

## ADB's Bangladesh Resident Mission (BRM) Joins Celebration of International Women's Day 2009, Dhaka



ADB's BRM and the Local Consultative Group (LCG), sub-group on Women Advancement and Gender Equality (LCG WAGE), Bangladesh organized a special event to celebrate the occasion of the International Women's Day 2009, held at the Shilpakala Academy Plaza, Segunbagicha, Dhaka on 9 March. Two prominent women leaders, Ms. Gitiara Shafiya Chowdhury and Ms. Rasheda K. Chowdhury, both Advisors of Caretaker Governments were present as guests. Several Ambassadors, Heads of Missions, and Resident Representatives also attended the event.

The theme of the event "Women's Political Participation as Leaders" was chosen considering women's role in the recent parliamentary and local government elections. Five women leaders including two Union Council Members, one Poursava Councilor, one City Corporation Commissioner, and one Member of the Parliament participated and shared their experiences as panelists. The questions for the panel were:

- How and why the women leaders got involved in politics?
- What were the challenges they have faced so far being the leader today?
- How did the male counterparts helped them to overcome challenges and supported them to be here as leaders?
- What are the new challenges they can envision in future as women leaders?

The panelists shared that their work experiences as community workers, experience as student leader, motivation from family, realization of women's deprivation and discrimination both at the family and at the community level created a zeal in them to get involved in politics and work for the disadvantaged. Most of them expressed that patriarchal attitude, religious conservatism and cultural beliefs were the main challenges they faced in the past and they think that they would have to fight against these in future as those are still prevalent in the society. They felt that they cannot serve all constituencies equally as the laws and provisions do not provide equal opportunities for those elected from reserved seats. All of them strongly felt that support from male partners and colleagues were important and were gradually increasing to help them overcome these challenges. They also feel that though cooperation from men to excel in their performances as local leaders are important, women leaders will have to gain capability and confidence to contest from general seats in order to be more effective in the socio-economic development of their constituencies. They appreciated the role of various development partners and the Government in helping them come forward and gain confidence by providing support through various projects.

ADB's BRM also participated in a book fair on gender and development facilitated by USAID where various publishers and development partners participated to display and distribute gender-related materials. The three-day book fair was opened by Mr. Nurul Islam Nahid, Minister for Education, Government of Bangladesh. The US Ambassador in Bangladesh James P. Moriarty also welcomed the audience to the celebration and book fair.