



Activating Village Courts in Bangladesh Phase II Project



Annual Progress Report (January - December 2018)



EUROPEAN UNION

Local Government Division
Ministry of Local Government, Rural Development and Cooperatives
Government of the Peoples' Republic of Bangladesh



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Table of Contents

Contents	Page No.
Executive Summary	3
Section I: Context	5
<i>1.1 Key areas of development and issues related to the subject area in Bangladesh</i>	5
<i>1.2 Description of the key objectives and outputs of the project</i>	5
<i>1.3 Project Components</i>	6
Section II: Achievements	6
2.1 Progress of outputs (expected results)	6
<i>Output 1.1: Capacity of relevant stakeholders at national and local level improved and key skills strengthened to enable Village Courts in new target Unions to function effectively by the end of project implementation.</i>	6
<i>Output 1.2 Legal and policy framework revised to enhance efficiency and effectiveness of VCs.</i>	20
<i>Output 1.3 GoB monitoring capacity for evaluating Village Courts performance is strengthened and systematised</i>	25
<i>Output 2.1 Beneficiaries in project areas understand the roles and functions of the Village Courts and can access their services when required</i>	27
<i>Output 2.2 Evidence-base and knowledge-management on Village Courts increased</i>	35
Section III: Networking	50
Section IV: Organization and Management	50
Section V: Partnership	54
Section VI: Lessons learnt and future direction	54
Section VII: Conclusion	55
Annex-I: Performance of Village Court (July 2017- December 2018) extracted from Case Statistics Database	56

Executive Summary

The Activating Village Courts in Bangladesh Project has scaled up to 1078 UPs based on the success of pilot phase and has started offering localized justice through village courts activated by the technical and financial supports of this project in 2078 UPs of Bangladesh. The Local Government Division (LGD) of the Ministry for Local Government, Rural Development and Cooperatives (MoLGRD&C) has been implementing this project with financial and technical support from the EU, GOB and UNDP. It aims to activate VCs in 1080 out of 4,558 UPs in the country.

The village courts have offered dispute resolution services following the prescribed procedures with proper documentation. The capacity development initiative for elected-UP representatives and VC officials has resulted in effective application of the law and regulations during proceedings.

Being sensitized by community mobilization initiatives, community people have started seeking justice from village courts. As a result, in a total 79,568 cases reported, resolved 61,450 cases and implemented 56,440 decisions between July'17-Dec'18 (*Details in Annex-I*). In 2018 nearly 58,200 (28 percent of which reported women) cases have been reported to the village courts extending direct access to justice to over 116,400 people. According to Midterm review (MTR), resolution took place within a 6 weeks' time-frame and settlements are generally enforced (91%). The consensus view of police, UNOs, UP staff and PNGOs is that where a VC is functioning properly crime is lower. The village courts have received 4,600 cases from district courts and other sources demonstrating that these courts are contributing to reduce case backlogs in the district courts.

The project continues to raise awareness at the grassroots through courtyard meetings, community meetings, multimedia shows, rallies and distribution of information, education and communication materials. It has delivered messages on village courts to approximately 3,175,000 people, half of whom are women, directly and sensitized journalist of 27 districts. There was a one-minute TVC on four TV channels to promote village courts.

During reporting period members of District Training Pool (DTP) got engaged in capacity building training of VC's service providers. They provided capacity building training to 15,484 service providers on VCs and its function.

Four partner NGOs contracted in December 2016, got involved in providing supports to unions to activate village courts in 1078 unions through its planned outreach and capacity building initiatives. They have provided supports to the local administration in organizing and conducting capacity building training to key VC actors (VCAs, UP Secretary; UP Chair, Panel Chair, and UP members).

27 district and 128 Upazilla Village Courts Management Committees (VCMCs) formed following the old GO issue in 2013 has started functioning to increase Government's involvement in carrying out monitoring of village courts performance. During reporting period 42% DVCMC and 42% Upazila VCMC meet following the old GO issued in 2013 for monitoring of VCs performance. Revised GOs of VCMC's (District and Upazila VCMC) that have been revised based on the assessment placed to LGD for issuing revised GO.

The Pillar Assessed Grant or Delegation Agreement (PAGoDA) has been amended on May 2018 incorporating the component "Rolling out of AVCBII project activities in CHT areas"

and addressing the inconsistency of different project documents. Accordingly, the Prodoc has been revised and submitted to Economics Relation Division (ERD) for approval.

The project was on track in achieving the two out of three Top Key Results that the project promised during designing of AWP 2018 and in achieving the financial target as planned. The project could not involve GOB in monitoring of village courts performance as planned. But in coming months along with other activities, the project will give special emphasize on GOB's involvement in monitoring of village courts, and integration of village courts issues into training curriculum of Judicial Administration and Training Institute (JATI) and Bangladesh Police Academy (BPA).

Section I: Context

1.1 Key areas of development and issues related to the subject area in Bangladesh

It was reported earlier that countrywide UP election is completed in June 2016 where UP chair has been elected with political identity. Therefore, a concern is potentially emerging about the neutrality of the Village Courts as being the UP Chairperson/Village Courts Chair are elected with the political banner. However, it hasn't so far created any practical concern in the field and the project is still maintaining closer observation to document lessons learning, if any, following this policy shift. The project is aware that might require rigorous policy analysis/Political Economy Analysis, lessons learning exercise and eventual legal framework adjustment for village courts operations.

The National 7th Five Year Plan (FYP) has emphasised that access to justice is critical for ensuring rule of law and protecting the rights of citizens. A pragmatic set of activities articulated under the National 7th FYP, including the establishment of a "Case Management & Coordination Committee" for civil and criminal matters at the district level and strengthening Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) as a critical process to improve the performance of the justice sector. New ADR Rules was approved and Gazette is issued by the government in 2015 to authorize the District Legal Officers to carry out Mediation/ADR when poor/vulnerable justice seekers come to DLAC offices for legal support. National legal aid helpline (i.e. 16430) has been established and inaugurated by the honourable Prime Minister in April 2016. The Prime Minister has also given Directive "*Make effective the village courts for providing justice to the common people easily and reduce case log at the courts*" during Deputy Commissioners conference 2017.

1.2 Description of the key objectives and outputs of the project

1.2.1 Overall objective

To contribute to improving access to justice for disadvantaged and marginalised groups in Bangladesh.

1.2.2 Specific objective

To make local authorities more responsive to local justice needs and offer appropriate legal services in the form of well- functioning village courts.

To empower local people, especially women, the poor and vulnerable groups to seek remedies for injustices and to resolve their disputes at the local level in an expeditious, transparent and affordable manner.

Outputs of the project

1.1 The capacity of relevant stakeholders at national and local level improved and key skills strengthened to enable Village Courts in new target Unions to function effectively by the end of project implementation.

1.2 Legal and policy framework revised to enhance efficiency and effectiveness of Village Courts.

1.3 GoB monitoring capacity for evaluating Village Courts performance is strengthened and systematised

2.1 Beneficiaries in project areas understand the roles and functions of the Village Courts and can access their services when required

2.2 Evidence-base and Knowledge-management on Village Courts increased

1.3 Project Components

The Project Management Unit (PMU) has been providing support in the implementation of the day-to-day activities of the project, under the guidance of National Project Director (NPD). The PMU, headed by a National Project Coordinator (NPC), comprised with Programme Component, M&E and Knowledge Management Component and Operations Component.

The Programme Component-comprised with Project Coordination, Capacity Development, Advocacy, Communication & Outreach and Legal and Gender Unit - responsible for capacity development of relevant stakeholders (UP representatives and officials, Village Police, Women and others as relevant) through activities designed under output 1.1; creating demand of village courts through outreach activities designed under output 2.1; and policy reform through activities designed under output 1.2. M&E and Knowledge Management Component is responsible for strengthening GoB's monitoring capacity for evaluating Village Court's performance and Monitoring, Evaluation & Research of the project. Gender being a cross cutting issue, Gender Unit provides gender specific support to all the programme interventions.

In addition, four partner NGOs (who have experience in local justice/dispute resolution and/or supporting Village Courts), contracted in December 2016, are responsible for providing supports to UPs in running village courts and mobilising community towards village courts through grass roots level outreach activities.

Section II: Achievements

As per the AWP 2017, the project made the following progress, this quarter:

2.1 Progress of outputs (expected results)

Output 1.1: Capacity of relevant stakeholders at national and local level improved and key skills strengthened to enable Village Courts in new target Unions to function effectively by the end of project implementation.

Activity 1.1.1 Equipped 1,080 UPs with all necessary forms, furniture, *ejlas* (court bench), VCA and others

Village Courts Assistance deployed by the project in 1078 UPs has provide supports to the union parishad to run village courts following VC's proceedings including documentation. In addition, they also have delivered the village courts messages through conducting Courtyard meetings at the community level.

Based on the assessment, quantity of VCs' forms and formats (given below) has been determined and then selected the printing firm following GOB's procurement process but could not finalize the firm as per plan due to absence of NPD since October 2018 as NPD's approval is require for finalization.

Table-1 Brief information about types of VC forms and quantity to be printed				
Sl	Name of the forms	Quantity to be printed (set)	No. of pages in a set	Use of the forms
1	Form-1 (Application form)	1443	150 Leaves	Use to file a case
2	Form-2 (Case Register)	1250	72 Leaves/144 pages	Use to record a case
3	Form-3 (Order Sheet of the case)	3142	120 Leaves	Use to record the order of the case
4	Form-4 (Summon to the defendant)	2646	120 leaves	To issue a summon to the defendant
5	Form-5 (Summon to the witness)	1513	120 leaves one side	To issues a summon to the witness
6	Form-6 (Instruction to nominate panel member)	2514	120 leaves	To use for instructing to nominate VC panel member
7	Form-7 (VC panel member nomination form)	1735	120 leaves	To use in nominating VC panel member
8	Form-8 (Request letter to the panel member asking attend VC session)	3101	120 Leaves	To keep the record of the attendance of the VC panel members
9	Form-9 (Solemn-nama)	1766	120 Leaves	To use for keeping record of dispute resolution through Solemn-nama
10	Form-10 (Attendance sheet)	1398	150 Leaves	To keep the record of the attendance of the applicant, defendant and the witness.
11	Form-11 (Case Slip)	500	120 Leaves	To provide information about following hearing date of the case
12 A	Form-12 (A- Decree or Order form)	1145	120 pages	To issue a decree or order of the case
12 B	Form-12 (B- Decree and Order Register)	991	120 Leaves/240 Pages	To maintain documentation about decree or order of the case
13	Form-13 (Compensation Register)	995	50 Leaves/100 pages both side	To maintain a registration of the VC compensated money
14	Form-14 (Fees/ Fine receipt)	1741	120 Leaves	To use in providing receipt against Fees/ Fine
15	Form-15 (Fees / Fine Register)	1025	100 48 Leaves/96 pages both side	To maintain documentation about Fees / Fine
16	Form-16 (Dispatch Register)	1414	108 Leaves	To use for registration of the UP

Table-1 Brief information about types of VC forms and quantity to be printed				
Sl	Name of the forms	Quantity to be printed (set)	No. of pages in a set	Use of the forms
				letter dispatch
17	Form-17 (Quarterly report of dispute received and resolved)	199	48 Leaves	Form-17, 18 and 19 will be used to monitor progress of VC performance
18	Form-18 (Quarterly report of dispute received and resolved under Upazila level)	91	48 Leaves	
19	Form-19 (Quarterly report of dispute received and resolved under District level)	68	48 Leaves	
20	Form-20 (Recovery of compensation/ fine)	63	100 leaves	To use for maintaining recovery of compensation/fine
21	Form-21 (Transferring the case to the Criminal Court)	62	100 Leaves	To use for transferring the case to the criminal court

1.1.2 Develop, update and print training materials (mainstreaming gender and vulnerability issues)

a. Review and reprint Training Manual on VC

The project has re-printed 200 copies of the Village Court Training Manual for District Training Pool (DTP) members. These will be distributed during one of their refresher courses.

b. Develop, print and distribute counseling materials on VC

A draft counseling guideline has developed and sent to the field.

c. Develop and distribution of Video Learning Aid (VLA) on local justice and VC

During the reporting period, 5000 copies DVD of Video Learning Aid (VLA) and 200 copies DVD of VLA with English subtitle has been produced. It has been developed through a process including field testing and on LGD's approved script.

It is a standalone audio-visual learning material to make the learning sustainable. The overall objective of the VLA is to provide an overview on village court trial process and local justice system, as well as VC and its steps, rules and laws in an interesting and entertaining form that appeal to wider participants/audiences effectively and efficiently. On the other hand, it will be standalone knowledge product which will act as a facilitator to increase the capacity of the various stakeholders on the steps of VC trial process, laws, rules featuring local dispute, forms, formats, procedure etc to make a thorough understanding on VC. It will be distributed to all Unions across the country.



d. Develop, print and distribute of Frequently Ask Question (FAQ) on VC

The Project has developed and printed 3000 copies of FAQ. The FAQ, handy for quick information, will enhance the basic knowledge of different stakeholders and empower both service recipients and providers. It has been developed through a process having consultation with different stakeholders (service providers, service recipients, officials of LGD) and finally taking vetting from legal expert and LGD.



e. Reprint and distribute the Pocket Card on VC

The project reprinted 100,000 pocket cards and distributed 99,350 of them. The pocket card includes basic information of village courts including their jurisdiction, formation, decision-making and implementation, and compensation recovery process if either party is unwilling to compensate.

1.1.3 Form Master Trainer (MT) and District Trainers Pools (DTP) and provide ToT for both

a. Provides training to field staff on village courts

PNGOs hired by the project to provide supports to LGD for capacity building of service providers and raising awareness of community people has recruited 29 new field level staffs (Project Coordinator-1, District Coordinator-4 & Upazila Coordinator-24) due to staff drop out. During reporting period, the project has provided a 5-day long Training of Trainers (ToT) to them in Mymensingh with the collaboration of NILG. The overall objective of the training was to enhance knowledge and skills of the participants on village courts Act and Rules, its practice and documentation so that they can provide necessary technical supports effectively in activating VC to respective Union Parishads. The training has conducted by the Joint-Director (Training & Advocacy), NILG along with Senior Capacity Development Officer and Training Officer of AVCBII.



b. Provide refresher ToT to District Training Pools (DTP) at NILG (3 days long ToT)

To review, refresh, reinforce and upgrade participants' existing knowledge and skills on VC, the project planned to conduct Refreshers Training of Trainers (RToT) for the DTP¹ members who will provides refreshers training to UP representatives, UP Secretary, Accounts Assistant cum Computer Operator (AACO) and Village Court Assistant (VCA). During reporting period the project has provided three days refresher ToT to 21 DTP members of two districts (Gazipur and Coxbazar) from 23-25th September 2018. Among total participants, 6 were government officials, 2 were District Facilitators (DF) from AVCBII, UNDP and 13 were from partner NGOs.



c. Reflection workshop on VCs with District Training Pools (DTP) from all project districts (day long at divisional level)

DTP members, who received ToT from the project, were involved in capacity development of VC's service providers and have gathered huge experiences and learning through providing capacity building training to service providers. The project organized eight (08) reflection workshops in eight (08) divisions during this reporting period with DTP members aiming to capture their reflection/experience that they gathered while providing capacity building training where 322 DTP members participated. Among the DTP members, 102 were from GoB officials (District Legal Aid Officer, Additional Police Super/Senior Asst. Police Super/Asst. Police Super, Deputy Director, Department of Social Services, Deputy Director, Department of Youth Development and District Women Affairs Officer). Among the total participants 52 were women and 270 were men. Representative from NILG was participated as resource person in each of the workshop.

1.1.4. Train all key VC actors (AACO, VCA; UP Secretary; UP Chair, Panel Chair, UP members, Village Police etc.) in project area on role and functions of village courts mainstreaming gender issues

a. Training on Village Courts to key VCs actor

The members of DTP who received ToT provided capacity building training to 6,407 (Women: 1,541) UP members, 85 UP Secretaries (women:6) and 8,821 (Women:455) Village

¹District Training Pool (DTP) is comprised of GoB and project officials and experienced staffs from partner NGOs and are responsible for training of all Union Parishad (UP) functionaries and representatives about Village Courts. The Deputy Director Local Government (DDLG) in coordination with respective Upazilla Nirbahi Officers (UNO) is responsible for managing DTP with the assistance from the project staffs.

Police and 89 AACO (Women:15. The DDLG of the respective district was responsible for coordinating and managing the training with the assistance from the District Facilitators (DFs), NGO's District Coordinators, and NGO's Upazila Coordinators. Training of UP Secretaries and VCAs was five days, UP members were for three days and VP were one day. Training of VCA and UP Secretary were residential held at district level and UP members and VP were non-residential held at Upazila level under the guidance of DDLGs.

Table-02 Number of key VC actors received training			
Name of the training	Male	Female	Total
Training to UP Chair and Panel Chair	22	1	23
Training to UP Secretary, and VCA	133	34	167
Training to UP member	4,844	1,540	6,384
Training to VP	8,366	455	8,821
Training to AACO	74	15	89
TOTAL	13,439	2,045	15,484



Apart from DTP members, involvement of local administration is highly acknowledgeable and appreciable in organizing the training at districts and upazilas. They were also involved and contributed their skill and knowledge to conduct the training session as a resource person who were out of District Training Pool (DTP). District Judge, Additional District Judge, Director, Local Government, Chief Metropolitan Magistrate, Deputy Commissioner (DC), Police Super (SP), DDLG, ADC (Revenue), ADC (General), ADC (Education and ICT), ADM, Assistant Commissioner, Additional Police Commissioner, Deputy Director (Regional Public Administration), Senior Judicial Magistrate, Assistant Judge, General Secretary (Bar Association), AC (Land), Officers In-Charge (OC) were involved with this process.

Challenges:

- Ensure all UP-members presence in planned time is very difficult due to distance, local transport & less self-eagerness. Unless and until all participants come to the venue on time, it's create concern and challenges to start the training session;
- DTP members (GoB) were found not interested to conduct session at upzilla level due to less honorarium and lack of transport facilities.
- Significant number of UP members were found illiterate who can sign only.
- Quality facilitation specially use of training methods and process according to training manual by some of the DTP members were found very poor.
- Organizing training more than two Upazilas simultaneously is a big challenge to ensure quality of training.

- Maintaining the DTP member's (GoB) schedule at upazila level was found very difficult due to their own business and other urgency.
- But due to not availability of transport or lack of budget on transportation cost, significant number of DTP members (GoB) couldn't attend the upazila level training in conducting training session.

Recommendations:

- A copy of training manual need to share with DTP members (GoB) individually for smooth facilitation.
- DTP should be reformed for conducting effective session/ training at upazila level. Accordingly, ADM/UNO/AC Land/OC could be included in the DTP as resource person.
- Residential training should be organized for UP representative at district level for ensuring time and effectiveness of the training.
- Respective trainers should be more attentive to create friendly environment so that the female participants feel encourage to actively participate in the training.

d. Training on Village Courts for AACOs at district level (5 days long at district level)

The project has provided capacity building training to 89 AACO (women:15)

1.1.5 Sensitize key stakeholders (UNOs; DDLGs; judges; police; UP members; district and UZ women affairs office, civil society members, Women's Development Forum etc.) in project area on gender and village courts (at district level):

With the objective of enhancing sensitivity and capacity of different key stakeholders about gender responsive service delivery of the village courts, in 2018 project organized 14 district level workshops titled "Sensitization Workshop on Gender and Village Courts" in Netrakona, Gopalganj, Moulovibazar, Sunamgonj, Bhola, Pabna, Madaripur, Panchagar, Satkhira, Khulna, Sirajgonj, Noakhali, Chandpur, and Barguna respectively. Total 323 women and 534 men participated in the workshops.

The workshop was participated by a mixed group of stakeholders that included UP chairmen, member, different level of government officials playing role as district training pool members, members of village courts management committees, judicial officers, NGOs, journalists, lawyers, women's rights activists etc.

The workshops identified different challenges for women in seeking justice and in participating in VC decision making process which include prevalence of social custom and tradition about women's role in society, lack of self-esteem of women, lack of agency of women UP member in performing their responsibilities as in some cases still husbands of the women UP members represent them, lack of access to knowledge and information for women, lack of support from family and society to seek justice and to participate in public life, specifically lack of support from the UP personnel (male) in performing their responsibilities in UP/VC.



Highlighting the need to ensure a gender friendly environment in VC operation, participants made individual commitments to promote gender equal access to VC. To mention few of the commitments:

- Carrying out publicity about VC among community women in the respective constituency of the UP members;
- discussing about the VC and about women's participation in different discussion meetings; including session on VC in ongoing training of youth development affairs;
- Carrying out VC activities in fair and transparent manner; cooperating and encouraging women's participation in VC panel;
- Performing the duties as people's representatives with due diligence and remaining active in increasing women's participation in VC process;
- Dissemination of information about VC among the students; and among the guardians through guardians' assembly;
- Ensuring cooperation so that women can access VC services in a congenial environment.
- Referring women and men to VC when asking advice about settling small disputes;
- including agenda on gender and VC in every monthly meeting of UP, taking efforts to ensure women's representation in all the cases of VC.

However, participants of the workshop also made several recommendations which include:

- Organizing such capacity building workshops at the union level covering all UP personnel and community people;
- Organizing massive awareness at the village level about village courts and about opportunity for women to settle their disputes locally, and about nomination of women in the panel;
- Carrying out motivational works and capacity building/leadership trainings for grassroots women to encourage their representation in VC panel process.

Activity 1.1.6 Establish clear and systematic coordination mechanisms with Upazila and District level government authorities

Divisional Commissioner Office in association with Deputy Director, Local Government and the AVCB II Project have organized six divisional level conferences in Khulna, Barisal, Rangpur, Mymensingh, Sylhet and Rajshahi divisions. In total, 995 people including members of District Training Pool, UNOs, UP Chairmen from respective project areas, PNGO representatives, AVCB II project staff and local media participated in the conferences. Divisional Commissioner of respective division graced the conference as chief guest and Director, Local Government Division of the respective division chaired the conference. During conference UP Chairmen recommended for increasing jurisdiction of village courts. They also sought human resource and budget for better functioning of Village courts. During the conference following decision was taken:

- DDLG in guidance of DLG will take necessary measure to regularize the VCMC committee meeting for ensuring monitoring and reporting at their districts based on the Government Order (GO) circulated by LGD dated on 22/03/2012. Along with that all the important decisions that will be taken during the meeting will be circulated among the members as soon as possible for further necessary measures. Members of VCMC will continue their visit for identifying the challenges and to provide guidance to the concerns on how to overcome;

- DDLG will submit quarterly report on village courts to DLG to update the overall progress and way forward;
- Proper monitoring is required to see if the village courts are functioning properly or not. In this regard, a monitoring mechanism need to be developed to ensure monitoring of village courts by DDLGs and UNOs. DLG will also go further visit based on DDLG report submission to know the hearing process of Village Courts to know whether VCs resolve the disputes following the village courts Act or not;
- UP Chairman will must follow one or two days in a week at least to regularize the Village Court session at all Up level by following entire procedure and document all the information properly;
- Local media will publish news on VC to make it more popular;
- Chairman of all Union Parishad will continue awareness raising program on village court;
- Deputy Commissioner of Project area will seek technical support from AVCB II project to activate Village Court at non-project area;
- Deputy Commissioners will take necessary to include VC in the web portal.



Divisional Level VC conference held at Rangpur

Half Yearly Coordination Meeting with DDLG held on 12th April 2018 at the Multipurpose Hall Room, BIAM Foundation, Dhaka where 52 participants including DDLGs and DFs of AVCB II project areas participated. In the workshop, upcoming plan for the period from January – June 2018 was shared with DDLGs seeking their cooperation. DDLGs shared their opinion, feedback, and recommendations to enrich the project target within proposed time frame. Following decisions were made:

- Concern UNO will submit separate budget for village court trainings to be held at UP level to DDLG. DDLG will submit to LGD for approval;
- UNO in association with DF and in guidance of DDLG will arrange, monitor the overall process, and quality of the training;
- DDLGs will take necessary steps to regularize the VCMC meeting for ensuring monitoring of village courts;
- Proper monitoring is required to see if the village courts are functioning properly or not. In this regard, a monitoring mechanism need to be developed to ensure monitoring of village courts by DDLGs and DLGs. Separate monitoring or visit date can be fixed by UNO for observing the hearing session of Village Courts to know how they resolve the disputes following the village courts Act.

Activity 1.1.7 Develop capacity of field level staff

Sensitization on Gender and Human Rights to field staff [DC, UC and DF] (1 day) at Divisional level:

With the objectives of building capacity and sensitivity of the field staff about gender responsive implementation of the project interventions, during the reporting period project organized 8 (eight) divisional level capacity building workshops titled as Sensitization Workshop on Gender and Human Rights in Mymensingh, Sylhet, Chittagong, Pabna (Rajshahi Division), Patuakhali (Barisal Division), Faridpur (Dhaka Division), Rangpur, and Khulna. Participants of the workshops were district facilitators, district coordinators, upazila coordinators, project coordinators, monitoring and reporting coordinators of the PNGOs. In a total 23 women and 166 men attended the workshops.



The workshops included both theoretical discussion on human rights, gender equality, and their relevance in the project interventions, and practical sessions using different relevant examples from the project interventions.

Evaluation of the workshops show that the workshops contributed to enhance their understanding on gender equality and human rights and for some as a refresher of their previous knowledge on the concepts of gender equality and human rights. Almost all the participants said that they found the workshop useful in enhancing their confidence in mainstreaming gender in implementing the field activities. They also considered this workshop as an opportunity for team building. However, some participants suggested to include content on history of women's rights and global aspects on gender and development.

Participants have successfully identified their roles and responsibilities in promoting gender equality objectives of the project which includes: 1) raising awareness about equal access of women and men to VC services, and about the gender equal representation in VC panel; discussing the importance of gender equality and women's access to VC in awareness events like court yard meetings, video show etc. 2) ensure active participation of women in all project activities as possible and deliver messages with practical examples of the necessity of women's representation in VC panel; 3) take care of safety and security of the women staff and provide necessary support; 4) take steps to ensure women's participation, and participation of marginalized people in different events organized by the project; 5) be aware of organizational policy on gender equality and workplace harassment and ensure a respectful and harassment free organizational environment so that both women and men can comfortably work; 6) ensure inclusion of women in capacity building trainings, and offer an environment so that they feel motivated to speak up; 7) including gender specific data and information in writing reports, avoid of using gender stereotypes in reporting and individual interactions. Participants, specifically the DCOs and Project Coordinators committed to take initiatives to ensure that learning of the workshop is flowed down to the VCA through regular coordination meetings and regular mentoring.

However, they recommended to consider a longer duration of such events at least for 2 days, also to organize such training for UP personnel, and to include a session on gender sensitization in the training/refreshers courses for UP personnel. They also recommended for gender specific IEC materials to be used in the field implementation, and to organize training for UP on gender equality issues and carry out awareness raising at educational institutions, and religious institutions.

Provide technical assistance and mentoring to CSOs, VC officials, and other stakeholders through field visit

The Capacity Development Unit (CDU) has visited Cox's bazar, Satkhira, Gopalganj, Rangpur, Kurigram, Gaibandha, Noagaon, and Pabna districts during the reporting period to monitor the trainings these held at upazila level by DTP members and provided technical supports accordingly. During the missions, the team observed the ongoing training session and visited some Union Parishads to see the documentations of VC's proceedings. Besides these, the Senior Capacity Development Officer provided a half day long orientation on VC legal framework, its process and documentation to PNGO's (BLAST) staffs located at Cox's bazar to make them more oriented about the process of Village Courts. Field observation including recommendations are given below:

Observation:

- Local Administration (UNO/DDLG) was found cordial and supportive on VC as well as organizing the training.
- Frequent coordination and follow-up found from the respective UNO.
- Training venue found well decorated with poster, stand banner and festoon
- The training environment found very warm and friendly.
- It was found in some cases that DTP members (GoB) conducted the training not following the schedule or manner of participatory training mentioned in the training manual;
- VC learning flow chart was not displayed in right place as per guideline in some UPs. Even didn't find the guideline on arranging different meeting and event as shared by PMU with respective UC and VCA;
- Respective VCA has been facilitating the Courtyard meeting without relevant flipchart. Court Yard flipchart is a vital element to run the court yard meeting. It's a regular activity which has vast impact to raise awareness among mass people specially for women. The flipchart is yet to be received from PMU.
- VC documentation didn't maintain in proper manner in some UPs.
- Since most of the VCA are newly recruited thus without proper guiding and mentoring by DCO/UC it's very difficult to develop a systematic Nathi by VCA



Recommendations:

- Respective DTP members/trainers should be followed the training manual for ensuring the effective session by using proper techniques, methodologies etc.
- Facilitators should deliver the session focused on content as per schedule. The review session should be reviewed by the participants not by the facilitator
- DF, DCo and UC should summarize the discussion of the session or add supplement in the session to make the discussion friendly and to make it understandable
- Facilitators should link the discussion with VC Act and Rules; they should also ask the participants what they have understood from the discussion
- It's always better to give some easy examples to make the discussion understandable and to summarize the discussion after the session
- Facilitators should do some ice break & energize with the participants to make them more attentive and energetic and not to make them boring or dull
- DTP members/facilitators need to be took more preparation to internalize the VC Act and Rules
- More effective & innovative techniques, methodologies could be introduced by the facilitators which can be brought a change in the training environment
- Effective communication and coordination with Local Administration and among the team is significantly important to organize and implement the training
- VCA is one of the important person of the project who is maintaining & preserving the VC documentation as well as guiding the panel member including UP chairman; thus, he/she should be well informed and understanding about the VC process/ Act/Rules
- Frequent meeting and discussion with concern personnel of Local Administration & DTP members is required for effective coordination
- PNGO colleagues should be more pro-active to organize and implement the training as a certified DTP member
- Need to provide courtyard meeting flipchart to the field from PMU immediately for ensure effective courtyard meeting.

Activity 1.1.8 Provide support to National Training Institutes (NILG, BCSAA, JATI, BPA, etc.) to update and develop training materials and ensure VC is integrated into regular curricula/syllabus ensuring gender and vulnerability issues are mainstreamed

There were no planned activities under this

Activity 1.1.9 Coordination and monitoring field-level activities

Coordination and monitoring field-level activities by PCU:

- Member of Project Coordination Unit (PCU) attended 10 Quarterly Coordination Meetings² (QCMs) organized by four partner NGOs in 2018. Project Coordination Unit (PCU) has provided technical supports to four partner NGOs for organizing 10 meetings effectively. Both financial and programmatic progress, and type of challenges faced by NGOs during implementation were discussed in the meeting. Possible mitigation measures of foreseeable challenges have been identified during the meeting and later on, disseminated these to all partner NGO for common understanding.

² *Quarterly Coordination Meetings (QCMs) is a NGO's activity organize by partner NGO quarterly where all District Coordination Officers, PC, Monitoring and Reporting Coordinator, Finance Officer and Focal person of AVCB II project of respective NGO attend. In addition, District Facilitators deployed by UNDP in NGO's working district also participate in the quarterly meeting of the respective NGO.*

- Member of Project Coordination Unit (PCU) has supervised/monitored the work of 27 District Facilitators and provided management and capacity building supports for smooth implementation of field level awareness raising and capacity building through four partner NGOs.
- Member of Program Coordination Unit made field visits to Madaripur, Faridpur, Gopalganj, Jamalpur, Netrokona, Gazipur, Coxsbazar, Chattogram, Chandpur, Khulna, Satkhira, Bagerhat, Bhola, Patuakhali, Barguna, Gaibandha, Rangpur, Noagaon, Sirajganj, Panchagar and Pabna district to monitor the VC's performance and progress of field level intervention.
- PCU unit has ensured support to purchase and delivery 21 no's of Female Motorcycle. During reporting period 21 female motorcycle were delivered to partner NGOs for smooth field monitoring.

Coordination and monitoring field-level activities by District Facilitators:

27 District Facilitators (DFs) deployed in 27 project districts were fully engaged to coordinate with local administration to ensure their guidance and leadership. They have also facilitated and guided partner NGO's to accomplish actions following the contract to produce desired results. In brief DFs did following activities in consultation with the respective DDLG and in coordination with the PNGO colleagues.

- District facilitators engaged most of the time to monitor the quality of VC documentation and observed village court hearing session at their respective area. They coordinate with UP Chairman and members to run the VC as per approved law;
- Always in close contact with the Union parishad Chairman to extend their support for regularize village court following the rules and procedure through continuous mentoring support;
- Provided necessary supports to the local administration to organize quarterly Upazila and District Village Court Management Committees. As part of that, they coordinated to finalize the agenda considering the challenges & needs faced local staffs during implementation, take necessary to approve and ensure well circulation of the minutes, etc. Later on, continuously coordinated and communicated with those concern persons related to the implementation of the decision for proper execution.
- Continued advocacy with local administration for issuing government directive instructing local NGOs to disseminate message on VC through their community mobilization initiatives. During reporting period Upazila Nirbahi Officer from Project area circulated GOs to all local NGO's for sharing VC related information through their different initiatives and to submit progress report regarding that. During this reporting period DF engaged themselves to communicate with those NGO's for submission of the reports, to check and to measure the result;
- Continuously they assisted PNGOs concern staffs to organize and facilitate CYMs following the guideline provided by PMU through field visit. Apart from that they also guided to the concern VCA to increase their facilitation skill to make the session more participatory and interactive;
- Provided technical and logistics supports to local administration for organizing Gender Workshop, GO-NGO coordination workshop, workshops with journalist, workshop with judiciary & police, etc.
- Provided support to the PNGOs for planning, budgeting and organizing community sharing meetings and video shows as per agreed plan to meet the target.

- Guided and provided all sorts of technical support to PNGO to attend in the quarterly coordination meeting organized by Upazila Nirbahi Officer to orient local NGOs about VC and to make them responsive to integrate VC in their regular activities. They analyzed the work plan and monthly target plan and provided feedback after reviewing to perform it properly by using the local resources;
- Assisted Union Parishad Chairman for providing incentives for Village Police at Union level;
- Maintained close relationship with local journalist to encourage them to publish report and related information highlighting the benefits of the VC to make it more popular;
- Ensured effective use of IEC materials by field level staff through monitoring;
- Provided technical support to improve the quality of reporting including quality of VC's performance data through field visits regularly as guided by PMU
- Conducted Court user survey following the guideline provided by the M&E and Knowledge component of AVCB II Project and sent to the PMU
- Ensured collection of data on status of appeal cases from 1078 UPs through VCAs coordinating with DCs and Upazila Coordinators.

They have represented the AVCB II Project in different forums/meetings organized by Government. They also have been maintaining professional relationship with Judges, Police, Journalists to ensure their assistance required for activation of village courts.

Project Reflection Workshop held in Dhaka of AVCB II

The Project with the assistance of Local Government Division organized its Annual Reflection workshop at BIAM Foundation, Dhaka on 18th March 2018 where representatives from LGD, representatives from UNDP, DDLGs and District Facilitators from concern Districts, staff of PMU and 4 Project Coordinator of 4 Partner NGOs were participated in the reflection workshop. The workshop allowed participants to discuss the coordination between DDLG and DF, performance of the project & village courts and plan of 2018 where role of DFs, DDLGs and PNGOs are important for execution of plan actions of 2018.



Output 1.2 Legal and policy framework revised to enhance efficiency and effectiveness of VCs.

Activity 1.2.1 Engage in advocacy and sensitization with judiciary and police to enable early case screening within current framework

1.2.1.a. Conduct workshops/opinion sharing meeting with District Judiciary and Police

The engagement with lower the judiciary and police officials is crucial to enhance cooperation and coordination among VCs, Judiciary and Police to make VCs effective and functional. Hence the project has planned to conduct 27 workshops/opinion sharing meeting with District Judiciary and Police in 27 districts. Till reporting period 27 workshops held, of which 21 in Sirajganj, Pabna, Rangpur, Panchagar, Kurigram, Khulna, Satkhira, Bagerhat, Bhola, Borguna, Patuakhali, Faridpur, Mymensingh, Netrokona, Gazipur, Chittagong, Cox's bazar, Chandpur, Sunamganj and Moulabi Bazar Districts during this reporting period.



The aim of the consultation meetings was to give an overview of Village Courts, share challenges and learnings from pilot phase, seek feedback and recommendations from the targeted stakeholders to increase early screening and case referral as well as to enhance cooperation and coordination between Village Courts, Judiciary and Police. Series of recommendations are generated through this consultation with judiciary and police which will increase collaboration and cooperation with Judiciary and Police to make the VC full functional and effective. It will also help to change the relevant laws and policies to remove the practical barriers.

Key recommendations from the consultations are given below:

- VC Act and Rules needed to be amended to remove inconsistency and weaknesses. Proper accountability mechanisms need to include in the law and clear connection with judiciary shall be in the law which will make VCs more effective and functional.
- Inspection from judiciary is critical for quality assurance of VC cases in terms of justice delivery, VC act should be amended to include inspection mechanism by District Judiciary. District Jud DJ/CJM should have the power to inspect the VCs for quality assurance, it should be included in the law.
- In relation to referral from Police Stations, participants stated that as per Cr.PC and Police Regulation, Police have to take actions when someone come to seek relief in the Thana. There is no mechanism to know which cases are filed in VCs, if VC/UP inform Thana that the case is in VC, then police can act. However, they mentioned that in practice people still have lack of trust and confidence on UP representatives and nowadays they are allegation of exercising political power by the UP Chairs.
- Large scale awareness programme on Village courts should be carried out to make the VC functional and change the justice seeking behavior of community people.

- Monthly/Quarterly VC Coordination meeting could be organized with UP chair, Judiciary and Police like Police-Magistracy Conference or DLAC meeting. A Judge could be designated for hearing VC matters and supervise VCs in the District.
- Introducing remuneration/incentive for UPs for conducting VC cases.
- Introducing clear proceedings for proving certified copies of case records to parties with certain time.
- VCs pecuniary jurisdiction needs to be increased considering the market, if the assistant judges pecuniary jurisdiction is increased (which is currently under process).
- All the UP Chair, Secretaries and UP members should be trained on VC and other relevant laws, continues mentoring should be ensured for developing judicial mind as there is already concern about the neutrality of the UP Chair due to their nomination from political parties, it is crucial to proof their neutrality as VC Chair as well as to build trust among the community people.
- In relation to appeal from VCs to District Courts, judges strongly recommended that right to appeal should available for all decisions taken by VCs as in Bangladesh Context, it is easy to bribe the panel members who may be initially nominated by the parties. Right to appeal shall not be taken away from parties under any circumstance.
- Judges recommended that Village Court and Government Legal Aid must be linked as both system is to facilitate access to justice for the poor and vulnerable population of the society. There shall be provision in law to visit the VCs to check the quality of the VC cases, to make the UP Chairs accountable. Judges also strongly suggested to provide intensive training for UP representative on basic laws and human rights.
- Clear referral/case transfer mechanism should be developed as currently there is no mechanism where Judiciary can get the update of the cases that they transfer to VCs for trial. Another issue is VCs often mix-up with cases that are send for investigation and referred cases for trial.
- It has been suggested by the participants that neutrality of VC chair is key element to make VC functioning, when someone sits on judges' chair, they must be neutral and non-biased, developing judicial mind is crucial. Judges stated that as per law there is no scope for arbitrary decisions in VC but in practice, it is not being followed. They strongly recommended to carry out specialized capacity building activities for UP Chairs in change their attitude, behavior and practices as well as to develop judicial mind and increase legal and human rights knowledge.
- As per Bangladesh Constitution every Court must be inspected by superior Court but no inspection power has given to CJM/JM/DJ, this is one the weakest part of the law. There should a system of inspection of VCs by Higher Court(CJM/DJ). VC Act should be amended to include this provision.
- Focused should be given on resolving disputes and to help the justice seekers, not to make the law too strict in terms of filling up the formats etc. Two types of VC Jurisdiction (formal and informal) could also be introduced.
- Judges also strongly recommended that in parallel with Village Courts, Conciliation of Disputes (Municipal Area) Board Act 2004 (*Pouro Birodh Mimangsha* Board Act 2004) should be revised, the jurisdiction under this act is still 25000BDT, whereas many appeals come to District Court under this act. Participants requested UNDP to place this recommendation at national level for policy change.

In all the consultations, the Judges acknowledged that if VC is functional it will reduce peoples suffering, court burdens as well as case backlogs, however, they emphasized on implementation of the law and quality in VC decision making. They also stressed the

importance to build trust and confidence on UP Chairs in the community emphasizing on the political nomination of UP Chairs for election as well as local power dynamics.

1.2.1.b. Conduct advocacy seminars and policy dialogues with the relevant stakeholders for early screening/legal reform (National level).

After completing 27 District Level Consultations with Judiciary and Police by June 2018, national level advocacy and policy dialogue on early screening and case referral was supposed to hold in the 2018 but could not hold due to absent of Legal Specialist.

1.2.1.c Lobby for LGD/AVCB II representatives' participation in relevant district level committees (e.g. Legal Aid Committee, Case Management Committee, Police-Magistracy Meeting, Judicial Conferences etc)

To increase participation of AVCB representatives (DF/DDLG/PNGOs) in DLAC meetings, an in-house assessment has been carried out to examine the existing participation and following that assessment lobby and dialogue with district judiciary is ongoing.

During this reporting period the project has organized a meeting with National Legal Aid Services Organisation (NLASO) and the Director of NLASO the honorable Senior District Judge Md. Zafrul Hasan has encouraged the AVCB project to obtain observer membership in District Legal Aid Committees. They have also requested to take direct VCs to refer cases to DLACs that are beyond VC jurisdiction and justice seekers are poor and vulnerable. Similarly, DLAC could also refer cases to VCs that come to DLAC for legal aid but matters fall under VC jurisdiction.

In relation to participation in other forums, the issue being raised during District Level Consultation with Judiciary and Police and follow-up and lobby with Supreme Court and District Judiciary will be continued.

1.2.1.d. Consultation workshop with relevant stakeholders on case referral to incorporate early screening (district/national level).

The objectives of this activity will be achieved through the Consultation with District Judiciary and Police under activity under 1.2.1.a. However, there is demand and need from field that referral from VC/Union Parishad to other institutions/agencies (District Courts, DLAC, Police Stations, NGOs, Women Affairs Officers etc) is essential for complete service delivery as justice seekers come to VC for various legal relief and many of those are not within the jurisdiction of VCs. Therefore, if a referral system is needs to be introduced to refer applicants to other legal service providers/appropriate authorities it will make the VCs more effective and full functional. Hence, project has planned to conduct this workshop with VCA, DLAC, Police and other justice service providers to facilitate referral from VC to other agencies. There will be 27 workshops in 27 districts 2019.

Activity 1.2.2 Lobby for Practice Note from Chief Justice and Directive from IG Police on screening and referral of cases to Village Courts

A primary meeting was held in October 2017 with the newly appointed Registrar General of Supreme Court Mr. Zakir Hossain and Special Officer to Chief Justice Md. Mr Saifur Rahman (Additional District Judge) to discuss this issue. They have suggested the project to gather field experiences through consultation with the Judiciary at district level and submit

proposal to Supreme Court with evidence and research, then they will pursue it for issuance. The completing the ongoing consultations with judiciary and police by June 2018, the project was planned prepare and submit the proposal for issuing Practice Direction by the Honorable Chief Justice but could not manage it due to absent of Legal Specialist.

Activity 1.2.3 Draft proposed amendments to the Village Court Act based on consultation with stakeholders

1.2.3.a National Consultant for Legal review and draft proposed amendment of Village Court Act and Rules

ToR has been developed, procurement process will start in first quarter of 2019.

1.2.3.b. Review existing legal framework of Village courts through consultation with district level stakeholders (In 3 selected districts)

There was no plan to carry out this activity in the reporting quarter. Once National Consultant for legal review is hired, he/she will conduct this activity to develop proposal for amendment of VC act.

Activity 1.2.4 Printed and distributed necessary VC materials and guidelines.

1.2.4.a. Develop and print I) Easy Reference Guide and II) Quick Reference guide to village courts

This activity has been shifted for 2019.

1.2.4.b. Print VC Booklet

During this reporting period, vendor has printed the booklet and quality assurance team has inspected the factory and identified faulty booklets which Vendor is correcting. VC booklet shall be delivered in the field in next quarter. In a total 20,000 copies were printed and distributed to UP functionaries, local administration and other key stakeholders.

1.2.4.c. Finalize Village Courts Operational Manual - National Consultant (IC)

Village Courts Operational Manual has been developed through an individual consultant and taking concern from the LGD. As Union Parishad is the core institution to activate, run and strengthen the Village Courts, it is very important to support UP Chairmen, UP Secretaries, Accounts Assistant and Computer Operators (AACOs) and Village Courts Assistants along with general UP Members to exercise/handle VC operational issues in an effective way without external technical support or lawyers' engagement. Hence the project has developed this manual.

1.2.4.d Print and distribute VC Operational Manual to run the village courts

Vendor has been selected following GOB's procurement poly. Once NPD is on board work order will be given to the vendor for designing and printing require quantities.

Activity 1.2.5 Undertake field monitoring to ensure legal compliance and quality of decision-making

During field visit for quality assurance of VC decisions, the key issues identified are:

Knowledge and confidence level to deliver/facilitate justice services of VCAs are very poor in general. Intensive capacity building supports of VCAs are required to enhance knowledge level and confidence to deliver legal services support at Union Parishad..

UPs are conducting Salish of matters those are not within VC jurisdiction. However, in some areas they are keeping the records of Salish using VC's forms and formats. Project needs to strictly monitor that UPs do not do Salish for matters those are non-compoundable. There is provision of Youth Entrepreneur in every UP and it is noticed that they are writing application in computer and taking charge for it which is alarming. If the poor justice seekers are spending money for this purpose which hamper the purpose of VC.

Sizable number of cases are referred from district courts to village courts and UPs are resolving the disputes. No challenges noticed relating referred cases in the UPs visited. However, the practice is UPs do not update the Court about the status of the cases. Staffs were given feedback to introduce the practice.

Good documentation noticed in all the UPs visited in terms of regular update, file maintenance, registrar maintenance etc. However, the quality of orders is poor. During writing the order sheet, in most of the cases VCAs are copying the text from the sample order sheet not giving due concentration in writing the actual facts and figures. Capacity building of VCAs and UCs in relation to writing order sheet are required. Capacity building does not necessarily means providing training by existing DTP members, it requires other forms of capacity building such as mentoring, coaching, experience sharing, on job training etc. Special training could also be designed where the experts (Judges, lawyers) could orient them on writing order sheet. In addition, they also need training on basic legal and human rights training.

Both UP representative and VCAs have lack of understanding about pre-trial and documentation process. Now pre-trial is one kind of Salish conducted by VC's Panel members whereas it must be mediation/conciliation by both parties, role of VC panel members is facilitating. In documentation, it is evident that panel members are taking decisions and VCAs are filling the section which requires ratio in favour of the decisions. Intensive orientation on pre-trial needs to be undertaken to increase conceptual understanding of the key actors.

Output 1.3 GoB monitoring capacity for evaluating Village Courts performance is strengthened and systematised.

Activity 1.3.1 Strengthen institutional capacity of MIE Wing of LGD, and District and Upazilla officials to manage the performance of UPs and oversee Village Courts through DMIE system.

Review Village Courts rules and revise guideline of DMIE system:

The project reviewed the directives of local government division of MoLGRD&C circulated on 17 January 2013 and 31 July 2013 to pilot DMIE system in 15 union parishad as a pilot, village court act, 2016 and directive of cabinet division circulated by district magistracy monitoring section on 12 December 2016. The M&E unit has prepared a comparative analysis report to facilitate the MIE Wing to issue revised Government Order to replicate DMIE system across the project areas.

A meeting-presided over by Mr ASM Mahbubul Alam, Director General (Additional Secretary), MIE Wing, Local Government Division- was held on 5 April 2018 on strengthening GoB's monitoring for evaluating Village Court's performance with MIE Wing of LGD. DMIE system revised by the project has been discussed in the meeting and following decisions were made in the meeting:

- Instead of mandatory visit of VC's by UNO and DDLG it has been decided in the meeting that UNOs and DDLG will monitor VCs during UP visits by them. The meeting has recommended to update the proposed DMIE system based on the above decision;
- Organize a meeting with cabinet division after revising the proposed DMIE system based on above decision;
- As VC's inspection/monitoring by DDLG and UNO did not include specifically in the directive (স্মারকসং ০৪.৫১৩.০৫৪.০০.০০.০০১.২০১০-৪৬৯) issued by cabinet division for monitoring, inspection, and night halt of field level administrative official's, the meeting recommended that LGD will send a request letter to cabinet division requesting them to amend the directive incorporating inspection of VC's by UNOs and DDLGs; and
- MIE Wing of LGD will issue GO on DMIE system once it is finalized based on the recommendation of Cabinet division.

Based on the decisions made in the meeting, the DMIE system has been revised and drafted incorporating the feedbacks of MIE Wing and UP section of LGD. The project has a plan to have meeting with cabinet division following the decision of the meeting held on 5 April 2018 but could not do it due to absence of NPD.

Recruitment of Short-term Consultant (Monitoring Associate):

The project has hired Short-term Consultant (Monitoring Associate) following the GOB's procurement policy. The consultant has joined and started working with MIE Wing of LGD. Office of Short-term Consultant (Monitoring Associate) has been furnished with ICT equipment's and other logistics (Chair, table and file cabinet).

Activity 1.3.2 Strengthen Village Courts Management Committee (VCMCs) across the project areas and lobby for increased balance in gender representation

As reported in last year, twenty-seven (27) District level VCMCs and one hundred twenty-eight (128) Upazila level VCMCs formed in project areas following the GO issued in 2012 and started functioning. Both committees are required to meet quarterly to monitor the village courts performance and provide strategic direction. The project has provided both technical and financial supports for holding VCMC meeting following GO. But during reporting period 42% DVCMC and 42% UVCMC meet following the GO issue in 2012 and following issues were discussed in the VCMC meetings.

Table-03 Agenda and decision s of VCMC meeting	
Agenda	Decision
Use of Ejlas and VC operation	The UP Chairmen should use <i>ejlas</i> and follow the VC Law and VC Rules properly to resolve the disputes. The UP Chairmen should document the VC's procedures properly as per guideline of PMU. To make VC's decision discussing with other panel members in order to establish fair justice in the locality. To be sincere to resolve the disputes timely with a view to reducing pending cases. To take necessary initiatives to implement the VC's decisions accordingly.
Training on Village Court	If any member of District Training Pool (DTP) was transferred or involved in other priority jobs, then the Course Coordinator would conduct the concern sessions with a view to avoiding hampering in training conduction.
Awareness raising activities	Awareness raising activities like CYM, Video show, Community sharing meeting, Rally etc. need to be held to make the community people aware about village courts and its judicial services. The concern staffs were advised to ensure presence of female participants more in the events.
Responsibility of DTP member	If any member of District Training Pool (DTP) was transferred, then the concern person of that department would be the member of the DTP. Concern staff should hand over the documents properly in case of transfer of DTP members.
VC activities monitoring	The members of Monitoring Cell were requested to monitor the VC activities regularly. They were advised to monitor the status of VC's decisions making process, VC's decisions implementation and provide necessary instructions to the UP Chairmen to activate the Village Courts. They were also advised to monitor the documentation process of VC's proceedings.
Sending information to the District Courts about referred cases	The UP Chairmen should send the updated information to the District Courts about referred cases after resolving the disputes using the UP pad.
VC activities implementation in the unions beyond the project areas	Provide technical support (couching, on-going job training) along with VC's forms and registers to the union parishads beyond the project areas to activate the VC.

Output 2.1 Beneficiaries in project areas understand the roles and functions of the Village Courts and can access their services when required.

Activity 2.1.1 Develop outreach strategy and implement community mobilization initiatives for local citizens about VCs in each project union

The project has carried forward its activities following Outreach Strategy developed in last quarter focusing on engagement of government and non-government organizations to raise awareness and service seeking behaviors towards village courts. Major activities completed in this reporting year included, revisiting mapping of NGOs involved in legal and social services in the working areas, organizing outreach events at 128 upazilas and 27 districts, engaging print, online and social media to promote success stories and major activities of the project etc.

Grassroots level awareness activities by partner NGOs: Four NGOs (Bangladesh Legal Aid & Services Trust (BLAST), Madaripur Legal Aid Association (MLAA), Wave Foundation and Eco Social Development Organization (ESDO) hired following UNDP’s procurement accomplished following activities during this reporting period.

Community mobilisation initiatives for local citizens about VCs: Awareness of community members, service providers and other relevant stakeholders about village courts and its function will be increased through community mobilization initiatives to be conducted both at national and local level. During this reporting period, the project has delivered VC related message to around **3,175,153** community people (55% women) through 116,692 courtyard meetings, 2,152 community meetings, and 5,956 video show through its four partner NGOs.

Table-04 Number of community people mobilized by type of activities				
Activities	# of activities	Total number of communities participated		
		Men	Women	Total
Courtyard Meeting	116,692	594,085	1,328,290	1,922,375
Community Meeting	2,152	77,539	21,354	98,893
Video show	5,956	740,169	413,716	1,153,885
Total		1,411,793	1,763,360	3,175,153



Assist local administration in organizing and conducting training: District Coordinators and Upazila Coordinators hired by partners NGOs are the members of District Training Pools

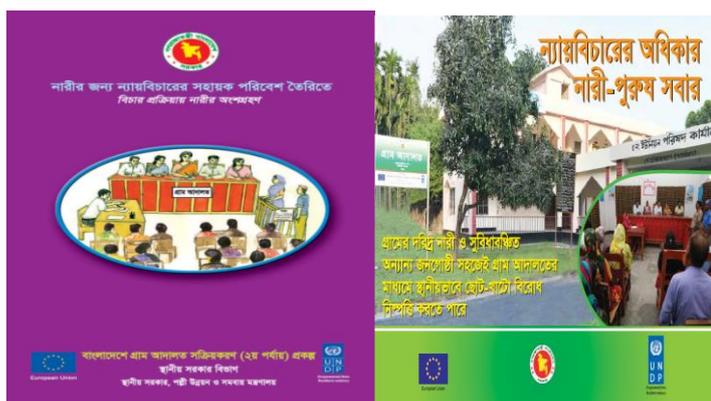
(DTPs) and are equipped with knowledge and skilled by the project to provide supports to local administration in organizing and conducting training for key village courts players. During this reporting period, they have provided supports in organizing and conducting training for 15,484 key VC actors.

Attend District and Upazila level GO-NGOs Coordination meeting: As mentioned earlier that the project has planned to develop an outreach approach that builds links with the social development/legal aid NGOs already active at the local level and create a network to disseminate VCs information. In this regard partner organizations are supposed to use Upazila and District level NGOs coordination meeting as vehicle to influence local NGOs to disseminate VCs issues. Meanwhile partner organizations have participated 1,223 number of district and Upazila level GO-NGO coordination meetings during this reporting period.

Activity 2.1.2 Develop and implement gender awareness-raising strategy aimed at improving the ability of women to make use of Village Courts

During the reporting period, project has produced two gender specific communication materials: 1) Pictorial Booklet on gender equal access to village courts, and 2) Fact Sheet on women's right to representation in village courts.

With the objective of making community women and men and other stakeholders aware about the right of accessing justice as an important human rights and make them aware and interested about the village courts services, it has produced 40,000 pictorial booklets containing images and testimony of different stakeholders, such as women and men as service seekers either as applicants and respondents, UP chair, female VC panel members and two teachers as community representatives. It has also produced 1,00,000 fact sheets highlighting the importance of women's participation in decision making process and in justice process with facts and figures.



These materials have been distributed among different stakeholders which includes community women and men, UP personnel, local NGOs/cultural organizations, and relevant government officials to be used in community awareness events on women's access to VC services.

During the reporting period, project has produced 1400 festoons (long banner) on Gender Responsiveness of the Village Courts, a visual material to be displayed at the UP complex to make UP personnel and other people (women and men) visiting UP aware about the roles of the UP to run VC in a gender responsive manner. Amongst, 1390 distributed to project working areas (1078 UPs, 128 Upazilas and 27 districts) and, and ten preserved in Project Office.

Gender awareness strategy: The Gender Awareness strategy has been prepared through consultation (consultation meetings held in 2017, and FGD and KII conducted in 2018) with relevant stakeholders and considering the learning from the previous phase.

Participants of the consultation highlighted challenges in accessing VC by poor and disadvantaged women and men, which include the lack of knowledge about village courts and its dispute resolution process, nepotism, political influence, lack of confidence of marginalized women and men on village courts, less representation of women in the panel, apprehension of harassment and intimidation from the respondents' part, lack of gender responsive infrastructural facilities, nomination of suitable panel member, lack of family support to seek justice, tendency of underestimating the issue of persons with disability and other marginalized people by the family and the society.

On the issue of women's representation, participants said negative social attitude about women's decision-making capability, backwardness, conservatism, lack of trust on women's abilities, lack of confidence of the disputing parties, religious prejudice are the main constraints.

Participants recommended mass awareness and behavior change interventions at different ends of community. They recommended neutral and fair decision-making and emphasis on the need of changing attitude. Participants recommended organizing more trainings for women and publicizing success stories of women's leadership through community awareness activities.

Draft project gender strategy: A gender strategy for the project has been drafted during the reporting period. It was built on the directions provided in the project documents including ProDoc and TPP, adhering to UNDP gender equality strategy 2014-2017, and policy directions embodied in National Women Development Policy of Bangladesh 2011, Seventh Five Year Plan of Bangladesh, and other relevant national and international policy instruments on gender equality. This draft strategy provides a framework that strives for gender equality throughout the AVCB II interventions.

Develop a gender guideline for village courts: Following in house consultation and getting approval from ministry, design of the guideline has been completed during the reporting period. By this time, soft copy of the guideline has been distributed among the field colleagues with the advice of organizing orientation about the guideline with the UP personnel.

International Women's Day 2018 Observation: On the occasion of International Women's Day 2018, project organised an event at the PMU to share project activities in promoting women's rights. Project made a short presentation on how project addresses the issues of women's right to accessing justice in its interventions, and about the progress made so far. Project prepared and distributed a leaflet highlighting its focus on women's participation in project interventions. Around 60 women and men from different projects and the country office participated at the sharing event. Shaila Khan, Assistant Country Director, and Sudipto Mukherjee, Country Director of UNDP attended the event and shared their views on this occasion. The project personnel at the districts in project working areas also participated at different events organised by the respective district and upazila administration.

In house Research: With the purpose of providing a deeper analysis on the gender equality perspectives of accessing justice through, project completed a study titled "Gender Equality Perspectives of Village Courts Services as the heading"

The study report (draft) specifies the challenges as well as the opportunities to promote gender equality in functioning of village courts. As widely explored and discussed, the study

finds similar types of socio cultural and institutional challenges that restrain women in equally benefit from the VC services. Along with the issues of limited or no education, lack of knowledge and awareness about their basic rights, lack of awareness about VC services and ignorance about the VC dispute settlement process, financial dependence, apprehension of losing social honour, societal tendency of underestimating women's capability, and lack of support from the family and from the society on the women's issue, religious restriction on women's mobility, geographic distance etc. are the common challenges that women face even to access VC services.

With regard to women's participation in VC panel, prevalence of stereotyped beliefs about women's role, prevalence of male only image in decision making places, partial information about the legal provision, tendency of side-lining the female representatives by the male UP members, lack of support from the Chairmen, lack of education and experience and confidence of women UP members, lack of community awareness and trust on women as panel members, responsibility for child rearing and household works have been highlighted as the main challenges for women's participation in the VC decision making process.

The study recommends a set of actions targeting both community and the UP machinery, such as rigorous information dissemination about VC and community awareness about legal and human rights, and about gender equality, intensive capacity building and sensitization of the UP personnel about gender responsive VC services, and leadership and motivational training for community women and women UP representatives.

Activity 2.1.3 Develop, updated and printed public education and awareness materials and distributed to project areas.

Develop and print IEC/BCC/outreach materials:

To boost knowledge of the target audience on VCs, the project has produced and distributed following IEC materials:

- Produced and distributed 23,500 copies of newsletter (Issue 1 and 2 combined covering news from January -December 2017) in Bangla and disseminated it to all relevant stakeholders including UP chairmen. Also produced and distributed 32,200 copies of Bi-annual newsletter (Uchhas) highlighting the different events took place at National, district and upazila level including success story along with media coverages of the project. English newsletter "Smile", an online version following same content of Bangla has been developed and distributed with all relevant stakeholders at field and central level.
- produced 40,000 pieces of caps to use mainly as a prize in quiz competitions during demonstration of video shows at community level along with various events.
- 1,06,000 posters and 1,130 CYM flipcharts produced earlier were delivered to field through Upazila Nirbahi Officers.
- published and delivered 2,600 greetings cards on Bengli new year to relevant central and district level stakeholders.
- three billboards (Rangpur, Chattagram and Gopalganj), five mini citizen charter boards (Rangpur) and four mini billboards (Rangpur) were repaired which were installed in phase one for increasing wider visibility.
- repaired two old billboards, nine citizen charter boards and nine mini billboards in Faridpur.
- '*Gram Adalat*' a community video drama was developed during the reporting period following approval from LGD on script, performers and shooting locations. This

30 minutes enter-education drama focuses on a rural poor woman headed family and a young girl, who went go to Village Court for resolving a dispute of a cow theft centering on an act intended to insult the modesty of the young girl. This video has been uploaded in the project's youtube channel

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=inZVJGVvvv8&feature=youtu.be>) as well as in the website for spreading messages to wider audience. A total of 200 copies branded DVDs containing this video drama will be disseminated among various stakeholders in January 2019.

- project reprinted a leaflet (150,000 copies) and shared with field for dissemination among outreach GO-NGOs at district and upazila levels.
- project initiated procurement process for developing a new one minute TV commercial/Public Service Announcement (PSA), developing three designs of map indicating working locations of the project.

In these materials, services of the village courts were focused apart from promoting the partnership of EU, UNDP, and GOB for effective implementation of the projects.

2.1.4 Raise awareness of network NGOs on village courts and supports their capacity to do outreach

The project organized 27 district level and 128 upazila level workshops with local GOB institutions and NGOs for promoting village courts messages through their own outreach activities. The major objectives of the workshops were to identify the relevant GOB institutions and NGOs having outreach activities at community level that would be able to encourage community people for receiving services from village courts. During workshops, approximately 7,000 (1200 attended in 27 district level workshops and remaining 5800 attended in 128 upazila level workshops) participants from local government institutions and like-minded NGOs having outreach events to disseminate VC messages through their outreach channels participated in the events.



Participants of this orientation sessions, reviewed progress, major challenges, way forwards and generated upazila level action plans of the GO-NGOs in promoting messages of Village Courts. They also learned about VC Act, Rules and procedures along with updates of village courts in the respective district and upazila.

In the upazila level orientations, representatives from various GOB agencies like, Upazila Youth Development Office, Department of Women and Children Affairs, Upazila Agriculture Office, Upazila Cooperative Office, Upazila Fisheries Office informed that they shared VC messages on trainings with youths, beneficiaries of Vulnerable Group Development (VGD) and lactating mothers' schemes, farmers, fish cultivation groups etc. Representatives from various non government organization i.e. BRAC, ASA, Padakhep, YMCA, Karitas Bangladesh, Codec, Islamic Relief, Shushilon, SAP Bangladesh, Proshika etc. chalked out that they shared VC messages during micro-credit borrowers' weekly gatherings, general meetings with parents, court yard meetings with mothers' groups,

vocational trainings with youths, teacher and student meetings etc. In workplans they committed to continue similar activities in 2019.

2.1.5 Organize workshop/seminars with journalists at national and local level to increase coverage of Village Courts

27 district level sensitization workshops were with journalists where approximately 1,100 journalists attended and shared their ideas of more coverage and information dissemination. The workshops had VC officials like union *parishad* chairmen, and beneficiaries narrate their experience. Journalists' recommendations include the following:



District level workshop with journalists

- share success stories and case data of village courts performance regularly and arrange visits to the UPs;
- ensure rewards for the best reports;
- include more journalists in the village court management committees; and
- announce final hearing dates at local press clubs.

Journalists were also given an orientation on village courts, their function, national and international priorities, key interventions of the project and its successes. This also helped build rapport with the local newsmen.

2.1.6 Update and maintain the village courts website and other social media

Update and maintain the village courts website and other social media

AVCB II project's website (<http://www.villagecourts.org>) went live during this reporting period with a new design where information of pilot project was kept in archive.

AVCB II Project received approximately 1,800 news including 137 national (56 TV coverages) during January-December 2018. Analysis of these media coverages shows, national and local media continued highlighting successes of Village Courts in the project working areas in every month by publishing detailed (in-depth)/result oriented news, features, success stories etc. including voices of the beneficiaries and relevant stakeholders. The project also ensured, three exclusive talk-



The Daily Protidiner Sangbad, a national daily

shows on Independent TV, NTV and Channel 24, one editorial in the Daily Prothom Alo and in-depth news in the Daily Star, country's two topmost leading dailies in Bangla and English and an analytical news in The Daily Samakal on the successes of the project in nine years covering phase I and phase II. Bangladesh Sangbad Sangstha (BSS), Bangladesh Television (BTV), Bangladesh Betar (radio), three state owned media also promoted messages of Village Courts during covering various events. Apart from this, news, events and messages of village courts were also covered by community radio's operating in various districts of the project working areas. In many news and success stories media presented Village Courts as a symbol of trust for obtaining justice at local level. A directive from the Prime Minister in Deputy Commissioners' conference to "to make Village Courts activate to ensure justice for people and reduce the backlog of cases in courts" was published in all leading dailies in July 2018.

"People-friendly court", "More than 450 cases were resolved within 18 months", 'Marginalized people trust Village Courts in Bhola', 'Local disputes resolved by Village Courts in Bakshiganj', '44 Village Courts are working in Chandpur to reduce pending cases', 'Decision of Village Court and its implementation: I never thought of getting justice so easily and within minimal cost!' were some result-oriented headlines in both national and local newspapers in 2018. Most of the coverages, presented number of cases registered, resolved, amount of compensation, brief success stories, speeches of key speakers etc. of village courts in various upazilas or districts. In addition, maximum news coverages mentioned partnership of Bangladesh Government, European Union and UNDP for implementing Village Courts in 27 districts.

In December 2018, 'The Daily Protidiner Sangbad' a national daily wrote introduction for one of its news, "Marginalized people of Bhola are getting benefits due to activation of Village Courts in 46 unions under 5 upazilas in the district. Number of people visiting district court for resolving petty disputes are also reducing. Village Courts have become a symbol of trust among marginalized people".

"People-friendly court" was a headline in the Daily Star in November 2018, to describe performance of village courts in Barguna while it highlighted 1,436 cases out of 1,545 disposed through Barguna Gram Adalats in 20 months. This news focused on two success stories of Runu Begum, a domestic help and Matiar Rahman an auto rickshaw driver. It also quoted Runu Begum, "I am very grateful to the court as they have heard me and gave their judgement in a very short time".

One remarkable news coverage in September 2018, was an editorial published in the national Daily Prothom Alo heading "village courts are becoming popular in Betagi upazila of Barguna" followed by a detailed news story. The editorial highly appreciated performance of village courts of the upazila for resolving almost hundred percent disputes peacefully. It says, Betagi upazila might be a good example for other upazilas as well as recommended to activate village courts throughout the country for reducing case backlogs of formal courts. In this month, one exclusive news story followed by a talk show was aired on Channel 24, a national TV channel on success stories of village courts in Gopalganj, Naogoan and other districts. In this talk show, one UP chairman of Gopalganj shared his experiences, recommendations etc. on village courts.

Bangladesh Sangbad Sangstha (BSS), the state-owned news agency covered two details features on village courts, related laws, fees, benefits of village courts, procedures, gender equality, major activities and accomplishments of AVCB II project along with other

information in Chandpur in July 2018. According to the news, since village courts are nearby the house and environment is familiar, therefore, women can easily express their opinions.

The Daily Samakal published an in-depth news on the successes of Activating Village Courts in Bangladesh in nine years including phase I and phase II in May 2018,. According to the coverage, 68% beneficiaries are satisfied after receiving services from village courts. It says, in the project areas 1,19,800 cases were reported including 8,700 cases referred from the district judge courts. Among them 91,600 cases were resolved.

In February 2018, one exclusive talk show in Asar Bangladesh Programme on Independent TV highlighted a news of Khulna including remarks of beneficiaries, UP chairman, Deputy Commissioner and Deputy Director Local Government (DDLG), Khulna while successes of AVCB II, village courts along with financial and technical supports of European Union, UNDP and Bangladesh Government were promoted by the National Project Coordinator, AVCB II in the programme.

In addition, AVCB II Facebook page and twitter were reached to approximately 150,000 people during this year, one video documentary focusing on a disabled beneficiary's story also attracted 340,434 people on Facebook along with high reach in twitter through UNDP Bangladesh. This video was also shared on UNDP's global twitter page.

Output 2.2 Evidence-base and knowledge-management on Village Courts increased.

Activity 2.2.1 Develop and implement detailed M&E and Research Plan

Monitoring of field implementation:

Five monitoring visits carried out in Chittagong, Sylhet, Barisal, Dhaka and Khulna divisions during this reporting period. Findings are given below:

A. Monitoring visit carried out in Chittagong division:

Monitoring visits carried out in 7 unions (Roshangiri UP, Fatikchari upazila; Vatiari & Varoedalia UP, Sitakunda upazila under Chittagong district; Eklaipur and Narouttam UP of Begumganj upazila,; Charjabbar UP, Subarnachar upazila and Bataiya UP of Kabirhat upazila under Noakhali district) of Noakhali and Chittagong districts from 27/01/2018 - 01/02/2018 . Brief monitoring findings are given below:

- All of the UPs were equipped with VC's forms & registers, trained VCAs, trained UP chair and *Ejlas* (Court bench)
- Attitude of UP chairmen towards village courts are improving. Initially their attitude were not good and they were kept busy themselves with political activities and own business. Now it has improved little bit after receiving training on village courts and participating different activities organized by the project. UP Chairman of Bataiya UP of Kabirhat upazila has written orders of all cases these were tried but he wrote the orders in his own ways not following the process which he learnt from the training of the project.
- Among the UPs, VC performance in-terms of documentation of VCs proceedings and dispute resolution following VC's law were good in Narouttam UP, Beumganj upazila of Noakhali district.
- Knowledge of VCA working in Roshangiri UP, Fatikchari upazila, Vatiari UP, Sitakunda upazila under Chittagong district and Charjabbar UP, Subarnachar upazila and Narouttam UP, Begumganj upazila under Noakhali district were good but VCA working in Eklaipur UP, Begumganj upazila and Bataiya UP, Kabirhat upazila under Noakhali district and Varoedala UP, Sitakunda upazila under Chittagong district were not good.
- Among four VCAs (whose knowledge were good), two were able to transfer their knowledge in to practice as they have documented village courts proceedings properly after receiving the training from the project.
- Vatiari UP, Sitakunda upazila under Chittagong district and Narouttam UP, Beumganj upazila of Noakhali district has resolved the disputes following VC's law but Varoedalia UP, Sitakunda upazila and Bataiya UP of Kabirat upazila under Noakhali have resolved the disputes following Shalishi procedure instead of VC's procedure.
- All the UPs did not receive required mentoring supports from Upazila Coordinators, and DCos for improving their skill and capacity for resolving the disputes following VC's procedure.
- Most of the staff could not get enough time to transform their knowledge what they have learnt from training into the practice as after training they got engaged in implementation to reach the delivery target.
- Most of the UP did not prepare VC's performance report correctly.

B. Monitoring visit carried out in Sylhet division

Monitoring visits carried out in 7 unions (Palash, Dhanpur of Tahirpur Upazila, Badhaghat and Balizuri UP of Biswambharpur Uazila in Sunamganj and Golapganj of Golapganj Upazila and Mollapur and Carkhai of Bianibazar Upazila) of Sunamganj and Sylhet districts from 10/02/2018 -15/02/2018. Brief monitoring findings are given below

- All the VCAs except one have joined by March 2017 and received training from the project in September 2017. Chairmen, Panel Chairmen, and Secretaries of the visited UPs also received training on Village Courts and its function from the project. However, the training of UP members was continuing during visit.
- Knowledge and skill of VCAs on VC and documentation of VC's proceedings varied from union to union. Among the visited UPs of four Upazila under two districts, skill of VCAs working in Biswambharpur of Sunamganj and Golapganj of Sylhet is better than the VCAs of other unions of two upazilas Tahirpur in Sunamganj and Bianibazar of Sylhet.
- Visited one training session of UP members held at Golapganj, Sylhet. The training started after 11.00 am and few participants left the session after lunch. Upazila coordinator facilitated the session during visit.
- Observed three courtyard meetings held at Dhanpur, Dhaka Dhaksin and Mollapur in Sunamganj and Sylhet district respectively. All meetings followed by a lecture and completed by 15 minutes discussion. They used the training materials as supporting documents. In Dhanpur, VCA did not introduce participants with the audience at the beginning of the meeting. In the meeting, UP chairman was present as a president though president was supposed to select from the participants.
- Observed signboard of 7 UPs of two districts and found that the vendor used 3 millimeters short from 1-inch enamel border though they supposed to use 1-inch border. Besides, spelling mistakes was also found on the signboard in one UP of Sylhet district.
- Union Parishad chairmen of three visited UPs generally do *Shalish* and interest in giving solution locally rather receiving and resolving disputes through village courts. They shared that the cases these their UPs received were out of VC's jurisdiction in most of the cases. They recommended to increase VC's jurisdiction.
- BLAST used different reporting formats in different districts. Reporting format of Sunamganj is different from Sylhet. There are huge anomalies between reported data and actual data. They have no data quality assurance system at all.

C. Monitoring visit carried out in Barisal division

Monitoring visits carried out in 6 unions (Amtoli sadar and Arpangashia of Amtoli upazila under Barguna district, Pakkhia & Gangapur union of Borhanuddin upazila and Char Umed & Kalma unions of Lalmohan upazila under Bhola district) between 24 March to 29 March 2018. The findings of the monitoring visit are as below:

- All the UPs were equipped with trained VCAs, trained UP chairmen, VC's forms & registers and *Ejlas* (Court bench);
- Knowledge & attitude of UP chairmen towards village courts are at moderate level. They informed that initially they were very busy with political activities and their own business. They didn't resolved the disputes following village courts act; rather they used to solve all kind of disputes through *shalish*. Now their attitude has been improved enough regarding village courts just after receiving the training on "**Village Courts**" and participating different types of awareness raising activities organized by the project. Md. Motahar Uddin Mridha, UP Chairman of Amtoli sadar said, "We

used to solve the problems of my union through shalish mainly. But now I am trying to resolve the disputes these are under village court's jurisdiction following VC Act and VC Rules sitting on the Ejlas. My Village Courts Assistant (VCA) assists me enough to run Village Court (VC) and document VC's proceedings properly. I am trying my best to review and analysis the subject matter of the disputes and pass the decisions neutrally. As there is a VC Act, we can resolve the disputes following the VC Act and VC Rules easily." He also told that the Upazila Coordinator (UC) and District Coordinator assist him and VCA providing technical support in running VC and documenting VC's proceedings. On the other hand, the attitude of Md. Ilan Hossen, UP Secretary, Paschim Char Umed union has been positively changed while knowledge about VC's proceedings isn't satisfactory level regarding village courts.

- Among the UPs, VC's performance in-terms of documentation of VC's proceedings and dispute resolution following VC Act is comparatively better at Amtoli sadar and Arpangashia unions of Barguna district than other unions of Bhola district.
- Knowledge of VCA working in Amtoli sadar and Arpangashia unions of Barguna district, Paschim Char Umed and Kalma unions of Bhola were good while knowledge of VCA working at Pakkhia and Gangapur unions of Bhola district were not up to the mark about VC and its procedures.
- Knowledge of Upazila Coordinator (UC) working at Amtoli upazila of Barguna is comparatively better than other UCs working at Lalmohan and Borhanuddin upazilas of Bhola while the UC of Lalmohan has not received training from project as he has joined recently. But all UCs are trying their best to assist UPs in running the VC and documenting the VC's proceedings following VCs act.
- Monthly on an average 5 cases were reported directly in each union parishad of visited five UPs between July, 2017 to February, 2018 where maximum 7 cases/month were reported in Amtoli sadar union and Gangapur union and 3-4 cases were reported per month in Arpangashia union and Paschim Umed unions. On the other hand, Amtoli sadar and Kalma unions are in better position in resolving disputes through VC hearing as out of total resolved cases more than 50% were resolved through hearing. But rate of resolving disputes through VC Rules 31 is very high in Gangapur and Pakkhia unions. In Pakkhia union, out of total resolved cases, 85% cases were resolved through VC Rules-31 which is need to be monitored to ensure quality VC's service.
- Reviewing 40 resolved cases it has been found that on an average 33 days were required to resolve the disputes.
- One VC's hearing session was observed in Amtoli sadar union, Amtoli, Barguna on 25.03.2018 and found that session was held following VC's procedures. The dispute was happened centering causing seriously injured of 4 cows. The applicant placed his complaint against the defendant. The defendant denied the complaint. The witnesses provided their statements without any hesitation. The VC gave them an opportunity to settle the disputes through compromise.
- The UCs and DCos told that in fact they didn't get enough time to assist VCAs and UP chairmen with technical support and transform their knowledge received from training into the practice during 2017 as after training they were engaged in implementing different types of events to reach the delivery target.
- Very minimum error was found in the VC's performance report which is ignorable. But most of VCA have not clear concept about the term uses in the reporting formats such as resolution through VC Rules-31 and Pre-Trial, return of application, cancel and dismiss of case, refer the case to the Higher Court etc.

- All the UPs are maintaining the Court Yard Meeting Register, Counselling Register, Stock Register, Attendance Register, Movement Register and Visitor Register as well as VC's Register.
- One VC's service recipients expressed her satisfaction on VCs services including VC's decisions. Housewife Bakul Begum (40), wife of Ruhul Amin living in Pakkhia, Borhanuddin, Bhola said, *"I have received Tk. 75,000 as compensation through village court. As a poor woman, I couldn't realize the amount in absence of VC. VC Chairman and other panel members were neutral in passing decision. The local poor people are getting judicial services through VC. I pray to God for sustainable of VC."*

D. Monitoring visit carried out in Dhaka division

The monitoring visits carried out in 10 unions (Tumulia, Rajabari and Telihati unions under Gazipur district; Kulia, Char Goalini, Satpoa and Bhatara unions under Jamalpur district; Tiyasree, Sandikona, Ashujia unions under Netrakona district) between 26 May to 31 May 2018. Brief monitoring findings are given below:

- All of the UPs were equipped with VC's forms & registers, trained VCAs, trained UP chair and *Ejlas* (Court bench)
- Knowledge of VCA working at Rajabari, Bhatara and Sandikona unions are good while other VCAs are at moderate level about village courts and its procedures
- Case files and registers are found up to date with all necessary papers and preserved well in almost all unions. But over writing was found in some union parishads like Satpoa of Jamalpur and Ashujia of Netrakona.
- It was found that the documentation of Village Court's proceedings in all six UPs was good as a whole. But the documentation of VC's proceedings was better at Rajabari, Bhatara and Sandikona unions than other unions regarding quality
- Attitude of UP chairmen towards village courts are improving. Initially their attitude was not good, and they were kept busy themselves with political activities and own business. Now it has improved little bit after receiving training on village courts and participating different activities organized by the project.
- In the visited 10 unions, during July 2017 to March, 2018, in average 2 cases (total-119) were reported monthly in each union parishad directly where maximum 4 cases/month were reported in Bhatara union of Jamalpur and minimum 1 case was reported per month in Char Goalini union of Jamalpur and Tiyasree union of Netrakona. Except Rajabari union of Gazipur and Sandikona union of Netrakona, the rest 8 UPs are found high trend in resolving disputes through VC Rule-31. As for example, 103 Cases (84%), 10 cases (8%) and 9 cases (8%) were resolved through VC Rule-31, pre-trial and VC hearing respectively in the 8 UPs which is very much alarming in terms of resolution disputes following VC Act and VC Rules properly and finally VC activation.
- 14% women excluding VC chairman participated in decision making process while no panel member got opportunity to participate in decision making process at Char Goalini union of Jamalpur and Tiyasree union of Netrakona. A total of BDT 12,00,000 was realized as compensation from defendants and provided applicants over last 9 months in these UPs.
- VCAs of respective districts conducted court yard meeting as their routine work. But the place selection was not good, use of flip chart (hanging process) was inappropriate manner, presentation skill of the VCAs was not up to the mark and signatures of 100% participants were taken in the attendance register but no resolution of the meeting was found written;

- Knowledge & attitude of UP chairmen towards village courts are at moderate level. Some UP chairmen still yet are interested to resolve the disputes through shalish rather than village courts procedures. On the other hand, some UP chairmen are interested to activate village courts following VC procedures in resolving disputes. However, the attitude of all UP chairmen has been improved enough regarding village courts just after receiving the training on “Village Courts”.

E. Monitoring visit carried out in Khulna division

Monitoring visit carried out between 15 September to 21 September, 2018 in 12 unions of 4 upazilas under Bagerhat (Char Baniary, Chitolmari sadar and Santoshpur unions of Chitolmari upazila, Maghia, Kachua sadar and Piljanga unions of Kachua upazila under Bagerhat district) and Satkhira (Nurnagar, Munshiganj, Burigoalini and Ishwaripur unions of Shyamnagar upazila, Krishnanagar and Mautala unions of Kaliganj upazila) districts. Brief findings are given below:

1. Status of Ejlash, Furniture and VC forms & Register

All the UPs were equipped with *Ejlas* (Court bench), almirah (made of steel) and wooden-shelf. Besides, all UPs were equipped with VC forms (17 types) and VC register (5 types) like Case Register, Decree & Order Register, Compensation Register, Fees Register and Letter Disburse Register) and other registers (e.g. CYM register, Counselling Register, Movement Register, Attendance Register, Stock register, Visitor’s Register etc.).

2. Knowledge and skill of VCAs about VC

To assess the knowledge of Village Court Assistants (VCA), it was discussed with VCAs about village court, its legal services, VC-procedures etc. Besides, it was discussed about VC Act, Rules, types of disputes, jurisdiction of village courts, types of resolution, time limit etc. during field visit. On the other hand, case files, monthly progress reports, different types of registers used in the village court (VC) like Case Register, Decree & Order Register, Compensation Register, Fees & Fine Register and Letter Disburse Register were reviewed to assess the quality of documentation of VC’s proceedings. Besides, there are additional 6 registers in the UP- they are Stock Register, Attendance Register, Movement Register, CYM Register, Counseling Register and Visitor’s Register which also were reviewed to assess the skill of Village Court Assistants (VCA).

It has been found by reviewing the documents and discussing with VCAs, that knowledge and

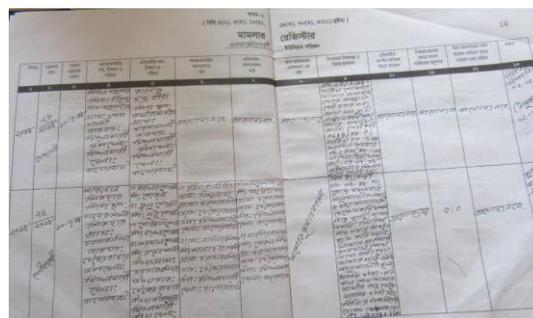


skill of maximum VCAs were good while knowledge and skill of VCAs working in Nurnagar, Munshiganj and Ishwaripur unions of Shyampur upazila under Satkhira district were not up to the mark on documentation of VC’s proceedings. But most of the VCAs have not clear concept about the steps of different disputes resolution mechanism (e.g. Rules-31, Pre-Trial and Hearing) of village courts. And also, don’t have clear idea about the difference between reject vs. return application to the applicant, difference

between cancel and dismiss of case. Some VCAs don’t know clearly that within how many days, a case must be resolved through pre-trial. However, both knowledge and skill of VCAs working in

Kachua sadar union of Bagerhat and Mautala union of Satkhira district is good about VC and its documentation proceedings.

Documentation in Kachua and Char baniari unions of Bagerhat and Mautala union of Satkhira is neat and clean. But Case Register and Decree register were not found updated in Ishwaripur and Nurnagar unions of Shyamnagar upazila under Satkhira, a few over writing was found in the order sheet and monthly progress report in Piljanga union of Fakirhat under Bagerhat.



The case files whose decisions were implemented meanwhile were reviewed minutely. Case files are found up to date with all necessary papers and preserved well in almost all unions. From review the case files, in some unions, it was found that extra detail application written by applicant was attached with the main application form which is fine to understand the real scenario of the dispute clearly. Case files are also found neat and clean with necessary documentary papers in Kachua and Char Baniari unions of Bagerhat and Mautala union of Satkhira.

Nirmala, VCA, Charbaniari union, Chitolmari, Bagerhat said, *"I have participated in the training on Village Courts, reviewed sample order sheets received from project, necessary documents provided by the District Coordinator (DCo) which he received in the M&E training. Thus, my capacity and skills have been increased in documentation of VC's proceedings. Now I have a clear concept on VC Rules including VC Act, 2006 (amended in 2013). I could maintain all types of registers properly, write orders, keep notes on statements of petitioners, defendants and testimony of witnesses correctly."* However, some other major findings are given below:

- All VCAs are familiar with all the registers and VC-forms used for documentation of Village Court's proceedings;
- Seal of Union Parishad's Chairman and Village Court's Chairman was used accordingly in order sheets and other documentary papers;
- Testimony of witnesses including order sheets were found attached with the case files;
- In some cases, it was found over writing in the order sheet and different dates (Charbaniari, Piljanga, Nurnagar, Ishwaripur, Munshiganj unions);
- VCAs are preparing monthly performance report using prescribed format extracting information from different registers and submit to the Upazila Coordinators. But some errors or over writing was found in some unions (Charbaniari, Piljanga, Ishwaripur unions).

Knowledge and skill of Upazila Coordinator and District Coordinator on VC

Both skill and knowledge of UC working in Kachua upazila of Bagerhat district is good about VC and its functions. But knowledge of Upazila Coordinator (UC) working at Shyamnagar of Satkhira is not up to the mark level while skill and knowledge of UCs working in Chitolmar of Bagerhat and Kaliganj of Satkhira is moderate. However, all UCs are trying their best to assist UPs in running the VC and document the VC's proceedings. They are providing technical assistance to the VCAs in documentation and providing written comments and recommendations in Visitor's Register.

Knowledge of District Coordinators (DCo) on VC and its function is fine. All file-folders are found well arranged in the well decorated DCo's office. They are preparing reports, budget, statistical progress reports, monthly work plan regularly. From review the monthly work plan of

the DCos, it was found that they were involved in monthly staff coordination meeting, NGO coordination meeting, District Legal Aid Committee meeting, meeting with UP Chairman & UNO, WDF workshop, bill-voucher preparing, report preparing, field monitoring and other business. From monthly work plan, it was also found that they were to visit UPs 3 to 5 days in a month to monitor case files, registers and documentation which is not enough. Consequently, the UPs situated at farther distance receive less technical supports from DCos ultimately.

3. Knowledge, attitude and perception of UP Chairman, Secretary and Member

(i) UP Chairman UP member & UP Secretary:

Knowledge, attitude & perception (KAP) of UP chairmen, UP Secretary and UP members towards village courts are moderate to fine now. Most of the UP Chairmen and UP members are resolving the disputes under jurisdiction through village courts following VC Act and Rules. Ashok Kumar Baral, Chairman of Charbaniari union, Charbaniari, Bagerhat said, *“We used to solve the problems of my union through shalish mainly. But now we are trying to resolve the disputes under village court’s jurisdiction following VC Act and VC Rules using Ejlas. My Village Courts Assistant (VCA) assists me enough to run Village Court (VC) and document VC’s proceedings properly.”* He also told that the Upazila Coordinator (UC) and District Coordinator assist him and VCA providing technical supports in running VC and documenting VC’s proceedings. Pankaj Kanti Adhikary, Chairman, Maghia union, Kachua, Bagerhat said, *“It is fine to resolve the disputes through village courts using reference of VC Act. I did not resolve any disputes under VC’s jurisdiction through shalis after receiving the training on Village Courts. I am trying my best to review and analysis the subject matter of the disputes and pass the decisions neutrally.”* He also told that nobody like him who dishonor the law and that is why, there is no problem towards election/vote to resolve the case following VC Act and Rules neutrally in response of a question. All of the UP representatives were present willingly at the UP complex to share their feelings about village courts (please see the picture of cover page). Same type of feelings were expressed by Shikder Hadiujjaman, Chairman of Kachua sadar union, Kachua, Bagerhat with other UP representatives. Khan Shamim Jaman Palash, Chairman of Piljanga union, Fakirhat, Bagerhat expressed his positive attitude to the village courts. He collected the VC Ordinance and Rule-1976 too. He further informed that he writes the case orders himself. On the other hand, Bhabatosh Kumar Mandal, UP Chairman of Burigoalini union, Shyamnagar, Satkhira said, *“We have made a plan to resolve disputes using Ejlas with proper documentation and record video of the whole process. Later on, we shall show our own video on Village Courts among the local people through multimedia to make the community people aware about village court.”* Feelings and expression of UP Chairmen shown their positive attitude towards village courts. Nirmala Mandal, VCA of Charbania union, Chitalmari, Bagerhat told that understanding of UP chairman and other UP representatives is good regarding village courts and its procedures. Same type of experience was shared by Salma, VCA of Kachua union, Kachua, Bagerhat. From discussion, it was seemed that the UP Chairmen are exercising with VC Act and Rule, 2016 with a view to operating village courts following VC’s proceedings properly. However, the UP Chairmen have some recommendations as following:

Pankaj Kanti Adhikary, Chairman, Maghia union, Kachua, Bagerhat	Facilitate ministry to increase pecuniary jurisdiction up to Tk. 2,00,000 for criminal case and Tk. 3,00,000 for civil case.
Khan Shamim Jaman Palash, Chairman, Piljanga union, Fakirhat, Bagerhat	Revise the rule for appeal to District Courts instead of certificate case to UNO.
Md. Abdur rahman, Acting	Revise section No. 5 of VC (Amendment) Act, 2013.

Chairman, Krishnanagar union, Satkhira	
Sayed Mehedi, Chairman, Mautala, Kaliganj, Satkhira	Strengthen rule for dishonoring summon. A very minimum level punishment should be kept in the rule for dishonoring summon.
Md. Abdur Rahman, Acting Chairman, Krishnanagar, Kaliganj, Satkhira	Keep a very minimal level honorarium (Tk. 200) for panel members for participating in the decision making process of village courts.

K.M Julfiker Ali Haider, UP Secretary of Santoshpur union said that Village Courts has earned popularity in his locality as the local people are getting judicial services through village courts within a very short period at least cost. Mitali Roy, UP Secretary, Kachua sadar union, Bagerhat has expressed her positive attitude to the village courts. She said, *“In previous, the disputes were resolved through village courts too. But there was some laps and gaps in maintain VC’s procedures and passing verdicts. Now we are resolving the disputes following VC procedures.”* She was observing the monitoring VC’s proceedings carried out by MLL Officer sitting beside him (please see the picture).

Quality of hearing session of VC:

One VC’s hearing session was observed held in Charbaniari union of Chitolmari upazila under Bagerhat held on 16.09.2018. It was observed that the session was held following VC’s procedures. It was a criminal case (23/2018) filed by Tapos Kumar Mandal, inhabitant of Khalishakhali village of the union against Tapan Kumar Mandal of the same village on 12.07.2018. The dispute was happened centering the issue of cutting off some trees by defendant, Tapan Kumar Mandal neighbor of applicant Tapos Kumar Mandal on 25.05.2018. Both parties, witness and panel members were present in the hearing session. A village police (VP) got the applicant and defendant take oath. Statements of applicant and defendant as well as testimony of witness was documented. The applicant claimed that the defendant Tapan Kumar Manda cut off his trees forcibly. On the other hand, the defendant claimed that the trees which were cut down and sold were in his own land. He argued that if the claim of applicant was right, he (applicant) protested to plant the trees earlier. In fact, the claim of the applicant was baseless. The witnesses provided their statements without any hesitation. Then it was required to check the documentary papers of the land where the trees were. But the necessary documentary papers could not be submitted by the applicant at that time. Then the VC Chairman fixed the next hearing date of the case. Quality of hearing session was satisfactory level.

(ii) UP Village Police:

Knowledge & attitude of Village Police towards village courts have also been improved after receiving training on Village Courts. Nabakumar, Village Police of Charbaniari union, Chitalmari, Bagerhat told that they perform their duties as follows:

- Delivery summon to defendants and witnesses accordingly;
- Arrange *ejlash* room on the hearing date of the cases;
- Call on witness on the hearing date (for giving statements);
- Get the witnesses in taking oath;
- Invite the community people to the courtyard meeting;
- Assist the VCAs to conduct courtyard meetings;

- Inspire the community people to approach to the village courts.

4. Quality/status of awareness raising activities

a. CYM: Courtyard meeting (CYM) is one of the major intervention of this project to make the local people aware about village courts and its legal services. In the visited unions, with a view to making the community people aware about VC and its judicial services, 9 Court Yard Meetings (CYM) were organized monthly in average as per work plan where averagely 17 community people (women-75%) participated.



A total of 3 courtyard meetings (CYM) were observed at spot held at (i) Kirtankhola, Chitalmari, Bagerhat (ii) Bhandarkhola,

Raripara, Kachua, Bagerhat and (iii) Kalikapur Sarnakar para, Mautala, Kaliganj, Satkhira. But in some areas, place, sitting arrangement, hanging flip chart, presentation etc. was not up to the mark level. It was not ensured active participation of the maximum participants in open question-answer session. Considering the overall scenario, the VCA of Raripara of Bagerhat was provided some tips like spot and time selection, participants' sitting arrangement, flip chart hanging, presentation style etc. in organizing a courtyard meeting and instantly rearranged the sitting arrangement of the participants and hanging flip chart in conducting the meeting (please see the picture). The facilitator was explaining about the village court's services including, types of disputes with fees, process of VC formation etc. before the participants. Then the participants actively participated in the open question-answer session. However, from discussion with the community people, it was observed that the community people became aware enough about village courts and its function meanwhile.

b. Counseling Session: Counseling session is another important activity to make the community people aware on village courts and its legal service. WAVE has sensitized on an average 10 community people (women-30%) per month per UP about VC and its judicial services through Counselling Sessions. But from discussion with VCAs and UCs, it has been found that they don't have common understanding or concept about counseling session.

c. Use of IEC materials:

Stock registers were reviewed in the visited UPs. It was found that the stock registers were updated and well preserved. It was also found that each UP received following IEC materials- pocket card (90 pc), VC brochure (20 pc), Leaflet (220) and Newsletter- Uchhwas (20 pc), factsheet (85 pc), poster (100 pc) and distributed/used the materials according to guideline received from PMU. Almost all VCAs decorated their office room with IEC material and VC's performance related updated information.

5. Village Courts performance (from July 2017 to August 2018)

a. Case Status

Among the visited UPs, VC's performance in-terms of case filing and dispute resolution following VC Act and Rules is comparatively better at Chitolmari sadar union of Bagerhat, Munshiganj and Mautala unions of Satkhira districts than other unions. Hundred plus cases have been reported in each of these unions from July 2017 to August 2018. Highest 111 cases

were filed at Chitolmari union and lowest 37 cases were filed at Maghia union of Bagerhat district. VC's statistical performance of the visited unions has been described below:

In visited unions, in average 5.28 cases were filed per month per UP. Separately in average 4.40 cases/UP per month were reported in Bagerhat district and 6.16 cases/UP were reported in Satkhira district. Out of the visited unions, in average more than 6 cases were reported per month in Chitolmari sadar, Munshiganj, Ishwaripur and Mautala unions where less than 3 cases were reported per month in Maghia union of Bagerhat. On the other hand, 75% reported cases were resolved (67% in Bagerhat and 82% in Satkhira) through village courts. More than 80% cases were resolved in Nurnagar, Moghia, Munshiganj and Mautala unions while less than 70% reported cases were resolved in other unions through village courts. However, Kachua, Piljanga and Charbania unions are advance in resolving disputes through VC hearing (more than 30% out of total resolved cases) while all of the visited unions of Satkhira are backward in resolving disputes through VC hearing (less than 10%) but advance in Rule-31 (more than 80% out of resolved cases). As there are 3 options to resolve disputes-Rule-31, Pre-trial and hearing, it should not be more than 40% for any option to resolve the disputes. Basically, out of resolved cases, more than 50% for Rule-31 is alarming in terms of resolution disputes following VC Act and VC Rules properly.

District	Upazila	Union	Total reported case	Resolved				Solved through other ways	Implemented decision	Panel members		
				Rule-31	Pre-trial	Hearing	Total			M	W	T
Bagerhat	Chitolmari	Char Baniary	51	16	2	8	26	17	27	36	4	40
		Chitolmari	111	31	30	2	63	52	58	99	29	128
	Kachua	Moghia	37	24	5	5	34	2	33	35	5	40
		Kachua	65	17	6	27	50	11	23	120	12	132
	Fakirhat	Piljong	44	17	3	13	33	9	28	54	10	64
Satkhira	Shyamnagar	Nurnagar	64	61	-	1	62	2	62	4	-	4
		Munshigonj	101	84	3	2	89	9	92	16	4	20
		Ishwaripur	87	44	6	5	55	29	57	39	3	42
	Kaliganj	Krisnanagar	69	43	3	4	50	16	44	26	2	28
		Moutola	110	79	10	7	96	21	91	56	12	68
Total			739	416	68	74	558	168	515	485	81	566

On the other hand, in average 23% reported cases were solved through other ways like cancelled, dismissed etc. which is very big amount and questionable specially in project areas.

About 75% cases were resolved through Rule-31 (416 out of 558 resolved cases) which has drawn keen attention. A case (case No. 16/18) was resolved through Rule-31 at Pilganj union, Fakirhat, Bagerhat. From case file review that Nur Md. Sheikh filed a case on 28.04.2018 against Md. Majid Sheikh claiming Tk. 7,500 as due amount of selling sugarcane. Md. Majid Sheikh submitted the claimed amount of Tk. 7,500 before UP Chairman on 05.05.2018. It was talked with defendant, Md. Majid Sheikh about the situation. Majid Sheikh informed that

Md. Sohag, nephew of Nur Sheikh took Tk. 2,000 from his home as per instruction of UP Chairman and he would pay the remaining Tk. 5,500 later. It is one story like others.

b. Days required to resolve and implemented

Reviewing 104 resolved cases from 10 unions it has been found that village courts took on an average 20 days to resolve a dispute. Separately, 63 cases those were resolved through R-31 took averagely 8 days to resolve, 18 cases those were resolved through pretrial took averagely 30 days and 23 cases those were resolved through full hearing took averagely 47 days to resolve.

c. Women empowerment

In the visited unions, woman members in the VC's panel is 15% in Bagerhat district and 13% in Satkhira district (in total 14%). Highest ratio of women (23%) in Chitolmari sadar and lowest ratio is 7% in Ishwarpur and Krishnanagar unions. Moreover, it was found that in 23% benches (cases resolved through pre-trial and hearing), at least one woman was in the VC panel, highest number is 80% in Munshiganj union and lowest 0% in Nurnagar union under Satkhira.

d. Satisfaction of VC service-recipients (beneficiary)

Three interviews were taken with VC' service recipients which took place at community level. The VC-service receivers are satisfied on both VC's services and VC's decision. One VC-service recipient, Md. Nurujjaman (55), father- Md. Babar Ali, village -Purbo Pania, union- Mautala, Kaliganj, Satkhira deals in clothes & cotton. Md. Fazlu Rahman (40), father- Md. Ater Ali khan of the same union is a retailer of clothes and cotton. Once Md. Fazlu Rahman refused Md. Nurujjaman to pay due amount of Tk. 41,500. At one stage Nurujjaman went to Fazlu's home on 11.07.2018 and asked to pay the due amount. Then Md. Fazlu refused his (Nurujjaman) claim and rebuked him. Nurujjaman wanted help of Fazlu's father as well as community people in realizing the due amount. But they could not help him. Later on being informed about village court through CYM, Nurujjaman filed a case in the village court on 18.07.2018 against Md. Fazlu claiming Tk. 41,500. A village court was formed following the VC's procedures. Then based on request of village court, Fazlu discussed with Nurujjaman and agreed to settle the dispute through compromise. Later on, he paid the due amount of Tk. 41,500 to the applicant Md. Nurujjaman before village court based on preconditions as per agreement. Finally, the case was resolved through pre-trial. Being satisfied, Nurujjaman returned Tk. 5,000 to the Fazlu in order to re-establish a good relationship with Fazlu as a business man. Nurujjaman said, *"I have received Tk. 41,500 as compensation through village court. As a poor man, I couldn't realize the amount of money in absence of VC. VC Chairman and other panel members were neutral in passing decision."* Nuruzzaman told that the local poor people are getting judicial



services through VC. I am asking the community people to approach VC to get justice within a short time at minimum cost.

Another VC-service receiver, Nazmun Nahar (37), husband-Md. Abdul Mazed Gazi, village-Sota, union- Krishnanagar, Kaliganj, Satkhira is also very satisfied on both VC's services and VC's decision (Nazmun Nahar hasn't allow to take her picture due to religious values). Nazmun Nahar sold mangoes of 4 trees from her mango-garden to Md. Hazrat, a neighbor and a retailer of seasonal fruits at Tk. 15,500. Hazrat paid Tk. 10,500 keeping due amount of Tk. 5,000. After a certain period of time, Nazmu Nahar asked Hazrat to pay the due amount. But Hazrat didn't pay the amount. Even at one stage he told that he would pay not a single paisa to Nazmun Nahar. Abdul Mazed, husband of Nazmu Nahar is a farmer and then he was very sick. Nazmun Nahar went to the local elite persons and sought their help in realizing the due amount. But the local elite persons failed to make Hazrat agree to pay the amount. Nazmun became very disappointed. Later on, being informed about village court through Court yard meeting, she went to Krishnanagar UP on 24th May, 2018 and filed a case against Md. Hazrat claiming Tk. 5,000 as due amount. Receiving summon through village police (VP) from UP Chairman, Md. Hazrat became afraid mentally. Then he came to the UP and confessed the claim of Nazmun Nahar and payed the due amount of Tk. 5,000 before UP Chairman on 29th May, 2018. With tears in the eyes, Nazmun Nahar said, *"I have received Tk. 5,000 through village court. As a poor woman while my husband was too sick to work, I couldn't realize the due amount in absence of VC indeed. I have spent the money for treatment of my husband and other family needs. I pray to Allah for sustainable of VC."* Nazmun Nahar added that she became very disappointed when she failed to realize the amount of money with the help of local influential persons. Nazmun told that the poor women like her are receiving judicial services of village courts.

Md. Hafizur Islam (35), father- Md. Abdul Hamid Biswas, village- Kalikapur, union-Krishnanagar, Kaliganj, Satkhira is also very satisfied receiving Tk. 17,900 from the defendant Md. Nazrul Islam (40), father- Md. Rafikul Gazi, Raghunathpur, Kaliganj, Satkhira as per decision of village court. The case was filed on 24.04.2018 and resolved on 22.05.2018. md. Hafizur spent the amount for family needs. Hafizur Islam told that it was impossible to realize the due amount by him as a day-labour in absence of village court. He is very satisfied for neutral justice and behaviour of the panel members.

6. Management and monitoring system of Wave Foundation:

It was reviewed the monthly action plan, monthly progress report etc. at district level office (Bagerhat and Satkhira) of Wave Foundation. District Coordinators, Upz Coordinators and VCAs prepared monthly action plan. District Coordinators and Upz Coordinators said that they monitor the VC's activities and awareness raising programs (Courtyard meetings, video show, community sharing meeting etc.) regularly. They suggest VCAs how the activities and events could be done/performed smoothly according to action plan. All VCAs confirmed that both District Coordinator and Upz Coordinators has provided them technical supports to build up their skill in documentation. As a result, the errors has been decreased in preparing monthly progress and documentation of village courts proceedings. It has been come from discussion that that Wave Foundation maintain a mechanism to monitor the field activities. They have developed and implemented checklists to monitor the VC's documentation, CYM, and VC's hearing. One DCo has to fill up the monitoring checklist as per monthly target.

The UCs and DCoS told that in fact they didn't get enough time to assist VCAs and UP chairmen with technical support and transform their knowledge received from training into the practice as they were engaged in different types of training and workshop including

implementing different types of events to reach the delivery target. But it was seemed that field movement of DCos is insufficient still now.

NGO's performance Assessment:

Activating village courts in Bangladesh project (AVCB) has engaged ESDO for 33 months starting from 10th December 2016 to 09 December 2019 to perform services in respect of setting Village Courts in 314 Union Parishads of Rangpur and Rajshahi divisions. According to clause 4 of the contract, ESDO has been initially contracted for 1 (one) year with an option of 02 consecutive extensions based on satisfactory performance annually. This is the end of their 2nd year contract and their performance assessment in-terms of program and operational point of view are important requirement to extend their contract for the next year. Hence the project management team has conducted performance assessment starting from 10 December 2017 to 30 September 2018. The purpose of the assessment was to identify and critically evaluate the activities as well as to assess the achievement against the deliverables during 10 December 2017 to 30 September 2018 against 2nd year of the contract.

The assessment was carried out under the leadership of Knowlagent Management and M&E unit. One team comprised with Operation, Finance and Monitoring and evaluation staff conducted performance assessment of four NGOs. The assessment carried out between 23 October -09 November 2018 in two phases (First phase from 23/10/2018 to 01/11/2018 2nd phase from 04/11/2018 to 09/11/2018). Data collection took place, having the consultation with UP chair, Secretary, reviewing documents (reports, plan, case statistics, case registers, forms, CYM registers, Counseling registers, visitor books, and attendance sheets of different events) and interviewing VCAs and service recipients. NGO wise performance assessment reports were prepared and submitted during this reporting period.

Develop and implement MIS

Development:

During this reporting period, the project has developed, and deployed project MIS by the National Consultant hired following the GOB's procurement policy. The objective of development and implementation of Web based Management Information System (MIS) is to track the progress of different indicators related to VC's performance and to monitor union wise VC's performance. The system has been implemented at 27 District level offices and generate different reports (progress report by unions, upazila, district, division, HQ, etc.) based on the pre-defined query criteria.

During the development process the consultant has visited Madaripur district and consulted with field level staff to determine their requirement. Based on the requirement study the consultant initially has developed the prototype of MIS and finalized it having consultation with the project staff.

Provide training to field staff on MIS:

Activating Village Courts in Bangladesh Phase II Project organized 3 batches of day-long training on Project Management Information System (PMIS) for field level



staffs including District Facilitators (DF) from 12th August to 16th August, 2018. In a total, 65 (Male-60 and Male-5) field level staffs including 5 PMU staffs (MLLO & PCO), 25 District Facilitators, 4 Project Coordinators, 4 Monitoring & Reporting Coordinators, 26 District Coordinators and 1 Upazila Coordinator participated in the training. One District Coordinator could not attend the training due to illness. Then one Upazila Coordinator (from adjacent upazila) was offered to participate in the training. Among the training batches, first one was held on 12th August, 2nd one was held on 13th August and 3rd one was held on 16th August 2018 at Village Well, 12th Level, IDB Bhaban, Agargaon, Dhaka.

The main objective of the training was to increase capacity and skills of the pertinent DFs, M&LLOs, PCOs and NGOs' staffs on project's MIS so that they can use the MIS regularly without any trouble. In addition, the DCOs can update PMIS monthly on regular basis, other project users can monitor VC's performance and generate different types of reports from his/her own desk.

The major contents of the training were PMIS Demonstration, PMIS data input procedures, PMIS data review, Reporting procedures & Record submission procedures to M&RC, Data input check for all districts under the NGO, PMIS data review & Reporting procedures for M&RC, PMIS Record submission procedures to PMU unit, PMIS data review & Reporting procedures for PMU unit, PMIS problem fixing finalization procedures and Reporting procedures for PMU unit. The trainings were interactive and participatory where massive interaction within the participants were ensured through group exercises. Technical Assistance was provided in each group during group works.

Testing and deployment:

The system has been tested by the field level staff in 27 districts entering real data and then implementation has been started full swing. Now data entry by the DCo has been going on. Meanwhile data entry has been completed till February 2018. All data entry will be completed by February 2019.

2.2.2 Undertake baseline survey, independent evaluations, surveys of beneficiaries, and officials and others need-based assessments including explanatory study for possible rolling out in CHT

Rolling out of village courts in CHT areas:

The Prodoc has been revised incorporating the component "Rolling out of AVCB II activities in CHT areas" and addressing the inconsistency exist in approved project document and Pillar Assessed Grant or Delegation Agreement (PAGoDA) and submitted to Economics Relation Division (ERD) for approval. Under the rolling out of village courts in CHT areas, the project has designed the interventions, implementation plan and budget having intensive consultation and ensuring involvement of UNDP's CHT project who has been working long time in CHT areas. Initially, incorporating CHT component and addressing the inconsistency in approved project document and PAGoDA, the PAGoDA has been revised and amended in May 2018. In this regard, budget and Logical Framework including outputs and results and indicators where applicable have been revised incorporating EU's feedback.

Baseline Study of AVCB II Project:

Baseline study report of AVCB II project has been published in this reporting period. Recently, the report uploaded on project website (www.villagecourts.org/reports) for public sharing. According to the study, before the project implementaion the VCs in the project areas were not well functioning and rarely used as a Dispute Resolution Mechanism (DRM)

mostly due to lack of awareness of the people, UP officials and representatives and lack of material support to manage VC activities. Wherever used, the VCs do not follow the law and administrative procedure. Increasing awareness of the people, improving expertise of UP officials and representatives to conduct VC and providing some critical material services are key to making VCs functional.

Conduct Mid-term Review:

Mid-term Review (MTR) of AVCB II project by one national and one international consultants have been completed. The mission was for 30 days starting from 27th August 2018 to 10 October 2018. They have completed their field works on 17th September and shared findings with LGD, UNDP and EU through de-briefing sessions. Meanwhile they have submitted final report incorporating feedback of UNDP, GOB and EU.

Activity 2.2.3 Undertake and organise South-South Cooperation activities for mutual learning and exchanging

This activity is deferred to the 2nd quarter 2018.

Activity 2.2.4 Produce and print knowledge products

1,000 copies of Annual Report 2017 has been printed and 846 copies are distributed to different stakeholders following a distribution plan. Vendor hired by the project also completed their Photo shooting in Mymensingh, Sylhet, Rangpur, and Khulna districts and submitted 300 pictures on different themes of village court project following the ToR.

Section III: Networking

Collaborations with IPA and Yale University is continuing aiming to produce high-quality impact evaluation report, a policy report focusing on the broader policy implications of the study for justice systems at local level in low-income countries, and academic articles focusing on what the RCT can contribute to the academic literature on justice systems at local level in low-income countries through conducting impact evaluation of AVCB Phase-II project through RCT method.

Section IV: Organization and Management

4.1 Organizational Structure and Management Composition

This project is implementing under National Implementation (NIM) modality and there is a Project Management Unit (PMU) headed by National Project Coordinator. The day-to-day activities of the project are being implemented with the support of three components named Programme Components, M&E and Knowledge Management Component and Operations Component. In addition, four NGOs which have experience in dispute resolution and/or supporting Village Courts have hired by UNDP under Responsible Party Agreement to implement several activities of the project. Besides this, two committees- the Project Steering Committee (PSC) headed by Secretary, LGD and the Project Implementation Committee (PIC) headed by Additional Secretary, LGD and National Project Director (NPD) has provided policy guidelines and monitored the progress of the programme, and guided Project personnel in the preparation of the annual work plan. During reporting period, one PSC and two PIC meetings were held.

4.2 Project Operations

4.2.1 Operational Progress in 2018

During this reporting period, the operation team provided extensive efforts specially in terms of procurement supports to implement the AWP 2018. Some major accomplishment/progress by the project operations during the reporting period are summarized below:

Contract management with 4 partner NGOs: During the reporting period, operation unit provided incredible supports to ensure efficient contract management with four partner NGOs and certify the quarterly payment in compliance with contract provision and achievement of set milestone outlined in RPA document. Besides this, operations also worked hard for renewing the RPA contract of four partner NGOs for the year 2019 based on the performance assessment of year 2018 accomplished by the mission commissioned by the project management.

Procurement Plan 2018 for both GoB and UNDP: Over the period of Jan-Dec'2018, project team accomplished the planned procurement of approx.. 500k US\$ including GoB. During this reporting period following procurement works has been accomplished:

- extension of RPA contract with four PNGOs
- tender for designing and printing FAQ
- furniture (Book shelf, metal drawer, Table, chair & drawer) for PMU Office and IC (Monitoring Associate) stationed at LGD
- Uniform for 3 drivers, printing of business card for 18 colleagues
- Designing and printing of leaflet
- maintenance and repairing of several office vehicles
- purchase of Laptop for BLAST
- Pocket card printing through re-tender
- Website domain and hosting renewal

- Theme development and cover designing for Booklet and its printing
- printing different size of office envelop
- designing and printing of project map and story book
- 20 Scooter Motor cycle for PNGOs
- Initiated procurement of 1-minute TV spot
- Provided support for processing several bill vouchers and releasing Tender Security and Performance Security

Besides this, some procurement related to office stationeries (LTA) , logistics and office maintenance are also accomplished through micro-purchasing method in the reporting period.

HR Recruitment: Recruitment of five positions- Finance Officer, Legal Specialist, Project Assistant and Two District Facilitators has been completed during this reporting period. On the other hand, separation of six staffs (One Project Assistant, Legal Specialist, Finance Officer-Field Monitoring, two District Facilitator and One Driver Cum Messenger) were processed during this period in close coordination with CO HR. In total performance evaluation of 37 staff were completed and accordingly 37 contract extension were done for the respective Service Contract holders in this reporting period. The positions are twenty-three contract renew process of District Facilitators, National Project Coordinator, Programme Specialist, three Project Coordinators, Operations and Procurement Manager, Research and Evaluation Manager, Senior Capacity Development Officer, Human Resources Associate, one Monitoring and Lessons Learning Officer, Office Assistant, Finance Assistant and two Driver cum Messengers.

The hiring process of Village Court Management Information System Officer (VCMIS) was also initiated during this period where vacancy announcement was circulated in the UNDP Jobsite.

Provide ICT support for PMU and 27 district offices: During reporting period the project has provided logistic and ICT supports for PMU and 27 district offices in trouble shooting for ICT equipment. The internet, e-mail and data transfer through the network services have been ensured. Completion and hosting of new website is also another milestone for the project.

Request for procurement of few Laptops & Desktops, UPS and some other petty ICT items in line with approved ProDoc was initiated and completed in this reporting period.

Project also initiated procurement of some MOSS equipment, printer toners etc. As a part of MOSS compliance, two Trauma kit bag has been procured for the project office and refill & checked-up fire extinguisher on regular basis. Security awareness and first aid training for the project staffs was also arranged in this year. Project also completed fire drill to ensure emergency time safety & security. The internet, e-mail and data transfer through the network services was also ensured within the tenure of this year.

Travel and Transport Management: During the reporting year, project collected all 159 Digital Registration Certificates from BRTA, monitored with PNGOs for updating the papers for insurance, tax token and driving license of the Motorcycles for the year 2018 those are being used by the Partner NGO's staff for field monitoring/visit.

Project provided extensive supports for various fields visits (monitoring visits of different component) and organization different events (NGO coordination meetings, MTR and ROM missions, Gender workshops, Journalist workshops, etc.) within Dhaka and outside of Dhaka. In this connection, project had to provide extensive logistic support to arrange huge number

of rented vehicles and provide air tickets for the traveler towards various location of the country.

BRTA fitness of three project vehicles and comprehensive insurance of all four vehicles along with 27 motorcycles was completed during this year in 2 different slots. GoB Tax token for all project vehicles were also renewed during this year. Tax waiver certification had to collect from National Board of Revenue (NBR) during this reporting period which was essential prior to fitness renewal of two old project vehicles. Besides this, BRTA registration of 20 new scooters (for female field staff of PNGOs) was completed and delivered to PNGO offices during this year 2018.

Asset Management: Annual Physical Verification of project Assets was completed by the verification committee in the beginning of this year. Asset management for office furniture and other goods has been maintained efficiently during this year. New office furniture for CDU, Finance and Operation unit. Office furniture also procured for the Monitoring Associate sitting in the LGD Ministry. Proper record keeping for stock management/store maintenance and other goods was done over the year. Necessary approval and instructions from ministry authority are under progress for 2nd lot of the ToT assets those were used in AVCB phase-II.

Office Management and Secretarial Support: During the reporting period, operations provided office management and day-to-day administrative support such as supervised office cleaning of all work stations/desk, meeting room, wash room, floor etc.,

Provided courier support for distributing huge number of materials (Leaflet 1,48,500 copies, Newsletter 57000 copies, Cap 38000 pcs, Annual Report 2017-660 pcs, Festoon & Banner 1400copies, T-shirt-1891copies, Pen-21600pcs, Poster-1890, Greeting Card (Bangla Nababarsha)-2090pcs, Folder-5400pcs, Pad-5400pcs, Brochure-24820pcs, VC Forms, Flip-chart, Pocket-card and letters etc. within the planned time and also maintained the record of this courier dealings. Every month has prepared matrix for due bill of corporate mobile SIM for 27 DFs and collected bill through bKash and handover the money to HR/finance for payment. All other bills like OT for Driver cum Messenger, postage/courier vendor also processed on regular basis in this year.

Processed Government 5193 number of Letter for distribution to (Chairman-4573, DC-64, DDLG-64, UNO-492 of Bangladesh). This was an huge task with several steps like prepare list, print letter and envelope (each item of 5193nos.) and distribute those letters by GPO through registry pasting stamps on each, dispatch written slip with quantity ensure etc.). Maintained File Register for file efficient management and keeping track record of file custodian.

Organised TOC and TEC for GoB procurement: During this reporting period, the operations provided extensive supports to organize the TOC and TEC meeting in connection with GoB approval for several procurement cases under GoB fund. Following two procurements cases are initiated but still under process due to have NPD position is vacant:

- Issuing the Notification of Award (NOA) for printing operational manual
- Issuing the TOC notice for conducting the meeting for opening the tender documents of VC forms and Registers;

4.2.2 Budget and delivery by major outputs

At the beginning of the period, LGD & UNDP Senior Management had approved the Annual Work Plan (AWP) 2018 of the total budget of US\$7,711,745.62. The donor wise total budget of 2018 is as follows: EU & UNDP: \$5,505,610.00 and GoB: \$2,206,135.62

According to latest Revised Annual Work Plan (AWP) for the year of 2018, total budget is US\$7,343,141. The donor wise total budget of 2018 is as follows: EU: \$6,200,000 and GoB: \$1,143,141 and as of 31 December 2018, total expenditure against several activities for the project has been stood \$ 6,189,984 for donor budget. This equates to the delivery rate of 99.84% against the donor budget. This statement has been prepared based on the IPSAS reports in ATLAS. Delivery status for the year 2018 shown in the below table:

(Figure in USD)

Outputs	Component/Activity	Budget	Expenditure	Balance	% of Utilization
Activity Result 1.1	Capacity of relevant stakeholders at national and local level improved and key skills strengthened.	4,453,438	4,452,924	514	99.99%
Activity Result 1.2	Legal and policy framework reviewed and revised to enhance efficiency and effectiveness of Village Courts	36,751	36,691	60	99.84%
Activity Result 1.3	GoB monitoring capacity for evaluating Village Courts performance is strengthened and systematized.	21,347	21,439	(92)	100.43%
Activity Result 2.1	Beneficiaries in project areas understand the roles and functions of the Village Courts.	924,069	925,916	(1,846)	100.20%
Activity Result 2.2	Evidence-base and knowledge-management on Village Courts increased.	171,148	171,111	37	99.98%
Activity Result 3.0	Technical Assistance and Management	593,246	581,903	11,343	98.09%
Grand Total		6,200,000	6,189,984	10,016	99.84%

Section V: Partnership

Partnership with four NGOs (MLAA, ESDO, BLAST and Wave Foundation) is going on. During this reporting period, the project has provided extensive supports so that they can accomplish their plan activities aligned with RPA contract ensuring quality.

Section VI: Lessons learnt and future direction

6.1 Lessons learned/Challenges

Types of difficulties encountered during the reporting period:

- DTP members (GoB) who are mostly based in district were found less interested to conduct session at upzilla level due to less honorarium and lack of transport facilities.
- Organizing training more than two Upazilas simultaneously is a big challenge to ensure quality of training.
- Replication of VCMIS system (piloted during Phase-I) across the project areas or piloting in 100 UPs is require hardware and capacity building supports from the government or other sources. Getting such supports are challenging as meanwhile BCC has refused to provide capacity building supports.
- Ensuring on time quarterly fund disbursement for conducting quarterly VCMC meeting adjusting the budget of previous quarter. It is very challenging to collect bill& Boucher related to VCMC meetings from 128 Upazilas and 27 Districts on quarterly basis and then release fund for the next quarter.
- Mind setup of UP Chairman towards Salish has created barrier to activate VCs.
- Getting delay in implementation of actions due to absent of NPD since October 2018 (GOB fund disbursement and implementation of GOB funded actions)

Table-06 Type of difficulties/ problems that may affect implementation in coming days:	
Types of difficulties potentially be encountered in coming days	Possible steps to be taken to overcome challenges/difficulties
1. The project envisages challenges in rolling out village courts activities in CHT region in terms of implementation modality. Furthermore, concerns may persist related to effective coordination among Regional Council (RC), LGD and MoCHTA raised, particularly by the Regional Council.	An agreed modality should be developed in consultation with Regional Council, LGD and MoCHTA for regular coordination.
2.The project envisages challenges in getting approval of TPP due to long GOB procedures. As a result, rolling out of village courts activities in CHT region could be delayed.	TPP need to be submitted from UNDP side as soon as possible. Once it is submitted necessary follow up with relevant stakeholders are require from UNDP and LGD's ministry.
3. VCs are authorized to deal with some cognizable offences. In the case of these offences, police retain the power to investigate which creates a barrier to	Both national and local level advocacy and sensitization interventions have been planned to overcome these challenges. The project will work with Ministry of Home for issuing

Table-06 Type of difficulties/ problems that may affect implementation in coming days:	
Types of difficulties potentially be encountered in coming days	Possible steps to be taken to overcome challenges/difficulties
activate VCs.	directive from IG Police to facilitate referrals to VCs.
4. Mind setup of UP Chairman towards Salish may create barrier to activate VCs.	Capacity building and sensitization initiatives through follow up and mentoring will be carried out. Also have a plan to change their mindset involving them in different activities such as VCMC meeting, Half yearly coordination meeting, etc.
5. Ensuring on time quarterly fund disbursement for conducting quarterly VCMC meeting adjusting the budget of previous quarter	
6. Delay in implementation of actions due to absent of NPD since October 2018 (GOB fund disbursement and implementation of GOB funded actions)	Project is ready with necessary files for approval so that project can start action just after joining of NPD. However, intervention from Senior Management is require.

6.2 Future Direction

In coming years, the project will continue in offering localized justice to approximately 21 million of rural citizens of Bangladesh through village courts activated by this project in 1,078 unions of Bangladesh. Increasing the involvement of the Government in carrying out of capacity development and monitoring of village courts performance, review Legal and policy framework to enhance efficiency and effectiveness of VCs and rolling out of AVCB phase II project in CHT region will be the priority areas during the remaining period of the project. The project will also sensitize the policy makers, government and development partners for scaling up this project across the Bangladesh through a National Conference to be held in 2019.

Section VII: Conclusion

About 24% (1078 out of 4500) of Union Parishads of Bangladesh which are being sensitized and capacitated by the UNDP supported Activating Village Courts in Bangladesh Phase II Project offered local and fast access to justice to 21 million rural citizens through village courts. In 2018 nearly 58,200 (28 percent of which reported women) cases have been reported to the village courts extending direct access to justice to over 116,400 people. In a total 79,500 cases reported between July'17-Dec'18. Total resolved 61,450 cases, of which 47,000 resolved in 2018. According to MTR, resolution took place within a 6 weeks' time frame and settlements are generally enforced (91%). The consensus view of police, UNOs, UP staff and PNGOs is that where a VC is functioning properly crime is lower. Involvement of women in decision making process has increased from 2% (Baseline) to 13% (2018).

Activating Village Courts in Bangladesh Phase II Project
Local Government Division
Ministry of Local Government, Rural Development & Cooperatives
Performance of Village Court (July 2017- December 2018) extracted from Case Statistics Database

- A cumulative total of **79,568** (an average 4.00 cases reported in a UP in a month) cases have been reported between July, 2017 to December, 2018 and **61,450** cases have been resolved through VCs. Of the resolved cases, **56,440** (91.50%) decisions have been implemented fully by this time;
- Between July 2017 to December 2018, a total of **4,665** cases have been transferred from District Courts to Village Courts demonstrating that VC is contributing in case backlogs in the District Courts;
- Project activities have targeted women to encourage in seeking remedy through Village Courts. As a result, in total **22,547** (28%) women sought remedies through Village Courts. In a total **76,543** community people involved in decision making process of Village Courts, of whom 13.50% were women;
- Community women were as panel member in VC's decision- making process of **9416** cases (48.50% of cases resolved through Pre-trial & hearing);
- BDT **589.80** million (58.98 Crore) recovered as compensation from respondents between July 2017-December 2018 and provided to the applicants.

Year	# of UP	Referred case from DC	Number of cases reported			Number of cases resolved			Number of decisions implemented			Number of panel member			# of Case involved woman in decision making.
			Man	Woman	Total	Man	Woman	Total	Man	Woman	Total	Man	Woman	Total	
2017	1078	1551	15281	6052	21333	10209	4191	14400	8940	3717	12657	16324	2241	18565	2016
2018	1078	3114	41740	16495	58235	33499	13551	47050	31139	12644	43783	49846	8132	57978	7400
Total		4665	57021	22547	79568	43708	17742	61450	40079	16361	56440	66170	10373	76543	9416