

# Report

On

Seminar for International Women's Day 2023

*“I did not break, I did not stop,  
I turned around”*



Organized and  
composed by



**Acid Survivors  
Foundation**

## ***ASF Seminar to Celebrate International Women's Day 2023***

**Theme:** ***"I did not break, I did not stop, I turned around"***

On the occasion of International Women's Day 2023, Acid Survivors Foundation (ASF) organized an online seminar, on Thursday, March 9, 2023. The Seminar was attended by distinguished guests from various national and international organizations who joined the seminar from different parts of the world. This year, the theme for the celebration of the day was inspired from the story of an Acid Survivor which was "I did not break, I did not stop, I turned around". The theme was set to demonstrate a case of empowerment of a distressed girl and to encourage other women to have the courage to move forward and fight all the hurdles on the way.

The event was chaired by Dr. Julia Ahmed, Acting Chairperson of ASF, and moderated by Mr. Jamil Ahmed, Media Personality and TV Presenter. The ASF Executive Director Mr. Sarder Jahangir Hossain delivered the welcome speech and stated the purpose of the seminar with the following three objectives-

- Firstly, presenting the long struggling stories of acid survivors and how they turned their fate around; which will include their needs as well;
- Secondly, informing everyone how ASF have been running their activities amidst different limitations particularly financial constraints and seeking recommendation for solutions;
- Thirdly, ASF have been operating in partnership of different organizations, which has become almost inactive now. So, discussing how to re-establish the partnerships, seeking recommendations and promises in order to solve it.

The speech was followed by Tahmina Islam, Coordinator–Program, who presented the goals and activities of ASF alongside the current scenario of acid violence in Bangladesh. Dr. Tabassum and Sabrin Mahmuda from ASF added with Tahmina on the financial hurdles that ASF has been facing since the pandemic started and how the support from the donor community can aid ASF in resuming its work better than before. Acid survivors Lulu Mansura and Khadija Akhter Khushi shared their brave journey of turning around post the acid attack and how ASF consistently supported them throughout their journey. An audio visual was also presented based on the story of Neela, the survivor who inspired the theme for the event.

The guest speakers of the Seminar included Ms. Kate Sangster, the first secretary of Australian High Commission in Bangladesh; Ms. Roquia Haider,



*Presenting audio visual of Neela*

Senior Broadcaster and Former Head, Bangla Service, Voice of America (VoA), USA; Barrister Wasiul Hoque Chowdhury, Prominent Lawyer; Professor Dr. Jebunnessa, Professor, Department of Public Administration, Jahangirnagar University, National Professor Dr. Kabir Chowdhury, prominent physician with independence award; Ms. Tamazer Ahmed, Action Aid Bangladesh; Lieutenant General (Rtd.) Aminul Islam, Former Military Secretary of the President & Former Professor of Independent University of Bangladesh; Air Commodore (Ret.) Ishfaq Ilahi Chowdhury, Treasurer, East West University; Professor Gias U Ahsan, former Pro–Vice Chancellor, North South University.



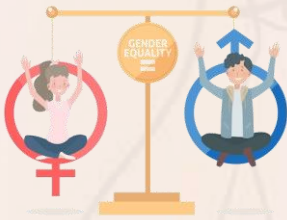
### *Distinguished Guests attending the Seminar*

Besides, other guests from different professions and organizations were also present at the seminar to participate in the open discussion. Among the Trustee Board of ASF, Mr. M Golam Abbas, Ms. Nasimun Ara Huq Minu and Mr. Shafiqul Alam Kiron were also present at the seminar. The open session held discussion on the activities of ASF, support for the cause of ASF and acid survivors, establishing strong network and ensuring proper donation for the purpose of ASF and many more.

Everyone appreciated the efforts and purpose of Acid Survivors Foundation and urged all to come forward in support of the foundation. The key recommendations from the respected speakers of the seminar are as follows:

- Awareness campaign can be strengthened.
- The support for the survivors should be given importance so that they can lead a dignified life.
- The activities of ASF should be presented properly and widely.

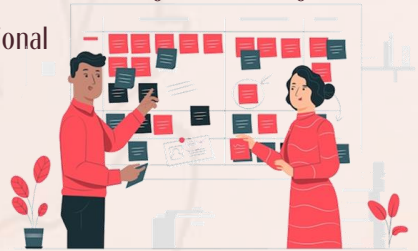
- Promotions can be done with the support of the media and seminars like this can be arranged frequently.
- Primary level education may include awareness and levels of violence. In this case, teachers may play awareness campaign.
- Social solidarity should be strengthened.
- Gender equity and equality should be ensured in developing an unbiased society. Both men and women shall be equally respected.



- There are scopes to work on dispute resolution, which should be utilized in order to eliminate acid violence from the country.
- For helping the survivors significantly, the expenditure on the survivor supports can be expanded.
- To draw attention of the concerned persons to accelerate the legal proceedings relating to acid violence.
- The existing laws on acid violence should be implemented well and the public should be aware of the justice being served to change the culture of injustice.
- Urging all the capable persons of the society to come forward in support of ASF.
- For fund collection, ASF can approach different corporate organizations.
- ASF can seek for Zakat funds considering the approaching month of Ramadan.



- In order to eliminate the financial crisis, advisory board can be formed on national level with prominent individuals from different sectors.
- Application can be made to concerned persons for waiving the Income Tax
- Drawing out solutions can be made possibly easier if ASF can collaborate with like-minded organizations in preparing plans like Action Aid to tackling the challenges.
- An advisory board consisting of different international donor organization can be formed.
- Planning should be done on how to incorporate all the interested individuals attending the seminar and their support with ASF on larger scale and in longer term.
- There should be a specific plan on strengthening the networks and starting the rehabilitation facilities.



- All the recommendations emerged from the discussion in the seminar can be circulated within the concerned places like the donor organizations, government, NGOs etc.
- A volunteering network can be established with all the present attendees from the civil societies.

- A platform can be developed with all the present civil societies and incorporate the skills of the engaged individuals for composing an Action Plan.

- Identify the percentage of the attacked individuals from the national population and adapt the budget in the purpose of their medical and wellbeing needs just like there is for the disabled people.



The Acting Chairperson Dr. Julia Ahmed wrapped the session asking all to work together as “One Bangladesh–One Community and as Smart community”.

### What ASF is planning to do next?

The recommendations from the esteemed speakers were highly appreciated by ASF and hence, they are committed to executing those through their current and future activities based on available resources.