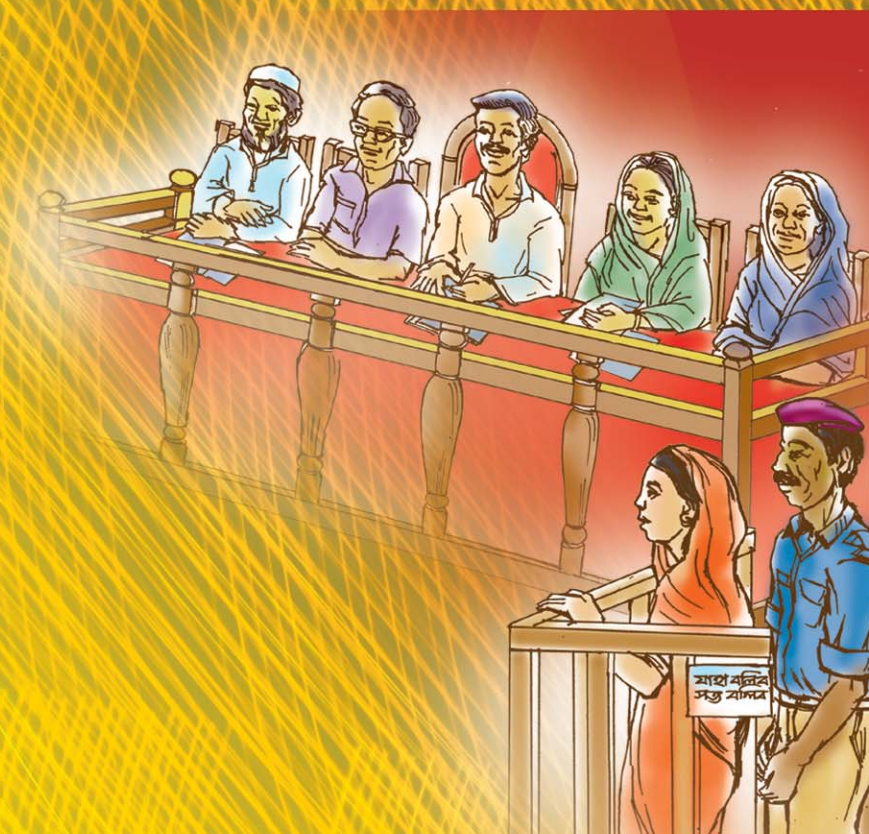


**A Glimpse of
Journey to Ensure
Local Justice
for the Poor**

2011



Activating Village Courts in Bangladesh Project

Local Government Division
Ministry of Local Government,
Rural Development and Cooperatives
E-mail: info@villagecourts.org, Website: www.villagecourts.org



Activating Village Courts in Bangladesh Project

Local Government Division
Ministry of Local Government,
Rural Development and Cooperatives



A Glimpse of

Journey to Facilitate Local Justice for the Poor 2011



European Union

Activating Village Courts in Bangladesh Project

Local Government Division
Ministry of Local Government, Rural Development and Cooperatives



Bangladesh



A Glimpse of Journey to Facilitate Local Justice for the Poor

Prepared by

Activating Village Courts in Bangladesh Project

Local Government Division

Ministry of Local Government, Rural Development and Cooperatives

September 2011



European Union



Bangladesh

Local Government Division Ministry of Local Government, Rural Development and Cooperatives hereby extends special gratitude to UNDP Bangladesh & European Union for their continuous support in bringing out this Scrap Book through the project titled "Activating Village Courts in Bangladesh Project"

A Brief about the project

Activating Village Courts Project in Bangladesh

Background

In line with ensuring good governance, efficient and stable justice sector is indeed inevitable. In this context, Bangladesh is under tremendous pressure with much workload and inadequate number of officials and staff to dispose the cases. Consequently, the case backlogs add up to the existing pending cases and at present it stands on about two millions cases. It creates a negative impact for the rural poor and vulnerable group of people who cannot afford the expenses of cases and do not have clear understanding of how to get access to justice in the upper courts on some issues that could be easily resolved at the local level. In this backdrop, Local Government Division (LGD), Ministry of Local Government, Rural Development and Cooperatives (MoGRDC) has initiated a project BGD/07/007 'Activating Village Courts Project in Bangladesh' with the partnership of UNDP and European Commission (EC) Bangladesh.

The project is supporting in strengthening the justice system through activating Village Courts in 500 selected Union Parishads (UP) in the country. It also strives to develop capacity of the Village Courts (VC) members, elected representatives and other relevant officials in a bid to run the VCs smoothly. It also carries out comprehensive advocacy activities to involve the community and other key stakeholders actively in efforts to activating the Village Courts through enhancing their awareness on legal rights and overall justice system.

Objectives

(i) Overall

The project aims at strengthening a system of alternative dispute resolution in 500 Union Parishads (UP) through the establishment of village courts. It intends to improve access to justice for disadvantaged and marginalized groups and enhance human rights systems and processes in Bangladesh.

(ii) Specific

- To empower women, the poor and disadvantaged groups to seek remedies for injustices, and to enable justice institutions to be responsive to claims
- To promote and protect human rights security through a human rights-based approach to development in programming and delivery
- To empower citizens to resolve their disputes at the local level in an expeditious, transparent and affordable manner

- To strengthen local government institutions to be responsive to local needs and offer approach legal service through well functioning Village Courts

Project Activities

Review of Legal Framework:

The project reviews the existing legal framework of Village Courts in depth and submit the analytical and pragmatic recommendations to government for ensuring functional and effective village courts.

Capacity Development:

It supports to enhance the capacity of the local representatives (especially UPs), village police and staff of village courts, judges through training, workshops, etc at national and international level.

Advocacy & Communication:

It conducts a comprehensive awareness program in community at local and national level on legal rights i.e. services of village courts with rights based approach. Using all the potential communication tools, the advocacy and communication activities are being carried out to sensitize all the actors in a bid to activating the Village Courts for ensuring the justice for the marginalized.

Monitoring and Evaluation:

In strengthening monitoring process and activities in emanating best practices of local government institutions especially UP in perspectives of running Village Courts effectively, the project supports to LGD, MoLGRD&C through initiating comprehensive interventions.

Intended Outputs

- 500 selected UPs are strengthened for activating village courts;
- Village courts legal framework reviewed;
- Capacity of UP Chairman, UP staff and village police on village courts developed;
- Awareness on village courts raised and involvement of community people and other key stakeholders in activating village courts enhanced;
- Monitoring and supervision function within MoLGRD&C enhanced;



Activating Village Courts in Bangladesh Project

At a glance Progresses

- All selected 500 UP Chairmen are aware and oriented about the VC project and VC functions; Supports are extended to 338 UPs for setting up village courts and making community aware of seeking local justice services at their doorsteps; In addition, 12 UPs (model VCs) started delivering justice services to the rural poor;
- In total 34920 CBOs are formed (12-15 members/each CBO) with 33% women member; 110161 participants attended in CBO meetings (42% women); 9598 courtyard meetings held covering 54991 participants (33% women); This promotes the demand side of justice delivery mechanism at the community level;
- Published Baseline Survey Report which attracted mass attention about the village courts status in Bangladesh and the project itself;
- M & E Framework is finalized which includes measurable indicators, monitoring tools, techniques and reporting guidelines;
- Village Courts Training Manual is approved and endorsed by the GOB;
- 16 UPs covered by on the job training for providing firsthand knowledge on how to use and fill up the VC-related forms, formats and necessary documentation;
- On the spot orientation to VC officials in 64 UPs have enhanced their confidence to run VC
- Various GOB trainings institutions are adequately sensitized about VCs and institutional partnership established with NILG, JATI and BCS Admin Academy in order to incorporate VC functions, roles and responsibilities of field level officials to activate VC into the training course curricula;
- Partnership established with the Ministry of Law; the Judiciary obtained the High Court's concurrence to obtain series of orientation on VC functions;
- Project's Communication and visibility plan is approved by EU and being followed while developing various IEC materials and communication interventions; It puts due importance to ensure the necessary visibility of GOB, European Union and UNDP in project intervention;
- Detailed Project Communication and Advocacy Strategy drafted aligning with the UNDP-EC Communication and visibility plan for the project;
- Increased awareness enabled peoples to have access to local justice services through wider Dissemination of various IEC materials (brochures, stickers, posters, festoons, flip charts, leaflet, pocket book etc.);
- Illiterate/low literate peoples are brought under access to local justice supports of UP through using flip charts in ward-level courtyard meetings;
- Interactive and informative website pulled huge curiosity among various stakeholders including media and development partners about VC functions and its judicial process;

Activating Village Courts in Bangladesh Project

- After installation of 500 signboards with the name of 'Village Courts' peoples now easily can locate it at their doorstep for seeking justice services;
- Installation of 17 billboards at district level and 56 at Upzila level are helping peoples to learn about the jurisdiction of VCs while they very often unknowingly approach to district courts;
- Around 1,039 participants are reached through 2 divisional, 5 district and 5 upazila level sensitization workshops for raising mass awareness where 298 were women;
- The IEC materials prepared through organizing feasibility sharing meetings with the experts on village courts to bring out the best outputs;
- The short video documentary on village courts grabbed much attentions and paved enhancing knowledge among the stakeholders through disseminating the docu in different events;
- Project prepared a TV spot on village courts along with a jingle portrayed with the popular artists and singer of the country
- The comprehensive communication advocacy initiatives availed to get huge media coverage along with enhanced the interest among journalists and sensitized the partners, donors, policy makers, civil society and other stakeholders in activating village courts through national level events;
- Docu drama on village courts is being prepared to boost the mass awareness on village courts;
- People's access to justice services are further facilitated through sensitizing judicial officers about village courts; VC triable cases are now referred back to VC from formal courts;
- Necessary documentation supports (i.e. 11 prescribed forms as per the Village Courts Rules 1976, 13 additional non-prescribed forms) are ensuring quality case management, proper data collection, better adjudication in the VC as well as strengthening performance monitoring of VCs;
- Set of compiled recommendations for necessary reforms in the VC Act 2006 is drafted for framing updated VC Rules and necessary amendment in the Act; Around 164 judicial officers are consulted in 5 districts;
- Peoples confidence and knowledge level is further heightened through the VC booklet titled "Gram Adalate Bichar: Sangslisto Ain O Bidhimala";
- Review of social barriers and limitations of Village Courts explored the socio-anthropo-legal aspect of village courts and its potentials;
- Survey to determine UP capacity to use IT for enhancing quality of justice delivery is done for introducing ICT based reporting and quality assurance;
- Easy and Quick Reference Guide on the village courts are drafted for easy understanding of community people

Case Story

Chobi Rani got Justice through Village Courts

Ms Chobi Rani Ray resides Orakandi union parishad of Kashiani Upazila in Gopalganj. Her husband Felu Ray is a farmer. They have very little land which is just scant to ensure the daily breads. Chobi also works with her husband at the field.

She grows crops in 1.50 decimal land near to her house. But her distant relative Mr. Topon Ray frequently let his cow to invade Chobi's land and damages the paddy seeds and other ones lying in the land. While objected to this cattle trespassing, Topon Ray made outraged and started shouting, threatening and at one point, bashed Chobi's house with an axe. After that Chobi rushed to the community but didn't get justice and then she went to the Union Parishad after being advised by Village Courts Project's CBO Member Mr. Shunil Bhokto. Then as per procedures of village courts, she lodged a case (no. 3/11) against the respondent Topon on 29 January, 2011 and the.

Accordingly, the UP Chairman served notice to both parties on 1st February, 2011 for nominating the duly representatives and be present at Village Court on 2nd February, 2011. The hearing of the case held on 5th February, 2011 and the both parties attended there. The full panel members of the village courts vetted the hearings along with the evidences and found the complaint justified. The panel gave the decision as 5:0 in accord of the petitioner. The court fined Tk. 300 (2.49€) as the compensation of damaged crops and rebuked not to do such misdeeds. Accordingly, the respondent paid the fine to the Village Courts and sought excuse to the petitioner.

After receiving compensation from VC, Chobi expressed her deep satisfaction to get justice from village courts within very short time. She also opined that henceforth the mischievous people can't dare to make the poor women humiliated or abused as VC is working as an effective local justice service institution.



Case Story

Liakot Ali compensated with 77.94€ through Village Courts



Mr. Liakot Ali (55), father deceased Mr. Yakub Ali, lives in Koikuri Union of Pirgacha Upazila under Rangpur district. He earns his family (wife and two children) living as a farmer through cultivating other people's land.

Since last couple of years, Liakot sells his crops to local small businessman Mr. Shohidul Islam Chowdhury. As a regular practice, Shohidul purchased 21 KGs of rice on 29 August 2010 in presence of Alauddin Boshunia, Abdul Mannan and Shah Alam of Moksud Kha village. The market value of the purchased crops was 143.77€ but he paid only 82.91€ cash to Liakot and promised to pay the rest soon after. However, just after the following day, Shohidul went to Liakot and sought for loan of 17.08 € for some urgency and firmly committed to repay the money soonest along with the rest owed money. The naïve Liakot responded and lent the money instantly.

Subsequently as per verbal agreement, Liakot asked for the money back from Shahidul but he started to show lame excuses one after another. After being refused repeatedly by Shahidul, Liakot rushed to village court as he was just passing arduous hardship to pay the school fees of his children. Meanwhile, he learnt about village court through attending at a court yard meeting of Village Courts project.

He then filed a case against Shahidul on 3 February 2011 by paying the duly village court fee 0.03 €. As per VC procedures, Liakot nominated two representatives Mr. Aminul Ehsan Lebu from Ward No-4 and local elite Mr. Sheikh Nurul Islam. On the contrary, the respondent, Shahidul nominated the female member of ward no 1, 2 & 3 Ms. Jelekha Chowdhury and local elite Mr. Shah Alam. The hearing of the case held on 20 February 2011 and both the parties attended there. The full panel members of the village court vetted the hearings along with the evidences and found the complaint justified. The panel gave the decision to pay back 77.94€ to the petitioner by 15 March 2011 in two installments. Accordingly, the respondent paid the fine to the Village Court in due time through installments.

After receiving compensation from village courts, Liakot expressed his satisfaction receiving justice from village courts within very short time and commented that village court is really working as the local savior institution to establish the rights of the marginalized peoples.



Snap Shots ▶

Conduction of oath
taking by Village
Police

VC Trial is going on



A Glimpse of
10 | *Journey to Facilitate Local Justice for the Poor*



Guests are seen at National Consultation on the 'Village Courts Act, 2006: Challenges and Way Forward' at Dhaka

Media at National Consultation on the 'Village Courts Act, 2006: Challenges and Way Forward' at Dhaka



Colorful & informative Festoons at the venue of National Consultation on the 'Village Courts Act, 2006: Challenges and Way Forward' at Dhaka



Inaugural session of ToT on Village Courts at Dhaka.



Interactive Workshop on Village Courts with Cabinet Division

A Glimpse of
12 | *Journey to Facilitate Local Justice for the Poor*



NPD visiting a Village Court & observing the documents at Rangpur

Workshop on Monitoring Framework on Village Courts Project at Dhaka



Reflection Workshop of Village Courts Project at Dhaka



PSC Meeting is
going on



PIC Meeting is
going on

A Glimpse of
14 | *Journey to Facilitate Local Justice for the Poor*



Media Workshop at
Nilphamari



Media Workshop at
Rangpur



A Participant is
presenting the findings
of group work at Media
Workshop



Workshop on Village
Courts with MPs at
Dhaka



Guests are seen at
workshop on Village
Courts with MPs at
Dhaka

A Glimpse of
16 | *Journey to Facilitate Local Justice for the Poor*



The ROM Representative is Participating at the workshop with Judiciary on Village Courts

Gender Workshop is going on at Cox's Bazar



Communication Officer, AVCB is observing a Court Yard Meeting at Faridpur



EU representative is participating at a meeting with Divisional Commissioner of Rangpur



EU representative is visiting a Union Parishad at Rangpur

A Glimpse of
18 | *Journey to Facilitate Local Justice for the Poor*



Participants are taking part in a session at ToT program on Village Courts

Monitoring Officer, AVCB is observing a Court Yard Meeting



Project Officer, AVCB is having a Planning Meeting with PNGO at Chittagong



Guests are seen at workshop on Institutional Monitoring and Evaluation of Village Courts



A reflection of the participants at Gender Workshop

A Glimpse of
20 | *Journey to Facilitate Local Justice for the Poor*



Guests are seen at workshop on Institutional Monitoring and Evaluation of Village Courts at Dhaka

The DC is delivering speech at media workshop at Rajbari



The PM & PSM, AVCB are seen at a Meeting with PNGO at Madaripur



The NPD is visiting a
Court Yard Meeting at
Rangpur



The DC is delivering
speech at Media
Workshop at Gopalganj

A Glimpse of
22 | *Journey to Facilitate Local Justice for the Poor*



Guests are seen at workshop with Judiciary on Village Courts & Restorative Justice at Gopalganj

The PM, AVCB is delivering speech at ToT program at NILG Dhaka



Legal Expert, AVCB is having a sharing session with CBO members at field level



EU representative is observing a VC trial session at Rangpur



Training Manager of AVCB is at FGD in Cox's Bazar

A Glimpse of
24 | *Journey to Facilitate Local Justice for the Poor*



ToT Program is going on

Monitoring Officers of
AVCB are visiting a
Union Parishad



Monitoring &
Evaluation Training is
going on



The PM of AVCB & Ms Nandita dutta, Program analyst, UNDP visiting a Court Yard Meeting



The PM of AVCB & Ms Nandita dutta, Program analyst, UNDP observing field level activities of the project



Guests are seen at
Monitoring &
Evaluation Training at
Chittagong



A section of the participants is seen at workshop with Judiciary on Village Courts



Guests are seen at ToT Program on Village Courts at NILG, Dhaka



A reflection of "Annual Planning Workshop & Retreat of 2010" of AVCB at Jumuna Resort



Mr Asif Karim, UNDP is moderating the "Annual Planning Workshop & Retreat of 2010" of AVCB at Jumuna Resort

A Glimpse of
28 | *Journey to Facilitate Local Justice for the Poor*



ToT Program on Village Courts

Workshop on Village Courts with Judiciary



Monitoring Officer, AVCB is observing a Court Yard Meeting



Coordination Meeting
with PRP



Legal Expert of AVCB is
Conducting a session
on legal issues on
Village Courts at field
level



Rally on Village Courts
at field Level

A reflection of Village
Police Training on
Village Courts



A participant of Gender
Workshop sharing the
findings of group work
at Kishorgonj



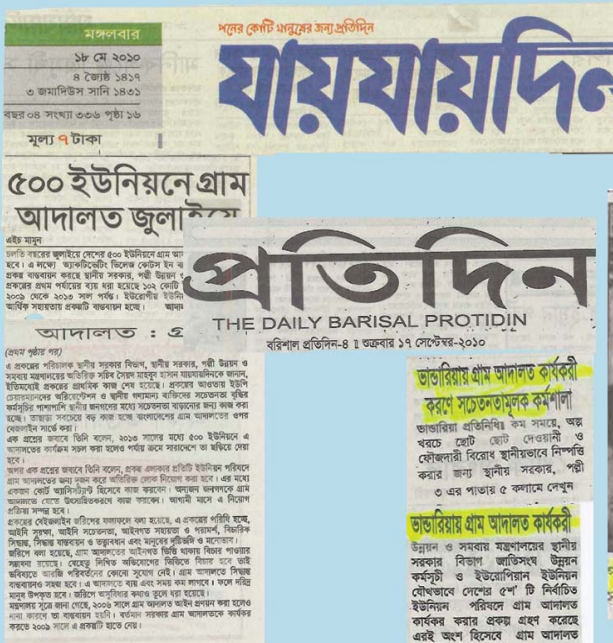
Communication
Officer, AVCB Project
is seen at
Coordination
Meeting with PNGO
at Lalmonirhat



CBO Meeting



National Roundtable Discussion on Baseline Survey Report on Village Courts
May 16, 2010, Hotel Sheraton, Dhaka



The Financial Express

DA 1589 INTERNET : <http://www.fe-bd.com>

DHAKA MONDAY, MAY 17, 2010 JAISTHA 3, 1417 BS

Govt to provide all out support to activate village courts: Nanak

State minister for Local Government, Rural Development and Cooperatives, Jahangir Kabir Nanak has said that the government would provide all out support to activate the village courts for the welfare of the rural people.

"Activating village courts at all the villages across the country would ensure justice to grassroots people and also help to reinforce the entire judicial system of the country," he said.

He was addressing the

inaugural session of the national roundtable on Baseline Survey Report on Village Courts as chief guest at a city hall Sunday, reports BSS.

Nanak said, "The country had all the legal frameworks like Village Court Rules 1976 and Village Court Act 2006 but the village courts were yet to be activated only for people's ignorance coupled with some sort of problems.

"The rural people are being deprived of access to fair justice and also facing untold suffering in resolving their local problems including land dispute, violence to women, robbery, dowry and extortion", he added.

Syed Mahboob Hasan, national project director of Activating Village Courts in Bangladesh (AVCB) Project under the Local Government Division, gave welcome speech in the function while country director of UNDP Bangladesh Stefan Priemer attended as special guest.



IEC Materials & Knowledge Products



IEC Materials & Knowledge Products



IEC Materials & Knowledge Products

