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## UN Joint Programme on Violence Against Women

### Progress Report December, 2011



Submitted by

**Community Empowerment Programme, BRAC**

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## List of Acronyms

CSC	Capacity Strengthening Component
CST	Capacity Strengthening Team
DLAC	District Legal Aid Committee
EC	European Commission
FCS	Food Consumption Score
GII	Gender Inequality Index
GOB	Government of Bangladesh
LGI	Local Government Institution
LGD	Local Government Division
LGSP	Local Government Support Project
LIC	Learning and Innovation Component
LIFD	Local Initiative for Development
LFA	Logical Framework Approach
MDG	Millennium Development Goals
NGO	Non-Government Organization
<i>Polli Shomaj</i>	<i>Polli Shomaj</i> are independent, ward-level platforms of the poor and marginalized, especially women, convened by Community Empowerment Programme, BRAC
PRSP	Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper
PNGO	Partner Non-government Organisation
REOPA	Rural Employment Opportunities for Public Assets
SME	Small and Medium Enterprises
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UFT	Union Facilitation Team
UP	<i>Union Parishad</i> ; lowest tier of the local government
UzRC	Upazila REOPA Committee
VAW	Violence against Women
WCG	Women Crew Group
WDF	Women Development Forum: All the women who are elected members of the Union Parishad in the union are members of this Women Development Forum

## **Executive Summary:**

The UN Joint Programme (JP) on Violence against Women (VAW) has completed the activities of its first year. Key activities and outputs of the project during the reporting timeline included training module development, capacity strengthening and sensitization on VAW through training of 9,716 Women's Crew Group (WCG) members, 2,255 Union Facilitation Team (UFT) members, 905 WDF members, and 827 UP members. Trained members are currently active in taking action to prevent and combat violence against women in their families and communities after their capacity building training.

The Rural Employment Opportunities for Public Assets (REOPA) project was initiated in 2007 and implemented till 2011 jointly by the Government of Bangladesh (GOB), UNDP, and the European Union (EU). The project's aim is to contribute to the long term sustainable socioeconomic development of rural Bangladesh through poverty alleviation in rural areas, and mainstreaming vulnerable poor women into development programmes as indicated in Bangladesh government's Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP) and its commitment to the MDGs.

Recognizing the consequences of violence against women on poverty reduction interventions, UNDP has taken initiative through the REOPA and LIC (another project being implemented by the Ministry of Local Government, Rural Development and Cooperatives (MLGRD&C) & UNDP) to address violence against women. The UN Joint Programme on Violence against Women, the mother of this initiative, kicked off the program activities beginning January 2011. UNDP's component of this JP started its field implementation by selecting BRAC through competitive bidding in March 2011. UNDP JP VAW components are particularly focusing on addressing few key challenges to reduce VAW in 388 unions where both REOPA and LGSP LIC projects are worked.

The goal of the UNDP JP VAW initiative is "to improve the overall VAW situation in the REOPA and LIC operating districts". The project implementation period is from March 2011 to December 2012 and is being implemented in 388 unions of 41 Upazillas under 6 LGSP LIC and REOPA districts named Habigonj, Narsingdi, Feni, Sirajgonj, Satkhira and Barguna. This report outlines the activities, outputs, and achievements of the project during the reporting period from March 2011 to December 2011.

During the reporting period, 4 project orientation District Workshops on the UN Joint Programme on Violence against Women were held with District level officials, NGO officials, members of the civil society, and members and journalists from print and electronic media in Borguna, Hobigonj, Norshingdi, Feni districts. There were 50 participants in each workshop. It has been revealed from the workshops that the government and NGO both have the same concern and agenda on violence issues and in this regard, a good coordination has been built to take up the initiative in combating violence against women. The recommendations of the workshop will be considered in implementing the activities of the project.

Some of the positive results that have been revealed through organizing training on VAW issues for different stakeholder of the project are that participants are learning about up-to-date laws on violence against women, which they were unaware of earlier, and participants are now aware of resources and services they can get from GO/NGOs. They are also aware of the District Legal Aid Committee's activities, and its information. Participants have a positive image of BRAC and are contacting BRAC with various problems and issues, and seeking legal advice. In addition, BRAC image and acceptability is increasing in government offices and at the Union Parishad.

More outcome-based results are expected to emerge as the activities of the project progress. Continued and concerted effort for raising awareness, community mobilization, stakeholders' capacity building, and advocacy against violence against women is crucial to combat the adverse violence against women situation in Bangladesh.

## I. Context

Violence against women is a widely discussed topic in many countries. In Bangladesh, the most common forms of violence against women are – domestic violence (wife beating, abuse/violence by husband or in-laws, torture or murder for dowry demands, verbal abuse and psychological torture), acid attack, *fatwa*, sexual harassment, trafficking and prostitution, kidnapping, polygamy and child abuse. Bangladesh ranked 129<sup>th</sup> out of 169 countries in the UNDP's Gender Inequality Index (GII) 2010. Activists say that the rate of violence against women in Bangladesh is among the world's highest and rising. According to the 2011 annual report on violence against women done by the Bangladesh National Woman Lawyer's Association (BNWLA), 1,836 women and girls died in 2011 as a result of violence or other forms of repression. 569 of those deaths were as a result of domestic violence, 281 were dowry related deaths and 153 were killed following rape or some other form of sexual abuse. 2,989 were victims of repression. Sadly, these figures represent an increase from 2010, where 1,180 women and girls were reported killed as a result of various forms of violence and 1,757 were victims of repression. These figures are staggering, yet only scratch the surface of the overarching VAW problem in Bangladesh. Since these figures are based on information BNWLA pulls from local news sources, it does not take into account what does not get reported. Many times VAW is ignored by a community due to lack of awareness of what actually constitutes VAW or what the legal redress is. In addition, it can go unreported by the victim or her family in order to save face, maintain family honour, and prevent the social stigma that victims of rape and other abuses might face. When it is reported it is sometimes seen as a personal matter by law enforcement and therefore not properly dealt with in the judicial system or the offender is able to find a loophole in the system and escape serious punishment.

Violence against women is increasing day by day as a result of family dispute, the dowry system, and sexual harassment, among other things. Violence against women occurs in all social and economic classes, but women living in poverty are more vulnerable to experience violence. Women in Bangladesh traditionally have a subordinate status in the family and are subjected to de facto discrimination in accessing their constitutional and legal rights to inheritance and property. Therefore, due to a myriad of factors, violence against women in various forms is wide spread in Bangladesh.

There are no comprehensive official statistics on violence against women except data generated in the health related sector and by some NGOs. Every day, 17 out of 100 women become victims of violence at home or in the workplace and 25% of them die as a result. Bangladesh Mahila Parishad reported that 47% women face violence from their male intimate partners. In 2010, there were 115 cases of acid violence alone. 68% of violence victims do not share their case stories of violence with anyone. Although people are more aware of the issues because of the media, poor law enforcement and male dominance are major barriers in the overall effort to prevent violence against women. Even though there are thousands of incidents of violence against women, only a few cases are ever filed. Reasons for this include; weak application of the law, passive role of corrupt police forces, lack of awareness about legal procedures by victims, and fear of the offenders. Criminals often bribe police, doctors, nurses, or other related people to create hindrances in the investigation process and escape trial. This awful situation persists in the legal arena and creates problems in dealing with cases of violence against women.

## **II. Background of the Project**

The UN Joint Programme on Violence against Women was initiated in March 2011 with the goal to “to improve the overall violence against women (VAW) situation in the REOPA and LIC operating districts”. The project aims to tackle violence against women in the districts of Habigonj, Narsingdi, Feni, Sirajgonj, Satkhira and Barguna (6 districts). The project implementation period is from March 2011 to December 2012. In order to achieve the goal stated above, the project focuses on the following objectives as identified:

- Raise the project participants, elected members'/representatives, Union Facilitation Teams, Women Development Forum and Union Parishad members, and Upazila and District level government officials' awareness on human and legal rights with special focus on violence against women and related contemporary issues.
- Activate and capacitate the UP standing Committee on “Women and Child Welfare, Cultural and Sports” to act as the focal point and also the DLAC to ensure legal services to victims and the poor.
- Establish linkages between UP-SC, human rights organizations, Women wing of Bangladesh Union Parishad Forum (BUPF) at the national and district levels and the DLAC to ensure rights and privileges of women in the project areas.

## **III: Activities of the Project (March – December, 2011)**

The Joint Programme on Violence against Women has completed activities of its first year which included raising awareness, community mobilization, stakeholders' capacity building, and advocacy against violence against women. Table 1 summarizes the activities carried out.

**Table 1: Plan and Achievement Against Action Work Plan (AWP) 2011**

SI.	Activities	Time frame			Budget head by cost category	Achievement
		Q1	Q2	Q3		
1.	Project Briefing Meeting				Project Inception Cost	All VAW staff attended the meeting and UNDP cluster head facilitated the meeting.
2.	Module Development for Training / Workshop				Project Inception Cost	4 modules have been developed for WCG, UFT, WDF and UP members training and have been field tested.
3.	Preparation of Contact and Focal Point List					Contact and focal persons list have been captured by VAW project staff.
5.	Identification of WCG Members					24,444 WCG members have been identified by all 6 district managers in the working area.
6.	Union Facilitation Team Members Training				Training	Union Facilitation Team members training was organized and 2,255 members were trained.
7.	Workshop with District and Upazila level Officials				District Workshop	4 workshops were held in Feni, Hobigonj, Narshingdi and Barguna districts.
8.	WCG Members Training (1 day training at union/area office level; 30 participants/batch; year 1 in Habigonj, Feni and Narshinghdi)				Training	9,716 WCG members have been trained in Hobigonj, Narshingdi and Feni Districts.



Sl.	Activities	Time frame			Budget head by cost category	Achievement
		Q1	Q2	Q3		
9.	Development of WCG Members Graduation Card				Training	25,000 Graduation cards have been developed for WCG members and being distributed.
10.	Women Development Forum Members Training				Training	1476 members of the Women Development Forum have been trained.
11.	Workshop with DLAC and Upazila level Officials				District Workshop	These workshops will be organized in the next quarter.
12.	Popular Theatre Drama Staging				Popular Theatre for Awareness Raising	114 shows have been organized and 40,278 participants from the community enjoyed the show on VAW.
13.	Development of Project Brochure				Media Coverage	Brochure development is in process.
14.	UP Members Training				Training	827 out of 960 members have been trained.
15.	Legal Aid and Medical Support				Legal Aid and Economic Support for survivors	2 WCG members received medical support.
16.	Database Development				Database Development	Meetings with BBS and District Women Officers were held and database strategy development is in process.
17.	Activation of Standing Committee on "Family Dispute Resolution, Women and Children Welfare"				Meeting	The committee is formed.

## Activities of UN- Joint Programme on VAW District Officers:

### III. a) Project Orientation Training on VAW:

Six District and Regional Managers received project orientation training. A demonstration session was also organized for the project staff on how to conduct the training on VAW for different stakeholders of the project. It is imperative that skilled, knowledgeable and properly motivated staff members can aptly facilitate training workshops. Therefore, the program has put emphasis on capacity building of staff members through training on violence against women that modifies individual attitude, knowledge, skills, and behaviour. The purpose of this is to ensure that staff members will perform each activity in an efficient and effective manner so the program will achieve its aims. It has been observed that as a result of the above mentioned trainings, the staff members were able to perform their designated tasks better. Notably, in the project orientation the UNDP cluster head was also present as a resource person.

### III. b) Women Crew Group (WCG) Members Training on VAW:

9,716 WCG members received training through 370 batches. The training was arranged in 3 of the 6 districts; Narshingdi, Hobigonj and Feni. The training courses were held to raise the awareness of the WCG members for prevention and protection against gender discrimination, domestic violence, and violence against women.



REOPA member in WCG training

#### Objectives of the Training Course:

- To make the Women Crew members aware of gender discrimination, dimensions of discrimination, and how to prevent it
- To build their capacity and how to take personal and collective steps to prevent violence against women
- To make the WCG members aware of laws against violence against women

WCG members are the direct beneficiaries of the program. Many have suffered different forms

of violence in their life. In this special training on VAW, the women are becoming aware of different issues such as the dimensions of gender discrimination, domestic violence, and violence against women. Concept, categories, causes of VAW, steps to take for prevention and protection against violence against women (BRAC Community Empowerment



REOPA members in Group Discussion

Programme – medical aid, counselling, rehabilitation), relevant laws on violence against women, and domestic violence (BRAC Human Rights and Legal Aid Services Programme) are also being covered in the training program.

After learning about the aforementioned issues, the women realized that violence and injustices affect women's personal lives as well as their families and the community. A positive outcome of the training was that 90% of the participants realized their gender rights and that woman must be free from these injustices in order to fully enjoy these rights and to effectively participate in society. After receiving the training, the WCG members are also more confident about their rights and combating violence in their own and other's life at home and in the community. In addition, in the closing session of the training, the WCG members made an action plan based on what they learned. After completion of training, WCG members received Graduation Cards with key contacts of BRAC, to receive legal, medical, and rehabilitation support and advice from BRAC on VAW issues when necessary.

10 training sessions could not be arranged due to a cold wave in December. These are planned to be conducted in the next quarter.

Name of the Training	Target	Achievement
Women Crew Group members training	11,970	9,716

### III. c) Union Facilitation Team (UFT) Members Training on VAW:

2,255 Union Facilitation Team members received training through 119 batches. The main objectives of organizing this capacity building training is to sensitize those involved about violence against women and build capacity of UFT members to take effective steps towards its reduction. In the training, the UFT members participated actively and they opined that they are now realizing that violence against women is amongst the most serious threats to overall development and progress in Bangladesh.

They understand that women are suffering multiple forms of violence including domestic violence, rape, dowry deaths, sexual harassment, suicide, forced marriage, trafficking and other psychological oppression. Now after receiving the training, they recognized that they have important role in combating and dealing with VAW issues. Together, they took a vow that from now on they will take an active role in raising their voices to protest any kind of violence against women and help to capacitate their communities on VAW issues. In addition, in the closing session of the training, all the UFT members made an action plan based on what they learned.



UFT members in training on VAW

UFT members are now actively helping BRAC staff in facilitation of trainings for Women Crew Group members.

Name of the Training	Target	Achievement	
Union Facilitation Team members Training	3492	Male: 1474	Female: 781
		<b>Total: 2255</b>	

### III. d) Women Development Forum (WDF) Members Training on VAW:

All the women who are elected members of the Union Parishad in the union are members of this Women Development Forum and they can play a strong role in combating violence against women. Keeping this in mind, the project organized sensitization training for these women. The main focus of the training is to sensitize WDF members about the causes of violence against women, so that they have the capacity to take effective measures against violence against women, and share their knowledge with others.

After completion of this course, participants will:

- Be sensitized about gender issues, gender discrimination, different dimensions of gender discrimination, and how to stand up against it.
- Become sensitized about different dimensions and causes of violence against women, and about how to prevent and protect against violence against women.
- Be able to personally and / or collectively provide psycho-social support to survivors of violence.



WDF members in training on VAW

Name of the Training	Target	Achievement
WDF Members Training	1,476	905

After the training, the WDF members have been sensitized on psycho-social counselling and prompt action to take in case of violence. They have also become sensitized about different laws related to violence against women in Bangladesh and are now able to give direction and aid to the victims through knowledge on immediate measures to take in cases of violence, where to go in case of incidence, and about types of facilities available. In addition, in the closing session of the training, the WDF members made an action plan based on what they learned. WDF

members have become sensitized and responsive as duty bearers in combating violence against women within their communities.

### III. e) Union Parishad (UP) Members Training :

827 UP members received training on VAW issues. All the male members of Union Parishad are the participants in this training. The objective of the training is to sensitize elected representatives of the Union Parishad about gender discrimination and violence against women in the family and society so they have the capacity to prevent and protect against violence against women, and are able to take effective steps to provide emergency support to victims. Before receiving the training the members were not interested in attending the training course because they felt the violence issue is not an issue. They believed it is only for women and there is nothing to discuss exclusively about VAW. Gradually, as they heard about gender discrimination, they became sensitized to discrimination and VAW issues in their personal, family, as well as community life. UP members have also made commitments to assist victims of violence against women, and discuss VAW prevention with community members. In addition, in the closing session of the training, the UP members made an action plan based on what they learned. UP members have become sensitized and responsive as duty bearers in combating violence against women within their communities, and have made vow to stand beside victims in times of need.



UP members discussion during training on VAW

All the elected members of the union are eligible for this training.

Name of the Training	Target	Achievement
UP Members Training	960	827

After receiving the training the Union Parishad members felt that this is their responsibility as a peoples representative to work to stop violence especially violence against women. They promised in the concluding session of the training that from now on they will work to reduce violence against women in their family and community.

### III. f) WCG members are included in BRAC *Polli Shomaj*<sup>1</sup> (Grassroots Women Forum):

BRAC *Polli Shomaj* is a platform for disadvantaged women where the women get the opportunity to talk about their rights, learn the details of different GO/NGO facilities and the process of how to receive assistance form them. This is a free platform where they can discuss any social issues freely and confidently and jointly they can

<sup>1</sup> *Polli Shomaj* are independent, ward-level platforms of the poor and marginalized, especially women, convened by Community Empowerment Programme, BRAC

take various actions related to them. After the closing of the REOPA, Women Crew Group members can be members of *Polli Shomaj* if they are interested. This issue was discussed and during the reporting period 530 Women Crew Group members joined *Polli Shomaj* and now they have become members of the platform. This is one of the sustainability actions that the members will benefit from even after the UN activities have concluded.

### III. g) Popular Theatre Show on VAW:

Popular theatre is an effective tool for information dissemination, awareness building and increasing the knowledge base of the rural population on various socio economic issues that affect their lives. It is also a way of mobilizing them against social ills and injustices. Popular theatre showcases stories of the people, for the people, by the people and to the people. The performers are recruited locally and local dialect is used during performances to maximize the effect of the messages. The plays are usually staged in the



Village people observe Popular Theatre shows with anticipation

evening at an easily accessible location in the village so as to draw large audiences including women and children who are often deprived of such entertainment. Typically 250-400 people gather in a show. On the following day after a popular theatre show a community meeting takes place in the same location, where people gather and discuss the issues portrayed in the play. They try to find out if a similar problem exists in the area and find ways to address them. The discussion also brings out a commitment from them to be active on such issues.

The VAW issue is a sensitive and burning issue and dissemination of information to the greater community on VAW is difficult. Therefore, in this program popular theatre is used as a tool for information dissemination to many people. BRAC staff assisted the local artist in developing a drama show focused on the violence against women issue. This is the platform where the entire community, irrespective of class and creed participated and enjoyed the drama show and in this way the topic of VAW is easy to disseminate to many people. 114 shows were staged in the Hobigonj, Narshingdi and Feni districts during this reporting period. 40,278 enjoyed the drama and become aware of the issues surrounding violence against women.

### III. h) Database Development:

Development of a database is underway. During the reporting period the initial discussions were held at different district levels with district upazila women officers regarding development of the database .All the officers agreed that a credible database is much needed. A discussion was also held with Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics officials where the secretary of BBS, Project Director, and other officers were in attendance. All of them spoke about the importance of the database and

agreed to work together to develop it. A consultant will help the program staff in developing the database strategy. After developing the database, database related training will be provided to the district level Women Development Officers. Equipment such as computers, printers, and internet capability will also be provided to the officials for maintaining the database.

### III. i) Activation of District Legal Aid Committee:

As a part of the effort to activate DLACs, meetings were held regularly in all districts. Our district managers actively took part in the meetings and discussed violence issues including victims and their support network. According to the meeting report, 442 victims received legal support through lawyers in all six districts .

### III. j) Activation of Standing Committee:

One of the committees that is mainly responsible for dealing with the VAW issue is the Family Conflict Resolution and Women and Child Welfare Committee. The roles of this committee are the following:

- To identify the problems of the women and children of the UP area and take necessary steps to solve them or raise this matter in the UP meeting for taking necessary steps.
- Inform the local people about the harmful effects of dowry, divorce etc.
- Creating public opinion to resist torture of women and children.
- Take necessary steps if any incident of torture of women and children occurs.
- To take necessary steps to inform the local people about the provisions of punishment for the crime of torture of women and child.

45% committee has begun its regular meeting at all Union Parishads during the reporting period with the help of VAW program staff but all are not functional. In some places the committee has not yet been formed but the committee formulation process has started and our staffs is helping in the formulation.

### III. k) Programme Visibility Action

#### Project area visited by the officials of JP VAW Project Monitoring Dhaka Office:

UNFPA International Program Manager and other two other staff from the UNFPA head office visited the UN-Joint program on VAW area in Sirajgonj on 5<sup>th</sup> December 2011. They observed a training session where Women Development Forum members attended and conducted a discussion session with UFT and WCG members who received capacity building training on VAW. The discussion session was very lively and



UNFPA and BRAC representatives observe WDF members training on VAW

the members confidently and spontaneously described how they are taking an active part in protesting violence in their community, especially cases of violence against women. They discussed various incidents in their locality with the officials.

**Training session observed by different Govt: official and representatives:**

1. ADC general MD. Abdul Wadud visited the UN –Joint Program on VAW at Lakhai Upazila in the Hobigonj district. He observed a training course which was organized for the Union Parishad members on VAW issues. He noted that this course can play a significant role if the members become aware and take action against violence and as a member of the Union Parishad their role is very important in combating violence against women at the grassroots level. He appreciated this initiative and said that he believes that positive changes will come through this initiative in the community.
2. S. K. Md. Golam Mostofa , UP Chairman, Kumira observed Union Facilitation training at Kumira Union Parishad, Tala, Satkhira . Md. Golam shares, “The government has taken many steps to stop violence against women. To make these government initiatives successful, UFT members in the grassroots level will have to become aware about relevant laws, and become pro-poor. Every UFT member will have to work towards the goal of eliminating violence against women, and for ensuring justice for victims of violence against women, especially amongst the poor. Women have to stand up and protest against violence. It is not true that we conduct shalish properly all the time as elected representatives. Women have to be aware about their own rights and participate in shalish proceedings to ensure justice and women’s rights.”
3. Mohd. Doulotuzzaman Khan Upazila Nirbahi Officer observed Women Development training at Upazila Auditorium, Shamnagar, Satkhira on 20<sup>th</sup> December , 2011.Mohd. Doulotuzzaman shared, “Government has taken many initiatives to empower local women, among which WDF is one of them. Elected representatives of the WDF from the grassroots level have to let the administration know women’s issues in writing, so that the government can take steps. Side by side, they will have to be aware about their rights and all forum members will have to solve the problems collectively. Everyone will have to come together to solve problems. Only then will violence against women stop and women’s rights be established.”
4. Mohd. Mohsin Hossain,UP Secretary, Romjannagar , visited Romjannogor Union Parishad, Shamnagar, Satkhira on 23<sup>rd</sup> November 2011 and he observed a Union Facilitation team members training. Mohd. Mohsin shared, “Women in Bangladesh are tortured by men regularly. Even though Islam sees men and women as equal, we, in our patriarchal society discriminate against women in many spheres of life. To stop violence against women, women have to become aware first, Gender inequality has to be erased from the family. Boys and girls will have to get equal access to education, so that they can stand up against violence later. This is a long term process that men and women will have to work together at.”
5. WDF Training for Pathorghata Upazila was held on 2<sup>nd</sup> November, 2011 at Pathorghata Area Office, BRAC. At the training, Upazila Woman Vice



Chairman, Ms. Moriom Akter Chowdhury (Jebu) commented, “Everyone will have to work together to combat violence against women. We all have to aid the poor and disadvantaged women. We have to establish our own rights. Women’s education is essential for women’s empowerment. We have to dedicate ourselves for social welfare activities for the people.”

6. Upazila Woman Vice Chairman Ms. Delowara Hamid observed WDF Training for Amtoli Upazila ,Barguna district on 19<sup>th</sup> December, 2011 at Amtoli Area Office, BRAC. At the training she shared, “Women have work side by side with men in all aspects, and establish their own rights. If women face challenges, they should raise the issues at the Forum, and work collectively to solve the issue. Women have to stand on their own feet and be self-reliant.”

### **District level Workshops:**

In 4 working districts of the project, Barguna, Narshingdi, Feni, Hobigonj, an orientation workshop on UN Joint Programme on VAW has been held and through these workshops the participants and many other people have gained awareness about the programme. The District level workshops received media coverage in both newspapers and on TV channels.

Workshop with District level Officials on UN Joint Programme on VAW were held at the District Commissioner’s Conference Room (Borguna, Hobigonj, Norshingdi, Feni). The District Workshops had the respective District Commissioner as Chief Guest, and were chaired by the Additional District Commissioner (General), and had present as special guests: Ms. Anna Minj, Director of Community Empowerment Programme, BRAC, and Ms. Majeda Haq, Programme Analyst and Cluster Head of UNDP. District level government officials also attended as special guests. Others in attendance included: Upazila Chairman, Upazila Executive Officer, Upazila Vice Chairman (male and female), Chairman and members of the Union Parishad, journalists from print and electronic media, President and Editors of the respective Upazila Press Clubs, Assistant Police Super, Civil Surgeon, Assistant Judge, PP, GP, members of the civil society, and BRAC and UNDP staff.

All the workshops started with general introductions, followed by a Power Point presentation on the UN Joint Programme on Violence against Women by Ms. Majeda Haq, Programme Analyst and Cluster Head, UNDP, on the following topics:

- Background of the Project
- Goal and Objectives of the Project
- Current situation of violence against women in Bangladesh
- Beneficiaries of this project
- Implementation plan of the project
- Important activities of the project

- Sustainability and challenges of the project

The participants present at the workshops provided their valuable opinions and feedback after this presentation as follows:

### **Borguna District:**

- Awareness on VAW is needed to prevent violence against women.
- All types of violence require severe punishments.
- In the government structure there are opportunities and mechanism to address VAW but the majority do not know how to make the mechanism functional.



Participants at the District Workshop in Boguna

- Women other than the REOPA members need to be brought under the coverage of this project.
- School-going adolescents should be brought under this programme.
- New people need to be included in different committees.
- We need to see whether the VAW issue can be included in school curriculum.
- Training is needed for women's economic empowerment.
- NGOs can provide support in promoting the issues on protesting VAW.
- Conveyance support needs to be arranged for poor victims to assist them in getting legal support.

### **Hobigonj District:**

- Most destitute women and women victims of violence do not receive any legal aid from organizations due to lack of awareness.
- The Union Parishad standing committees are inactive. These committees (especially the committee for women and children's welfare) need to be activated for their effective role.



Participants at the District Workshop in Hobigonj

- 24,444 women will see the light as BRAC implements this programme and get legal aid.
- More awareness needs to be created about the District Legal Aid Committee in the village, ward, union, and upazila level.
- When selecting the people to be members of village court we need to be careful who they are.

- The victim can get immediate and proper support if we can provide a lawyer in the Union Parishad office and Thana.
- All the training on VAW needs to have follow-up so that we will be able to know what the outcome of the training is and whether our expectation was achieved or not.

### Narshingdi District:

- Violence against women should be kept on the agenda of the upazila and district level coordination meetings.
- A woman S.I. should be appointed in every Thana.
- An email address should be kept for immediate reporting of violent incidents.
- Everyone should take action against violence from their respective positions.



Participants at the District Workshop in Narshingdi

- Women should be made aware of their legal rights.
- The cases of violence's should be observed carefully to identify what could be done and what needs to be done for further improvement in the cases.
- A database on VAW is needed to address the VAW issue.
- A Zero tolerance policy needs to be followed in VAW cases especially in sexual cases.
- A session could be included in the NGO coordination meeting on VAW related to women.
- A DNA test facility should be kept in every thana.

### Feni District:

- Awareness and sensitization about violence against women needs to be created at all levels, both among the literate and illiterate.
- Women and children's committees in the union and upazila levels need to be made effective.



Participants at the District Workshop in Feni

- Cases filed need to be increased to make effective use of the government allocated funds.

All District Commissioners commented on the fact that the Bangladesh government has taken different steps to stop violence against women. More awareness, effective role of the media, activation of the village court, and active role of elected representatives can be vital steps towards prevention of violence against women. Anna Minj, Director of Community Empowerment Programme, BRAC, commented that everyone needs to be aware of violence against women. She added in her speech that victims can also get legal aid from the BRAC Human Rights and Legal Aid Services Programme, and women will continue to be integrated with BRAC's Polli Shomaj even after end of the REOPA project. She asked for “zero tolerance” towards sexual violence. She also advocated for creation of a nationwide database on violence against women.

The recommendations of the workshop will be considered in implementing the activities of the project. During the workshop it was revealed that the government and NGOs both have the same concern and agenda on violence issues and in this regard a good coordination has been built to take up initiative in combating violence against women. All the workshop participants commented that the UN Joint Programme on Violence against Women is a right initiative.

### Media Coverage (March – December, 2011)



#### IV: Achievement of Results

##### Immediate Results of the Programme Activities:

##### IV. a) Actions by UFT Members:

Sl.	UFT Member Detail	Action Taken
1.	Masud Rana (UFT member) Village, Union: Bajnabo Upazila: Belabo District: Norshingdi	After receiving the training he helped one rape victim (Urmi Begum (age: 8, father: Kamal Herson) of Bajnabo village by taking her to the police station and filing a case on her behalf.
2.	Shetu Akter (UFT member) Father: Md. Shah Alam Rari Village: South Hosna Bad Upazila: Betapi District: Borguna	Motivated by BRAC's training, she held two meetings in her community, one of which was held with students on eve teasing (sexual harassment), and the other one was held with women on child marriage.
3.	Rajib Hosain (UFT member) Father: Mozammel Haq Village: Dhul Ghagrakhari Upazila: Belkuchi District: Sirajgonj	Motivated by BRAC's training, he prevented a child marriage in his community.
4.	Abu Taher (UFT member) Father: Abdul Malek Village: Chor Dorbesh Upazila: Shonagazi District: Feni	Motivated by BRAC's training, a club in his community held a meeting on child marriage, dowry, acid throwing, and illegal divorce, with the participation of 200 community members.

##### IV. b) Actions by WCG Members:

Sl.	WCG Member Detail	Action Taken
1.	Fozila Begum (WCG member) Father: Wahab Mia Village: Danua Upazila: Shibpur District: Norshingdi	After receiving training from BRAC, she has filed a complaint with BRAC Legal Aid Center against her husband for conducting a second marriage without her permission.
2.	Bibi Hawa (WCG member) Father: Jamal Hosain Village: Ranihat Union: Kajirbag Upazila: Feni Sadar District: Feni	When she was a REOPA member, she withdrew her savings money from bank, and upon her return home, her husband physically tortured her to confiscate the money from her. She filed a complaint with the BRAC Legal Aid Center after

		that, and a case has been filed.
3.	Parveen Akter (WCG member) Father: Late Abdur Rahman Village: Puran Gao Union: Kaliar Bhanga Upazila: Nobigonj District: Hobigonj	Two parties in her community had a fight centring on cattle's crop feeding, where one person received head injuries as a result. Parveen Akter filed a complaint with BRAC office regarding this.

### Case Story: School Student Avoids Child Marriage Thanks to The Intervention of a UFT Member



Sonia Khatun aged 13, daughter of Md. Umar Ali and Mosammad Monjuara Khatun resides in Charkosabari village under Taras Upazilla in the district of Sirajganj. She was a student of class seven in Sayedpur Public Welfare High School. Her poor parents arranged her marriage with Md. Abdul Mannan, a resident of Mosindapara village under Gurudaspur Upazilla in the district of Natore.

Md. Ashrafujjaman, a UFT member was made aware of the incident and made Monjura Khatun understand the negative effects and legal constraints of child marriage. He learnt about these issues from training on violence against women by BRAC. Sonia's mother talked with her husband and her relatives sharing the possible negative effects of child marriage on her daughter's health, mind and its legal consequence. Sonia's family and her relatives understood and stopped her marriage at the age of 13. Monjura Khatun shares, "I, being convinced by my neighbors settled Sonia's marriage, because I did not know the existing laws against child marriage and its individual and social consequences which I do not want for my daughter. Ashrafuzzaman Bhai of BRAC helped me to protect my daughter from child marriage. My daughter now goes to school. I will no longer agree to settle her marriage at her childhood and I shall try to stop child marriage around me by informing the BRAC office." Following this type of good practice, the UN Joint Programme on Violence against Women will play a more effective role to end violence against women.

### Case Story: UFT Member Helps File Rape Case at The Police Station

On 18th September, 2011, local hoodlum Ashraful, aged around 18 years, coaxed 8 year old Urmi into a nearby field, with false promises of candies and chocolates, and then raped her. When Urmi started screaming, people nearby came to find her, upon which Ashraful ran away. Urmi hails from Bajnab village in Belab Upazila, Norshingdi. Her mother Laili Begum shared that her daughter has deteriorating health conditions since the incident. She wants to seek justice for her daughter. Since the incident, with the help of UFT member Masud Rana, Urmi's father, Kamal Hossian, has filed a case at the police station. UFT Member Masud Rana received training on violence against women at the BRAC office on 5th September, 2011 and has been proactive in standing up against such cases of violence against women in his community since then.

## V: Upcoming Activities for Next Year (2012)

Sl.	Activity	District	Unions	No of Units
a)	WCG Members Training (1 day training) at union/area office level; 30 participants/batch; year 1 in Barguna, Satkhira , Sirajgonj	3	198	12,474 members
b)	Women Development Forum members training	6	41 Upazila	1,640 members
c)	Union Facilitation Team members training	6	388	3,483 members
d)	Workshop with District and upazila level officials	2		2 workshops with 50 participants in each workshop
e)	Workshop with DLAC and upazila level officials	6		6 workshops with 50 participants in each workshop
f)	Popular Theatre Drama Staging	3	190	176 drama shows
g)	UP members training	6		1,940 participants
h)	Legal aid and Medical Support	6	388	25 victims
i)	Activation of Standing Committee on " Family Dispute Resolution, Women and Children Welfare "	6	388	776 meeting
j)	National level learning and sharing workshop	1		
k)	Activation of District legal Aid Committee	6		12 meeting
l)	Development of Database			

## VI: Challenges

- Ensuring government officials participate in workshops.
- It was hard to work with union facilitation team members as they were the members of the LGSP-LIC project and there they got good allowances for attending training. We have limited budget therefore some of the members were not interested in training initially. We motivated them and tried to make them understand about the importance of the training then some of them realized and attended the training
- Elections results have changed the composition of the UP. In addition, activation of a UP Standing Committee is a challenging task as we are working with over 388 union parishads. The committees are not yet formed in

some places the roles and responsibilities are not clear to the committee members.

- Communication is a problem at the field level as our working area is the very remotest area of our country. Field staff and community people are facing communication problems therefore they can not move easily from one place to another. As a result, some of them are not interested in attending trainings.

#### **VII: Lessons Learnt**

- Women's participation in the trainings and discussions increases their feelings of social responsibility especially on VAW issues. It also encourages them to take a leadership role on facing or dealing with VAW issues. The program anticipates that group members will enlighten themselves through developing capacity by involving them in the trainings. As a result, they themselves will be able to develop their confidence level and will have the courage to protest against injustices.
- WCG members and UP members can play the role of whistleblower in the community and can work for the community to protest violence against women, we need to protect them.
- Good coordination among all service providers relating to VAW issues is very essential for smooth implementation of the program.
- It is crucial to make an effective link between different service providers, as the main concern is there are agencies that are responsible and have resources but are unable to utilize their potential/mandate to the poor due to not having reliable information.
- The VAW awareness trainings are creating a pressure group in the demand side to hold the duty bearers responsive and accountable. The demand and supply side needs to work side by side in harmony for effective service delivery to the VAW victims.

#### **VIII. Conclusions**

Despite all the challenges and obstacles, the UN Joint Programme on VAW has completed the activities of its first year. More outcome-based results are expected to emerge as the activities of the programme progress. Continued and concerted effort for awareness raising, community mobilization, stakeholders' capacity building, and advocacy against violence against women is crucial to combat the adverse violence against women situation in Bangladesh. However, we invested our all-out effort to execute the activities as planned. We believe that the successes will encourage us to do better in future and the failures will be a guide to learn to be more careful in executing the project activities.

The UNDP has supported this program since its inception and for that we are very grateful. We look forward to the continued assistance and the enormous support of the UNDP on this challenging joint program in the future.