of this year's Women's Day festivities began at 7:30pm on March 7, 2011 with various musical and dramatic performances from groups like *Udichi Shilpi Gosth* and *Salam Baul*, dancer *Kamrun*, and Change Makers *Uday Eigamban*.

In attendance at the evening's events were Ms. Munira Begum, Secretary, **Bangladesh Mohila Parishad**, Mymensingh, Mr. Bijan Sharker, Teacher, **Anandamohon College**, Shah Abdus Salam, founder of **DEW** and national steering committee member of **We Can Campaign**, Poet Swadhin chaired the discussion session.

After the candle-lighting ceremony, participants swore to the following oath: *I charge myself first to be a Change Maker, will believe in gender equality, will give respect to women, and will work to prevent violence against women at home, in the community, and in society as a whole.*

The *We Can Campaign*, through this celebration of 101-years of International Women's Day-2012 has promised to:

- Ensure adequate safety and security for all women
- Assure that the darkness might not be an obstacle on their way
- Establish equal rights for women by ensuring equity between men and women

In Dhaka, **DEW** also organized a national-level programme at central Shahid Minar jointly with the **University of Dhaka** and the *We Can National Alliance*. At 12:01am on 8th March hundreds of women and men participated in a candle-lighting ceremony symbolizing the illumination of equality in society. Later that evening, *We Can* and **Dhaka University** jointly organized a concert with some of the best female artists in Bangladesh – *Sion*, *Krishna Koli*, and *Samina Nobil*.

In further celebration of the Women's Day events, Development Wheel formally announced a new initiative with Oxfam GB to begin in April this year, called the *Women's Transformative Leadership Programme*, at a press conference and preparatory workshop with Change Makers held on 6th March.

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Picture 01: The 101st Celebration of International Women's Day is marked with a candle-lighting ceremony shining a light through the darkness at midnight on March 07, 2012 at the Townhall Shaheed Minar in Mymensing.



Picture 02: A powerful dramatic enactment of a war crimes trial, where a collaborator stands to hear the accusations of survivors of the Liberation War.

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Photo 3: Uday Eigamban reciting their moving poem.



Photo 4: Kamrun performing her eloquent dance.

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Picture 05: Taking the Change Makers oath after the candle-lighting ceremony at midnight, 8th March.



Picture 06: The crowd also takes the Change Makers oath promoting gender equity.