



*Empowered lives.
Resilient nations.*

**Project Closing Report
(March 2011- June 2013)
UNDP-UN Joint Programme on Violence against Women**



Submitted by
Community Empowerment Programme
BRAC

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The List of Acronyms

CSC	Capacity Strengthening Component
CST	Capacity Strengthening Team
DLAC	District Legal Aid Committee
EC	European Commission
GOB	Government of Bangladesh
LGI	Local Government Institution
LGD	Local Government Division
LGSP	Local Government Support Project
LIC	Learning and Innovation Component
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
PNGO	Partner Non-government Organisation
REOPA	Rural Employment Opportunities for Public Assets
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UFT	Union Facilitation Team
UP	<i>Union Parishad</i> ; the lowest tier of the local government
VAW	Violence against Women
WCG	Women Crew Group
WDF	Women Development Forum: All the women who are elected members of the <i>Union Parishad</i> in the union are members of this Women Development Forum

Executive Summary

Violence against women (VAW) is one of the most prevalent social and health problems in Bangladesh, posing a severe challenge for women's development, destroying families and communities while also ruining lives and opportunities. Being deeply concerned about the pervasiveness of violence against women in all its different forms and manifestations in Bangladesh, the UNDP Components of UN Joint Programme on Violence Against Women (VAW) in Bangladesh has worked from March 2011 to June 2013 to improve the overall VAW situation in the Rural Employment Opportunities for Public Asset (REOPA) and Local Government Support Programme - Learning and Innovation Component (LGSP LIC) operating districts. Recognizing the consequences of violence against women on poverty reduction interventions, the UNDP REOPA project and the LGSP LIC projects have taken an initiative under UN Joint Programme on VAW to engage some of the key stakeholders of REOPA and LGSP-LIC to improve the violence against women situation particularly in 6 districts by developing an effective mechanism by addressing violence against women and advocating for replication of the model at the national level.

The UNDP Components of UP JP VAW Project has been working over the two and half years with the top NGO of the world i.e. BRAC, as well as project participants, elected members & representatives of the local government bodies, Union Facilitation Teams (UFT), Women Development Forums (WDF) & Union *Parishad* members, and the district level government officials on human and legal rights with a special focus on VAW and related issues. UNDP UN JP Programme on VAW in Bangladesh has been working for more than two years to activate and build capacity of the Union *Parishad* (the lowest tier of the local government) standing committees on "Women and Child Welfare, Cultural and sports to act as the focal points. This project has also worked together with the District Legal Aid Committee (DLAC) to ensure legal services to the victims and survivors from the marginalized groups.

The project has been implemented in 388 unions of 41 Upazilas under 6 LGSP LIC and REOPA districts- Habigonj, Narsingdi, Feni, Sirajgonj, Satkhira and Barguna.

The key activities of the project included capacity strengthening and sensitization on VAW through customised training for different groups in society. 23368 Women's Crew Group (WCG) members who have received the training are now more aware of and united to stand against VAW issues. As a part of the awareness activities, 535 popular theatre shows have been staged with a view to sensitise VAW issues among WCG and other stakeholders. Recognising the importance of the involvement of mass people in this issue, Union Facilitation Teams (UFTs) are formed. 2335 Union Facilitation Team (UFT) members have received training on VAW. These have resulted in increased awareness of the community people. It also should be mentioned the local representatives of Union *Parishad* and 1003 WDF members (women elected members), and 3368 UP members have received training on VAW. They are now more supportive and gender sensitive in dealing with VAW issues.

1056 survivors have received support in various ways— medical, legal and health services. Activating District legal aid committee is a strategic intervention of the project and has been reported here.

The project activities have been observed by different visitors and they have shared that this JP-VAW initiative has indeed been able to create a positive environment in the working area towards combating Violence against Women.

Learning from the fields, some new ideas have been introduced in the original planning. The issues of masculinity have been introduced in the training schemes. Positive responses have been observed during the training sessions. BRAC, with the financial, technical and linkage support from UNDP UN-Joint Program on VAW has undertaken a new initiative to develop an effective mechanism for the purpose of developing a credible database on VAW. Several discussions have been held with different stakeholders of the project and the development of the database is in process.

The report also documents the statistical results, visibility, media coverage and case stories. It describes the sustainability implications, the lessons learnt and challenges to note for the future interventions.

I. Context

It is clear that the effects of VAW impact many facets of society. The physical and psychological trauma associated with violence often has a negative impact on the victim's productivity and reduces her ability to break out of the cycle of poverty. Every violence incidence against women has subsequent negative results covert or overt in development initiatives at the individual, family, community and national levels.

The women in Bangladesh traditionally get a subordinate status in the family and subjected to de facto discrimination in accessing their constitutional and legal rights to inheritance and property. Due to multiple factors violence against women in various forms is wide spread 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 tortures), acid attack, *fatwa* (religious decree given by religious leaders), sexual harassment, trafficking and prostitution, polygamy and child abuse, etc. Women fall prey to Acid Burn, inflicted upon them by male perpetrators. Usually the criminals do this after being refused to have sexual relations or proposal of marriage. Sometimes the cause is for acquiring her property or dowry from her parents. Women are sometimes burnt to death by the husband or his family for the sake of dowry. Usually dowry is taken during the marriage takes place. But the greedy family puts pressure on the family of the girl for further dowry and in case of failure, resort to such barbaric activities. Sometimes in order to get rid of torture, the women commit

suicide. VAW has significant impact on poverty reduction interventions due to the fact that violence has the potential to impoverish a woman at both the individual and family level. This in turn creates a negative multiplier effect on the national level poverty reduction initiatives. Further, violence impacts a woman's ability to be fully productive in the work force at a fundamental level, with VAW being a primary cause of death and disability for women aged 16-44. In addition, violence impacts a woman's ability to aptly care for her children, as a child whose mother endures violence is more likely to suffer from severe health issues such as malnutrition and respiratory infections. The economic impact is also notable, with one recent study showing that when a woman is a victim of violence, the ramifications, from medical care and court fees to time lost at work could cost her family about 112,000 Taka. There is no question that violence against women hinders the progress and sustainable development of the women of Bangladesh. However Bangladesh has been ranked 111 among 186 countries according to UNDP's GII, 2012 and there is a high need for a well coordinated and designed programme on VAW among GoB, Development Partners and CSOs. The mentioned rate of VAW according to the WHO report is one of the highest in Bangladesh.

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 reduce violence against women in six districts: ***Habigonj, Narsingdi, Feni, Sirajgonj, Satkhira and Barguna***. The project implementation period was from January 2011 to June 2013. In order to achieve the goal stated above, the project focused 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, the 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: Project Activities & Their Results

The Joint Programme on Violence against Women has completed a range of activities in its journey of two and half years. Table 1 summarizes the activities of the year 2011 to 2013 followed by details description along with the results.

• Table 1: Plan and Achievement March 2011(March 2011 – June 2013)

Sl. Activities	Time frame			Budget head by cost category	Achievement
	2011	2012	2013		
1. WCG Members Training (1 day training at union/area office level; 30 participants/batch; in six districts)				Training	12106 WCG members have been trained in Satkhira, Siraigoni and Barguna districts
2. Women Development Forum Members Training				Training	1003 members of the Women Development Forum have been trained
3. Union Facilitation Team Member Training				Training	2335 Union Facilitation Team member are trained
4. Meeting with DLAC and Upazila level Officials				Meeting	16 Meetings were organized
5. Popular Theatre Drama Staging				Popular Theatre for Awareness Raising	535 shows have been organized and 1,78,629 participants from the community have enjoyed the show on VAW
6. Workshop with District Officials				Workshop	12 workshop, 6 orientation and 6 closing workshop been held.
7. UP Members Training				Training	3,368 members have been trained

Sl.	Activities	Time frame			Budget head by cost category	Achievement
		2011	2012	2013		
8.	Legal Aid, Medical & Counselling Support				Legal Aid and Economic Support for survivors	411 WCG members have received legal aid, medical & counselling support
9.	Database Development				Database Development	A pilot initiative has taken place in six <i>upazila</i> under six working districts
10.	Activation of Standing Committee on "Family Dispute Resolution, Women and Children Welfare"				Meeting	747 meetings have been organized. The target was 1,164 meetings.

III.A. Capacity strengthening and sensitization events

III. (a) Training on VAW for WCG members.

Awareness raised & confidence built of WCG members on VAW and able to seek support from the service providers.

As of June 2013, 23638 WCG members have received training on Violence against Women issues through the initiative of UN joint program on VAW. This training infuses the ability of women to recognize their rights and dignity in the family and society. After attending the training courses, they realize that they also have dignity and nobody can torture them or violate their rights. Those who have attended the training, they also have received a graduation card (smart card) with contact number of the BRAC staff. This card helps them in getting services if they would have been tortured, harassed or humiliated. By joining this project they now know the information and also know the process of getting support.



A WCG member is seen confidently delivering her speech

As a result of which 97% WCG members are aware on VAW issues and have become more confident to face such issues. They have opined that these trainings have opened up their mind against VAW and helped them in getting assistance while they are being tortured and humiliated. They have been confident enough in facing such sensitive and challenging issues.

III. (b) Training on VAW for Union Facilitation team member:

Union Facilitation Team (UFT) consisting of local youth, opinion leaders & local influential people and these groups have taken collective initiatives against VAW.

2,335 UFT members have received training on VAW issues. Union Facilitation Teams is another strategic group of the youth people of this project. The trainings they have received has resulted in not only their understanding about VAW issues but they also have been motivated to cooperate others on such issues as well as to provide advice and counselling services to WCG members, as & when required. The 67% of the targeted youth has received training on VAW issues. These members have participated in LGSP-LIC program as the volunteers. The objectives of the training course are as below:

- Deepen knowledge and understanding of VAW issues
- Follow-up the action plan formulated by them to stop VAW in their working area
- Exchange ideas and learn from each other about ways to combat VAW
- Take necessary personal and/ or collective action against VAW
- Provide advice and counselling services to WCG members, if needed
- Support in establishing a credible data base system on violence against women and children at the local level.

Migration of many youth UFT members to urban areas has been a concern to make the activity success. After closing the project earlier, it is hard to find them for training and some of them are not interested in joining because there is no monetary benefit to them from the VAW training.



Training session for UFT members

Despite some obstacles, a total of 67% Union Facilitation Team Members under the project have received training on VAW. Those who have attended the training are now willingly supportive to the program to address the violence issues. Some of them are giving voluntary services to the program and they have started thinking that it is their moral responsibility to protest and combat Violence against Women issues. These Union Facilitation Team members are playing a vital role in dealing with different social issues in their locality

and they have been recognized by the community people as well as the Union Parishad representatives. In the following table we have portrayed some of the significant activities taken by the UFT members.

Action taken by the Union Facilitation Team members after receiving the training								
District	Stop Early Marriage	Conflict Resolution	Stop Dowry	Eve Teasing	Stop Hilla Marriage	Stop ill Legal Divorce	Legal Support by Brac	Case by Court
Barguna	7	27	-	2	-	01	-	-
Hobigong	4	21	-	01	-	-	06	01
Feni	17	38	01	3	1	01	02	02
Sirajgong	23	71	01	11	-	06	17	5
Satkhira	50	98	12	15	02	13	12	05
Narsingdi	11	04	01	01	-	-	01	03
Total	112	259	15	33	03	21	38	16

III. (c) Training on VAW for Women Development Forum members

WDFs members are playing the role of whistleblowers in the community in dealing with VAW issues.

Women Development Forum members are the elected women representatives of Union *Parishad*. They often represent the poor women to the local justice system including Union *Parishad*. But they often lack the awareness, capacity to raise their own voice and motivate others on violence against issues. The project has worked to build their capacity through different tools like training. The training they received have had some specific objectives:

- Deepen knowledge and understanding of VAW issues

- Follow-up the action plan formulated by them to stop VAW in their working area
- Exchange ideas and learn from each other about ways to combat VAW

Because of the project activities, 86% WDF members are capacitated in dealing with the VAW issues. 1,056 victims have received support during this reporting period. After receiving the follow up training they have become able to evaluate themselves, what they have learnt, and understood as well as the commitment they have made during the basic training. They also have learnt from each other by sharing stories and information in training. Based on the insights gleaned from the training, some of the participants have played a significant role in combating VAW in their localities and are also responsible for providing appropriate information to relevant GO/NGO agencies about the victims. In addition, these same participants have also played a key role in assisting the victims with getting legal, medical, and financial support for survival as & when needed. If any incidents occur in their area, they try to face that and collect the information and pass the information to JP VAW staffs for the future courses of action.

III. (d) Training on VAW for Union Parishad (UP) Members

UP members are more sensitive in dealing with VAW issue.

All the elected members of the union are the participants of training on violence against women. It has been observed that it is very difficult to change the mindset of the male members. 3,368 members have received training on violence against women issues. The objectives of the training were as below:

- Be sensitized about necessary steps that Union *Parishad* standing committees on family dispute, and women and children's welfare can take to prevent violence against women
- Be able to take immediate and emergency steps against violence against women and be able to aid victims with necessary information
- Be able to personally and / or collectively provide psychosocial support to victims
- Be sensitized about the roles and responsibilities of Union *Parishad* members to prevent violence against women

87% Union Parishad (UP) Members who have received Training on VAW are now sincere to the issue at their family and respective constituencies. After receiving the training the Union *Parishad* members have felt that this is their responsibility as the representative of people to work to stop violence especially violence against women. They have promised in the concluding session of the training that from now on they will work to reduce violence against women in their families and communities.

WDF and UP members provided support and taken action against VAW						
District	Stop Early Marriage	Conflict Resolve	Stop Marriage with Dowry	Stop IL Legal Divorce	Legal Support by BRAC	Case by Court
Barguna	8	46	5	-	-	-
Hobigon g	7	44	-	3	12	12
Feni	29	84	-	5	7	11
Sirajgong	37	119	4	8	10	16
Satkhira	20	196	01	01	49	07
Narsingdi	30	110	02	21	23	03
Total	131	599	12	38	101	49

During the reporting period almost 100% marriages have been registered in the working area and district wise registration has been shown in the followings table:

SL.No.	Name of the districts	Marriage registered (Jan'12-Jun'13)
1.	Barguna	1694
2.	Hobigong	2188
3.	Feni	1415
4.	Sirajgong	2711
5.	Satkhira	4703
6.	Narsingdi	2800
The total number of marriages registered		15511

III. (e) Masculinity training for UP members Program on VAW

Mobilising good men towards women can be good entry points to fight against patriarchy.

It is revealed while implementing the program at the field level that organizes a training or discussion on masculinity is essential. This also has been observed that it is difficult to change the mindset of the people towards women's rights and dignity which is one of the underlying causes of Violence against Women. Male members as well as women also do not have the clear concept on masculinity and how this has a relationship with gender discrimination and violence against women. Therefore as per suggestion from the UNDP and based on the existing training findings, a session on masculinity has decided to include in follow up training course of UP members. A



UP member is in masculinity Training

consultant has been hired to facilitate the training course for the staffs and members. A TOT followed by the field level demonstration on VAW is organized for the staffs on masculinity.

Based on this realization BRAC with the financial, technical and linkage support from UNDP UN-Joint Program on VAW undertaken a new initiative in the existing program activities to capacitate the Union Parishad representatives and staffs on masculinity. This will contribute the project goal that reduces Violence against Women in the working areas. The objectives of the training course:

- To enhance better understanding on Gender and the importance of social transformation.
- To build common understanding on masculinity and development to engage men for End VAW
- To strengthen skills in facilitating masculinities and Power Dynamics training for UP members and handle sensitive discussion.

It has been planned that this training course will be organized in all the working districts of UN joint program on violence against women. Two no of demonstration training have been held in two unions at Barguna District and a significant impact has been observed. During the training session a change has been observed in the views and they have showed their concern on this subject. They have realized that negative masculinity being promoted by patriarchy is one of the underlying causes for Violence against Women whereas men with positive masculinity can be an entry points to fight against women. They need to be changed and this kind of masculinity behaviour should not be repeated in their daily lives.



Masculinity training participants

Some of the comments and views of the Chairman and UP member after receiving the training are noted here:

- “Before receiving the training course I thought that women have to bear torture for peace of the family and now I have started realizing that We should not torture our wives as they are our partner and family is with husband, wife, and children we should give our wives dignity and equal rights “- Anowar Hossain, Pocha koralia Union
- “After receiving the training now I have started realizing that we have common misconception that the women are only responsible for child rearing Both husband and wife can take good decision for the child” – Rezaul Karim ,Chairman ,Bura Mojumder Union
- “Biologically female are responsible for rearing baby in the womb, but father can take good care of children in rearing them in the world. Women contribute

a lot to the family which we have learnt from the training“ said Md. Edris Ali, UP Member Sorisha Muri Union

III. (f) Popular Theatre Show on VAW

Popular Theatre demonstrate an effective tool for dissemination of sensitive information like 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 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 to see a show. On the following day, after a popular theatre show a community meeting takes place.

The program is a very powerful means of disseminating information, particularly to those who are unable to access information. The popular theatre programs consist of ten people: three female members of the BRAC village organisations and seven males who all have tremendous skills of acting and singing. The drama groups attend a six-day training course on acting and directing. Each group then investigates and decides on the issues they would cover in a particular week. These plays are always run without the scripts and use local dialects of the area where the play is hosted.



A show on VAW issue is staging

After each performance a coordinator encourages discussion about the VAW issues raised with the actors, viewers and village elders. Women and men share their ideas. In fact, the actors who portray the positive roles ask questions to the audiences via their dialogues. Some even share their own problems so that others can make suggestions about how to solve them.

535 shows on VAW issues were staged during this reporting period. 1,78,629 people have enjoyed the drama and become aware of the issues surrounding violence against women. As the drama artist, their language and the chosen plot of the drama are taken from locality, it easily affects their understanding and thus changing their attitude and action towards VAW issues.

III.B. Activation of Government Mechanism

III. (a) Activation of District Legal Aid Committee

The Numbers of legal aid recipients have increased because of the project intervention.

To activate District Legal Aid Committee was not very successful intervention in all the six districts. One achievement is that the project staffs have become the member of the committee now as a part of the effort to activate DLACs, regularly our staffs can attend in all the districts except Feni district and the meetings are getting held on regular basis. BRAC district managers have taken part in the meetings in different districts and discussed violence issues including victims and their support network. According to the meeting report, 3,510 victims have received legal support through lawyers in all the six districts during the reporting period. At the end of the project 4 district level workshops were organized with the District Judge and District Legal Aid Committee. In all the workshops where district judge were present they appreciated the contribution of JP-VAW program in assisting VAW victims getting support from DLAC. They also opined that these types of activities should continue, they provided some valuable recommendation which will help the project implementing agency for undertaking future program and interventions.

III. (b) Activation of Standing Committee on women issue

Stranding committees of Union Parishad on women issue are making more enabling environment for women free of violence.

According to the Union *Parishad's* (Amendment) Act 2009, each UP will constitute 13 standing committees, one for each of these areas. The UN joint program on VAW is working with the *Family Conflict Resolution and Women and Child Welfare Committee*. This committee is responsible for dealing with the VAW issues in the locality but in fact, most of the *Parishad* committees of the project area were not functional. The main roles of the committee are as follows:

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



Standing committee members are conducting meeting

57% of the committees have begun to meet regularly at all Union Parishads during the reporting period with the help of VAW program staffs. However, all are not functional. In some places the committee was not formed before the project intervention but now all committees are formed with the help of the project staff. 747 numbers of meetings were conducted during the reporting period

III.C. Database Development and Support

III. (a) Database Development

Women Development Forum members are sending incidents data on violence against women which would be used in programmatic analysis by government and NGOs.

Credible database on VAW is very important to in providing support and maximizing the support towards victim. It is revealed from the different stakeholder's discussion that credible database can provide us accurate and workable information on VAW. Therefore in this project from its inception it has been trying to work out a strategy on database. For this purposes and for technical support in this regard, a consultant has been hired who can help to formulate a fruitful database. He has done the initial activities like interactive discussion with project beneficiaries, NGO leader, Government Officials, UN officials and other concerned persons. He is now formulating the strategy for database. The draft strategy will be presented in a round table discussion where different GO/NGO personnel will be invited who are dealing with the database and based on the comments and feedback from the roundtable the strategy will be finalized. The final strategy of database will be shared for wider dissemination in a National level Seminar which is planned to be held during 16 days activism.

In the meantime at the field level Women Develop Forum members are trying to collect the data on Violence against Women through a process. One *upazila* has been selected in each district and Women Development Forum members are oriented how to document and share the information with others for proper record and thus the members are collecting the information and giving the information to our staff and also to *upazila* women affairs officer, with the help of our staffs, the *upazila* women affair officers are giving this information to District Women Affairs Officers for her information and use. Till now after starting this process in the selected *upazila* of JPVAW, 886 cases have been reported by Women Development Forum members. This is the picture of seven *upazila* for the duration of ten month.

At national level a policy dialogue was held jointly with Daily star on 21st June at Daily star office auditorium.

III. (b) Information on Survivors Support

Provide Victim Support to the REOPA Women Crew Members in the areas of economic, legal, social and medical, as and when needed.

Through the different activities of the project, supports are provided to the survivors. The table below shows different support schemes in number.

Name of the Districts	No. of victims received support	Legal Aid	Health related Support	Financial Support	Counselling
Sirajgnj	167	70	-	19	78
Narshingdi	377	81	-	17	279
Feni	105	35	01	07	62
Satkhira	175	85	05	12	73
Hobigonj	149	21	-	20	108
Barguna	83	06	02	14	61
Total	1056	298	08	89	661

From the above table it is clear that a number of 1,056 victims have received support from the program. The table depicts that in all the districts a significant number of women have been victimized and they have got legal advice and support through a BRAC lawyer. The UN Joint Program provides legal, medical and grants support to these victimized women for their survival and safety. It is to be noted here that among these 411 victims are REOPA beneficiaries and 645 victims are from the local community. The table also shows that 298 persons have received legal support,

IV. Result Evidence, Visibility & Media Coverage

All the activities held under the project scheme have positive effects on the ground. The activity description, testimonies and speeches by the beneficiaries and stakeholders, the changing scenarios of the locality in terms of VAW issues are self-evidence of the effectiveness of the project. Here the results of the midterm Evaluation by UNJPO, BRAC monitoring report, project area visit by renowned personality and media coverage on project activities have been compiled to better visualise the result, visibility and media coverage.

Midterm Evaluation Report by UNJPO:

- Capacity building of the government staffs at community level undertaken by UNDP- UN Joint Program promotes application of lessons learned through follow up trainings which provide an opportunity for members to share their experiences, as well as refresher on the actual content learned. This method of capacity building should be further examined as a best practice that could be replicated.
- BRAC's infrastructure has also allowed the *JP VAW to reach 10,000 rural poor female workers (REOPA Beneficiaries) who have been trained on basic understanding of their rights under Bangladeshi law, in order to highlight that common cultural practices such as beatings or child marriages are illegal. The JP is also providing them with access to BRAC's free support through the distribution of "who to call" cards(Smart card)*
- JPMO officials have visited JP-VAW working areas and commented the project is implementing in line with its goal and objectives.

Final Evaluation Report: Three innovations

- Spread success stories advocating ending child marriages, individuals stopping VAW, and other success stories on women's rights further in order to maximise impact.
- **Developing a National VAW Database:** Continue creation of a credible database on VAW in Bangladesh, including completion of the Policy Dialogue on the National Database on VAW in order to highlight key national achievements, challenges, and the way forward based on studies, findings, and field experience.
- **The Importance of Reaching Out to Rural Areas:** Increase popular theatre and dramas in order to have a greater impact on information dissemination on ending VAW as popular theatre and dramas have proven to be extremely effective

Project Activity visited by renowned visitors

Project activities have been visited by some renowned visitors. On April 1, 2012, Pedro Linas, Charge de Affairs, Spanish Embassy, Bangladesh, Dr. Nur Mohammad, Assistant Representative, UNFPA, and Anna Minj, Director, Community Empowerment Programme and Integrated Development Programme, have visited the UN Joint Programme on Violence against Women in Hobigonj. They have participated in a dialogue session with 28 WCG, UFT, WDF, and UP members about the successes and challenges of the project. BRAC representatives have also attended a WDF follow up training in nearby Deorgach union, and learnt that the trainings are being held effectively.



Pedro Linas, Charge de Affairs, Spanish Embassy listening the voice of the people

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

UNFPA International Program Manager and other two other staffs from the UNFPA head office have visited the UN-Joint program on VAW area in Sirajgonj on December 5, 2011. They have observed a training session where Women Development Forum members attended and conducted a discussion session with UFT and WCG members who have received capacity building training on VAW. The discussion session has been very lively and the members confidently and spontaneously have described how they have taken an active part in protesting violence in their community, especially cases of violence against women. They have discussed various incidents in their locality with the officials.



UNFPA representative observing training session



UNFPA and ILO representative are in a meeting

Ms. Angelica Arbulu, Evaluation Consultant of UN Joint Program on VAW MDG

Ms. Angelica Arbulu, Evaluation Consultant, MDG Fund and Marianne Berner, UNFPA International Program Manager visited the UN-Joint program on VAW area in Sirajgonj on 5 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.



Evaluators to UN Joint Programme on VAW, Norshingdi

The discussion session was very lively and 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.

Journalist Workshop: The importance of media in fighting Violence against Women in coverage and as advocacy to raise awareness among the society is paramount. Six Journalist Workshops have been held in Habigonj, Narsingdi, Feni, Sirajgonj, Satkhira and Barguna on Violence against Women: The Role of the media.



ADC General of Narshingdi Giving her speech in Media Workshop

The objectives of the workshops are as below:

- Create awareness on VAW among media professionals
- Highlight role of the media to address VAW
- Develop a code of conduct for the journalist on VAW

A total number of 120 participants such as the journalists of national & local newspapers and electronic media have participated in these workshop. Majeda Haq, Program Analyst with UNDP shared her findings on VAW situation on multi-media.



Journalist are developing code of conduct

After each session the participants were allowed to give their opinion and some journalists shared few reported incidents on VAW in the local area.

At the end of workshop, the most exciting session was drafting “Code of Ethics for Media Professionals”. The vibrant participation of the enthusiast journalists could be felt at the workshop.

The journalists in all the workshops have outlined a series of dos and don'ts which apparently could be deemed as draft “Code of Ethics for Media Professionals”. With the compilation of draft code of ethics from the participants of these workshops a “National Code of Ethics for Media Professionals” will be developed by the media professionals.

8th March Celebration:

In all six districts this year the REOPA and WDF member celebrated 8th March jointly with the district officials .In every district about 50-120 REOPA women member attended in a rally organized by DC office. Representatives of different organisations including GO and NGOs, youth and women organisations and forums that have been working in the district took part in the event raising one voice of preserving rights of the women.



WCG members are seen in a RALLY on 8th March

Following the rally a discussion session and cultural events were also organized. In the discussion all the dicussants raised very strong voice to protect the rights of the women who are neglected and violated in various forms in the male dominated society in Bangladesh. Our women member shared about their success story and their experiences with this project with the audience of the discussion session.



Project staff and Donor Partner are celebrating

Closing Workshop: As a part of closing of UNDP-UN Joint program on Violence against Women a closing workshop was organized at Cox Bazar from 26th to 27th June 2013 with the staff of JPVAW project. Along with them UNDP officials also joined in the workshop. In this workshop the lesson learnt, best practices and challenges were shared. In this workshop staff were participated actively and shared their

experiences confidently. They said that this challenging project has given them a great opportunity to work with the service providers as well as the claim holders. They were satisfied that they were able to provide support to the most needy violence victim from the very grassroots. A linkage with the government has established through this initiative. UNDP officials also appreciated the contributions of the staff towards the project. All celebrated the achievements of the project.

Lesson Learnt Workshop: A Workshop on Sharing of UNDP UN Joint Programme on Violence Against Women experience, results and lessons learnt” was held on 18 May 2013 at BRAC Center, 75 Mohakhali, Dhaka.. The lesson learnt workshop provided an opportunity to share the UNDP VAW experience, results and lessons learnt with project stakeholders. The main purpose of this workshop was to dissect the programme based on the project stakeholders’ experiences in order to capture the lessons and best practices to help move forward to the next phase.



Dr. Tofail Ahmed is delivering his speech as special guest

Mr. Tariq ul Islam, Secretary, Ministry of Women and Children Affairs graced the workshop as the Chief Guest. Dr. Tofail Ahmed, Local Governance Expert was present as special guest. Mr. Palash Das, Assistant Country Director, Poverty Reduction Cluster, UNDP Bangladesh was also present in the workshop.

Renowned facilitator Mr.Kajol Banarjee facilitated the whole workshop. MS. Majeda Haq, program analyst ,UNDP, Mrs.Anna Minj , Director, CEP&IDP BRAC also present in the workshop. Different stakeholder of JP-VAW project attended the workshop.Union Parishad Member,Standing committee member, MOWCA staff, Prosecutor of DLAC,NGO Staff idenfied lessons and best practices through group work. A good number of lessons idenfited which will be helpful for designing the future project.



Participants of ILesson learnt Workshop

V. Case Story

Impact of BRAC's UN Joint Programme (A Case Study)

Sharmin Akhter Bina was married to Aminur Rahman in April (1997) at Labsha village in Satkhira, a bordering district with India located in the southwestern part of Bangladesh. As per Muslim law, their *denmahar* (husband's declared money for wife's security to happen the marriage) was settled amounting of BD taka 35,000.

Bina's father was not alive during her marriage, her two elder brothers were bound to arrange dowry of BD taka 35,000 for Bina's husband Aminur. For a few years their marriage life was joyful and this couple was blessed with two children – daughter Tanjum, 13 and son Imran, 8. But the joys did not last too long due to Aminur's longing for more dowries.

As Bina's family was unable to afford dowry, her husband Aminur used to torture Bina mentally and physically often by claiming the dowry money. Long 12 years Bina silently endured pains and agonies without raising her voice which has been the traditional norms of the poverty-stricken families in the typical Bangladesh society.



Sharmin Akhter with her two children

Tortures on Bina increased gradually. Being impatient Bina came to her won brothers' house in November 2011 and with their help she filed a case in the local court against her husband describing all about the tortures and their causes.

Then the husband was in a serious stake of arrest, hence Aminur's lawyer proposed Bina to offer some money to withdraw the case and mitigate this issue through a local arbitration. At that moment a female union parishad (smallest administrative unit) member named Ferdowshi Islam Misti, who got UN Joint Programme's Violence Against Women (VAW) training, intervened into the issue, encountered the lawyer and coordinated with the relevant local leaders several times to get an appropriate justice of the deprived woman Bina.

Including *denmahar* Misti proposed to demand taka 120,000 from Bina's husband for Bina's reasonable survival with her two younger children. Lastly she was successful to earn taka 80,000 for Bina while a local ward commissioner, who was in favour of Aminur, intended to settle the issue pursuing taka 30,000 from Aminur.

With certain portion of the money Bina's two brothers built a semi-concrete house on their own land for Bina who is now residing there with her daughter and son. With surplus money her brothers pawned a piece of arable land for Bina to get some seasonal crops. In addition, she has been provided a job in a bag producing

company having monthly salary of taka 2,500. Now Bina runs the family smoothly in spite of separation from the husband.

Ferdowshi Islam Misti, the female union parishad member, is contented for the initiative taken by her for setting an example of justice. Misti acknowledged the benefit she got from the training on VAW arranged by the BRAC's UN Joint Programme in October 2011. "Being a woman I am able to benefit another woman (Bina) because of receiving the training," Misti said with pride.

VI. Sustainability

Many of the beneficiaries have been taken under other activities of BRAC and other service providers. Many (2028), per example, have become members of *Polli Shomaj*¹. This will sustain beyond the project. They have been introduced with government and non-government service providers. This has made a culture of pro-poor services among the service providers including government institutions. The trainings the stakeholders have received have long term effect both at the individual and institutional levels. The data based system on VAW will be institutionalized in government reporting system like Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS). The learning and the Smart Card the WCG members have received are not only to providing services in hand but also to change their mindsets on VAW issues. This kind of social transformation has long term effect beyond project period. Finally many of the learning of the project will be internalized within programme or institutional systems of BRAC, government and other service providers.

VII. Challenges and Learning

The project involving different stakeholders and linking other cross-cutting issues faced some difficulties along with some good learning for future scale-up. The challenges are noted here:

- Lack of availability of a government official for meetings and collaboration on developing the database strategy.
- Political & social interest groups create hindrance in providing legal aids
- Working in the hard-to-reach geographical area limits efficiency and result delivery by the project staff because of lack of physical communication
- Lack of effective coordination among service providers including NGO and GoB mechanism
- Traditional mentality of UP members in delivering services only in exchange of personal financial benefits
- VAW considered non-priority for high officials
- Lack of motivation of UP to activate the Standing Committees

¹ *Polli Shomaj* are independent, ward-level platforms of the poor and marginalized, especially women, convened by Community Empowerment Programme, BRAC. In *Polli Shomaj*, disadvantaged women get the opportunity to talk about their rights, learn the details of different GO/NGO facilities and become part of the power structure of local governance.

- Deep rooted patriarchal mentality among duty bearers at all levels, Lack of common understanding at every level on VAW
- Lack of accountable and universal framework on VAW
- Strong Culture of Silence where VAW considered as private and non-priority matter
- Lack of experience & streamlining of data collection protocol, data storage technology, data analysis skills among agencies and also at the national level
- Development of a comprehensive, integrated & well coordinated database
- Addressing VAW issue needs a longer timeframe beyond the project life cycle practices
- Getting all the works of the programme done alone for a District Manager
- Ensuring the participation of the trainees due to the budget constraints
- The amount of workload within so less time
- Changing the decisions frequently
- Continuing all the works during the current political instability
- Putting an excessive amount of workload on the shoulders of the field staffs from HO
- The absence of the authorization letter or any sorts of guideline issued by District & *Upazila* Women Affairs Official to collect the information for the database
- Ordering all the field staffs the same way without considering the places where they are
- WDF,WCG, and UFT members can become the whistleblowers in communities in order to deliver adequate justice for poor victims of VAW as they would know what actions must be taken for victim support
- WCG members now have SMART cards in order to attain support from local service providers
- VAW awareness trainings have been created as a pressure group in order to hold those in a position of authority, responsibility as well as accountability

Lessons Learnt from the project can be pointed as here:

- Sensitization on VAW and related laws change the attitude of influential people
- All stakeholders feel the need of a comprehensive, credible & dynamic database on VAW
- Masculinity training can create a positive attitude among the duty bearers and they become accountable to response in VAW issue
- Knowledge, confidence and resource support to address VAW issues empowered WDF & UFT: WDF members can play the role of whistleblower in the community.
- Victim's information captured and stored for receiving justice through existing UP→UZ→District→National support service mechanism.

- Corresponding with district & *upazila* government officials to make the programme more functional
- Making the conditions of eligibility easier to financially support the victims as per the requirements
- Arranging workshops for the police/law enforcement committees essential to make them more responsive to the violence victim
- Arranging transportation support for the victims so that more disadvantaged victim can reach to the service centre and get legal and other services.
- Increase empowerment of marginalised women through trainings and provide them with information regarding available services and assistance in their areas
- Programmes working with DLAC to ensure legal services to victims from marginalised groups should be strengthened
- Stronger links must be built between women's groups, local government bodies, and national government services
- Popular Theatre and dramas are effective tools for information dissemination, awareness building, and better knowledge base in rural areas for various socio-economic issues affecting women and therefore should be scaled up
- VAW issues should be included in the coordination meetings at *upazila* and District levels
- Activation of the District Legal Aid Committee is a key aspect of the programme in order to show the people, local government, district administrations, judiciary, civil society, and NGOs that there is a collaborative effort to end VAW. Evidence indicates that when people are aware of useful services, they will utilise such services
- The Panel Lawyers of District Legal Aid Committees require sensitisation and technical training by legal experts. District judges must monitor the performance of the Panel lawyers
- Journalists must be sensitised on VAW reporting and trained for sensitisation
- Elected representatives and journalists must coordinate among themselves in order to adequately, effectively, and widely disseminate information on VAW
- Once again, the lesson learned here is when people are given the knowledge, confidence and resource support to tackle a problem like VAW they feel empowered and work collectively to combat it. Education, sensitization and emergency services on VAW should continue for the vulnerable communities.
- The activation of the District Legal Aid Committee is key to showing the local population that the local governments, civil society, and NGOs are actively making efforts to combat this problem.
- 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.
- Popular Theatre shows have played a significant role to aware the rural community people on violence against women issue. 263 popular theatre show have been staged in 263 villages where 89763 people attended and

become aware of the VAW. About 60% of them have realized that it is necessary to stop violence.

- Providing SMART card is one of the significant achievements. By receiving the graduation cards, the REOPA member felt honoured and their confidence level has increased and they are now more courageous in dealing with VAW issues.

Best Practices:

- Those who are involved with VAW Programme or the stakeholders have not only received support but at the same time they have supported others. There are many distressed and helpless males and females who have received support other than being only REOPA members.
- After receiving the training many female members, male members, UFT Members, UP Chairmen and community people have got enthusiastic to stop early marriage, eve teasing, dowry, illegal divorce, illegal marriage etc.
- There are many UFT and WDF Members have personally taken the initiatives to stop domestic violence. At many times, they also have been able to get the money of Den Mohar by arranging Shalish for that.
- The male dominated mentality has been changed after receiving the masculinity training which has lead to the reduction of violence.
- The women have been empowered which has not only created their own positions in the society, but also has earned respect for them.
- Database development on VAW issue in selected upazila showed a path that grassroots women can provide support to develop national level database. They contributed lot in developing the process of database development. This learning can be replicated in other area of the country.

VIII. Upcoming Activities

- Make the list of REOPA member who can be involved in BRAC *Polli Somaj* and include them in the polli somaj platform.
- Provide necessary support to the victims of violence as when needed

IX. Conclusion

BRAC along with other stakeholders successfully accomplished the targeted outputs and make expected outcomes in the light of project objectives in spite of different challenges, the project has been able to and has made significant contributions towards reducing violence against women in the working areas. The professions of the beneficiaries, case studies, visiting tour by renowned persons, media coverage,

official monitoring and evaluation have evidently delineated the project outcomes. The poor women, the victims in most cases are now more aware and united to prevent, stop and redress VAW issues. Other strategic actors including perpetrators, Union *Parishad* members, and government officials are more supportive and self-conscious to the issue.

The leanings of BRAC and its strategic implementing partners are very important for its future scale-up and programmatic planning. BRAC with its long experience on VAW issues and programmatic experience working for downtrodden poor has contributed and gained much on its way to make a violence free society for women in Bangladesh and elsewhere. In the process of empowering the claim holders and capacitating the duty bearers of the UNDP-UN programme had many success stories as well as failures. Failures have taught us many lessons, which were used as stepping-stones for many other challenges. The work with UNDP-UN programme has changed the life of the WCG- WDF members. BRAC is grateful to UNDP for implementing such a challenging project. BRAC-CEP hopes that all kinds of malpractice will be removed from the society and thus a happy, prosperous and healthy society will be set up. However our march towards the vision for reducing Violence against Women will be continued.