



Activating Village Courts in Bangladesh Phase II Project



Annual Progress Report (January – December 2017)



EUROPEAN UNION

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



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Executive Summary

The Activating Village Courts in Bangladesh Project has scaled up to 1078 UPs based on the success of pilot phase and has started its implementation in full swing during this reporting period. The Local Government Division (LGD) of the Ministry for Local Government, Rural Development and Cooperatives (MoLGRD&C) has been implementing this project with financial and technical support from the EU, GOB and UNDP. It aims to activate VCs in 1080 out of 4,558 UPs in the country.

During this reporting period Village courts of 1,078 unions have offered dispute resolution services to rural citizens of 1,078 unions of Bangladesh following VC' procedures with proper documentation. Being sensitized by community mobilization initiatives of the project, community people have started seeking justice from village courts. In a total 21,300 people sought justice between July-December 2017 and 14,427 got remedies. Of the resolved cases, 11,988 (83%) decisions have been implemented. Through the process of Village courts it has recovered BDT 113 million as compensation from respondents and provided to the petitioners. Project activities have targeted women to encourage in seeking remedy through Village Courts. As a result, in total 6,000 (28%) women sought remedies through Village Courts and 10% women were involved in VC's decision-making process. Between July-December 2017, VC have received 1,619 cases from District courts and other sources demonstrating that VC is contributing in case backlogs in the district courts.

During reporting period 27 District Training Pool (DTP¹) established in 27 districts. Being sensitized and capacitated, members of 27 District Training Pool(DTP) got engaged in capacity building training of VC's service providers. They provided capacity building training to 12,490 service providers on VCs and its function. Judicial officers also got authorized to participate in village courts training and became part of (DTP) based on the GOs issued by NLASO and MoLJ&PA following the necessary guidance of the Honorable Supreme Court. A total of 25 Judiciary Officers (District Legal Aid Officers) from 25 districts of project area received ToT as DTP members and provided capacity building training to service providers on VCs and its function.

Engagement with the judiciary and police officials is critical to enhance cooperation and coordination among VCs, Judiciary and Police to make VCs effective and functional. Hence the project has planned to conduct 27 workshops/opinion sharing meeting in 27 project districts with District Judiciary and Police. To ensure participation of Judges in the consultation session, the project got approval from the supreme court during this reporting period. Supreme court approved the proposal that they were received from the Law Ministry regarding participation of Judiciary officers in the district level consultation session and the ministry has issued GO (Government Order) for the District Judiciary to attend the consultation and host the meeting at District Judge's Conference Room in project districts. As a result, six consultations held in six districts under the leadership of the district judiciaries.

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

Four partner NGOs contracted in December 2016, got involved in providing supports to unions to activate village courts in 1078 unions through its planned outreach and capacity building initiatives. They have provided supports to the local administration in organizing and conducting capacity building training to key VC actors (VCAs, UP Secretary; UP Chair, Panel Chair, and UP members). In a total, around 3,650,000 community people (50% women) were mobilized through CYMs, community meetings, video shows etc. Gender guideline for village courts has been drafted during this reporting period. In addition, 1052 signboards placed in 1052 UPs and TVC (60 second) aired in four national level TV channels to promote the village courts.

26 district and 127 Upazilla Village Courts Management Committees (VCMCs) formed and started functioning to increase Government's involvement in carrying out monitoring of village courts performance. Draft baseline report submitted by IPA- a research firm hired to conduct impact study is under LGD's review.

The government has demonstrated its ownership towards village courts by disbursing BDT 72 million (USD 0.88 million) from their own resources for establishing village courts in 601 unions (beyond 1,080 project unions) in 2017. Recently District Magistracy Monitoring Branch of the Cabinet Division issued a Government Order (GO) instructing local administration (District Magistrates and Upazila Nirbahi Officers) to activate, strengthen and monitor village courts in their working areas. According to the GO, village courts performance will be discussed in District and Upazila Law and Order Committee meetings and each district will send monthly village courts performance report to District Magistracy Monitoring Wing of the Cabinet Division which will contribute increasing efficiency and effectiveness of village courts.

Section I: Context

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

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

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

1.2 Description of the key objectives and outputs of the project

1.2.1 Overall objective

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

1.2.2 Specific objective

1. To make local authorities more responsive to local justice needs and offer appropriate legal services in the form of well- functioning village courts.
2. To empower local people, especially women, the poor and vulnerable groups to seek remedies for injustices and to resolve their disputes at the local level in an expeditious, transparent and affordable manner.

1.2.3 Outputs of the project

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

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

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

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

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

1.3 Project Components:

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

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

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

Section II: Achievements

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

2.1 Progress of outputs (expected results)

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

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

a. Equip 1,080 UPs with all necessary forms, furniture, *ejlas* (court bench), VCA and others

The project has equipped 1,078 new unions with 21 types of prescribed forms, necessary furniture, *Ejlas* (Court bench), and personnel (i.e. Village Courts Assistants (VCAs)) to allow smooth delivery of justice services by the village courts.

Prescribed forms are required to document the village courts proceedings. Based on the case flows, working areas, and lessons learnt of the pilot phase, the demand of each form at union level has been determined in 2017. This year the project has printed the required quantity of each forms through a vendor hired by the GOB's procurement policy and distributed to the unions. Aiming to sensitize the key stakeholders at upazila level and create the ownership of the local administration and service providers of village courts, the project has distributed VC forms and registers to 1,078² Union Parishads through Upazila Nirbahi Officers (UNOs). In this regards, half day long discussion workshops held in 128 upazila where Upazila Chairman of concern upazila was present as chief guest and UNO & DDLG were present as special guests.



Ejlas (court bench) and furniture are needed to run village courts sessions. During the reported period the project has made a physical verification to know the real situation of *ejlas* (court bench) and found that 760 UPs have no *ejlas* while 268 UPs have *ejlas* but required repairing supports, and no supports is required for 48 UPs. Based on this finding the project installed new *ejlas* in 760 UPs, and provided supports for repairing 268 *ejlas* in 268 UPs. Four partner NGOs hired for field level implementation was responsible to setting up *ejlas* (court bench) and furniture following the specification provided by the project. They set *ejlas* (court bench) and furniture by the vendors hired following the organisation policy and procedure.

² Did not distribute VC's forms and registers to two UPs of Charpasion upazila of Bhola district as the project could not start its activities due to non-existence of UP bodies to run the village courts. VC's forms and registers has been kept in UNO office.

Village Courts Assistant (VCAs) are required to provide administrative support to running of the village courts and to create demand of the VCs through awareness raising initiatives. During reporting period, the project appointed 1,078 (Male: 538 and Female: 538) VCs Assistants in 1,078 unions to assist union Parishads to run VCs with proper documentation. Among them 116 were recruited for Barisal division, 130 were recruited for Khulna Division, 172 recruited for Chittagong, 111 recruited for Sylhet, 136 recruited for Dhaka, 99 for Mymensingh, 131 for Rajshahi and 183 for Rangpur division. Knowledge and skills of the all VCAs were developed through training. The project did not appoint VCAs in two UPs of Bhola district under Barisal division because the project could not start its activities due to non-existence of UP bodies to run the village courts.

Division	Number of VCA planned to be recruited	# of VCA recruited		
		Male	Female	Total
Barisal	118	64	52	116
Khulna	130	77	53	130
Chittagong	172	104	68	172
Sylhet	111	61	50	111
Dhaka	136	47	89	136
Mymensingh	99	49	50	99
Rajshahi	131	73	58	131
Rangpur	183	64	119	183
Grand Total	1080	539	539	1078

Activity 1.1.2 Develop, update and print training materials

b. Review and reprint Training Manual on VC

During the project period, AVCB II Project printed 450 pieces revised Training Manual on VCs, of which 240 pieces already has been distributed to DDLGs, DFs and four partner NGOs and remaining will be distributed to different GOB's training institutes, Police Staff College, Police Academy (Sarda, Rajshahi), JATI, NGO Affairs bureau, EU, LGD, Police HQ, etc. VC Training Manual is a very important knowledge product to build the capacity of the relevant stakeholders. It was printed in collaboration with NILG in line with VC Act, 2006 (amended in 2013), VC Rules 2016 to enhance the knowledge of the stakeholders on judicial system, judicial values, Act and Rules of VCs and its procedure.

c. Develop, review and reprint Training Flip Chart on VC

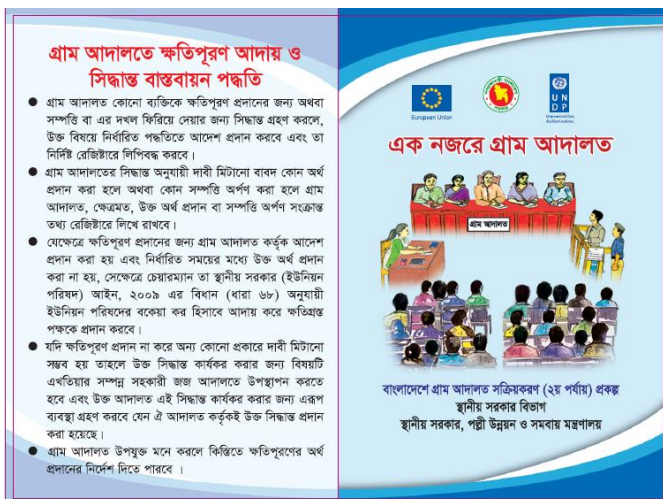
During this reporting period, the project printed 250 sets of Training Flip chart on VC and distributed 213 to DDLGs, DFs and four partner NGOs and remaining will be distributed to different GoB's training institutes, JATI, LGD, EU, UNDP, Police HQ, Police Academy (Sarda, Rajshahi), NGO Affairs Bureau. The flipchart is a supplementary tool of the training manual. It includes clear and visualized information on the village courts and is targeted to the community people. As a part of the training manual, the flip chart has been reviewed and drafted following the same process used to develop the Training Manual: Intensive documents review, consultation with relevant stakeholders and field testing of the content. It

is also ensured of its legal compliance through vetting by a National Consultant and has been endorsed by NILG.

d. Develop, print and distributed Pocket Card on VC

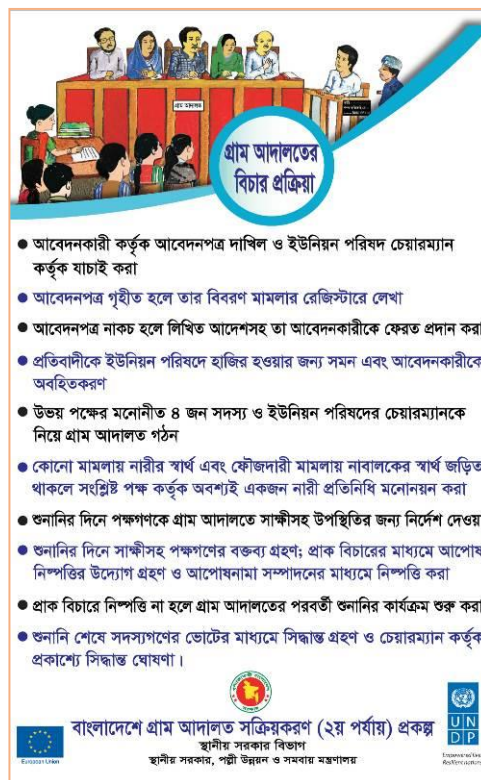
The project produced 100,000 Pocket Card on village court and distributed 99,350 in 1078

unions. 90 pocked cards contained in each box for each Union. The Pocket Card is a learning material contain basic information of village courts including VC's jurisdiction, VC's formation process, VC's decisions making and implementation process, process of compensation recovery if either party is unwilling to compensate. The objective of the Pocket Card is to enhance the basic knowledge on Village Court (VC) of relevant stakeholders (UP and VC functionaries, community leaders and participants in different training, workshop at districts and upazilas level). This learning aid can easily put in the pocket /handbags and preserve for years as it is small, and eye-catching.



e. Printing and distribution of VC process Flow Chart (Learning Chart)

During this reporting period, the project developed and printed 1250 pieces of VC process flow chart (Learning Chart) and distributed 1078 to 1078 union parishads, 27 to 27 DDLGs and 128 to 128 UNO offices. It has been developed through intensive documents review and consultation with project staff members and vetted by LGD and Legal Specialist of the project to ensure its legal compliance. Finally, LGD has issued letters to the respective DDLG and UNOs. The flow chart included clear and visualized chronological contents on the process of village court. It explicitly mentioned about the provisions of appointing women panel members. It will be helpful for the panel members of VC to provide justice service to the community people (women and men) following the process of VC in line with VC Act and Rules. It will also be helpful for justice seeker as well as the community people to make them aware regarding VC process.



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

Hiring of vendor for developing Video Learning Aid(VLA) following GOB procurement process is under way. As visual and audio have greatest impact on quick conceptualization and contextualization; the Video Learning Aid (VLA) on VC is an able material for building capacity and sensitization. As the project embarks on several trainings for building capacity of different stakeholders on VC, the VLA will be a significant source material for stimulating the discussions which is very important for adult learning. Usually audio-visual learning materials make the learning sustainable. The VLA will also be used to urge the community to act more responsibly on VC so that they can contribute to activate VC which is ultimate goal of the project. It will also be distributed to all UPs of the country out of the project area so that they can run the village court in proper manner as the VLA is a standalone material.

d. Develop, print and distribute FAQ on VC

The FAQ is a learning aid contain a series of questions and their answers that the service recipients and service providers may face during service delivery and service obtaining. The



objective of this is to enhance the basic knowledge of different stakeholders on VC. It will empower both service recipients and providers through enhancing their awareness and legal knowledge on VC. National Consultant hired by the project has developed the Frequently Ask Question of Village court (FAQ) through as process. As a part of the process the Consultant has conducted an inception meeting with PMU, review the previous FAQ developed during pilot phase, conducted KII, in-depth interview and Focus Group Discussion (FGD) with relevant stakeholders. In addition, the project has also collected questions and queries regarding VC from frontline actors through District Facilitators (DF) and NGO's field level staffs. Compiling all questions, the consultant has developed the pertinent answers of all questions in line with VC Act, Rules. Finally, the Consultant has prepared and submitted a draft content of FAQ

to the project. Accordingly, the Legal Specialist of the project has reviewed the draft content of the FAQ to ensure the legal compliance of the document.

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

a. Provide Orientation to Master Trainers at NILG (3 days long)

As per the plan each project district is supposed to establish a District Training Pool (DTP), who will lead all Village Courts training within the District. The DTP will first be trained by a national training pool of approximately 16 ‘Master Trainers’ composed of both NGO specialists in Village Courts (PNGOs from Phase I and/or others), and government officials.

The National Institute of Local Government (NILG) is assigned for forming and developing the capacity of the members of Master Trainers (MTs). Accordingly, during this reporting period, the NILG formed a Master Trainers (MT) group with the officials of LGD, NILG, Project Management Unit (PMU) and individual experts on village courts and provided a three (03) days training to them from 10 to 12 February 2017 at NILG. Mr Zakir Hossain, Registrar (District Judge), Bangladesh Supreme Court, Mr Iqramul Haque, Additional Secretary, LGD & National Project Director, AVCB Phase II; Dr Kha Mohid Uddin BPM, Additional DIG (Training & Sports), PHQ, Bangladesh Police; Mr Abu Taher Mohammad Jaber, Deputy Secretary, MoPA and Mr Md. Abdullah Zafar, Team Leader, Protikriti Communications were the resource persons provided training to the member of Master Trainers.

The training course was attended by 16 participants in which 2 from LGD, 7 from NILG, 5 from AVCB Project Phase II and 2 village court experts from NGOs. Major contents covered in the orientation were, Approach of Andragogy, Participatory Training Methodologies, Restorative Justice, Village Court Act, 2006, Village Court Rules, 2016, creating the opportunity to translate ideas and concepts of participatory training into practice and responding to issues of immediate concern to participants raised by them during the course. Following critical issues raised during the MT training Course

- The Village Courts Act, 2006 is a tailored made law to reduces the burden of cases in formal courts.
- If one wants to learn the law, needs to read law frequently, again and again.
- The Higher Court usually discourages lower courts to take village court triable cases.
- Needs to work to get a “practice direction” from Chief Justice for all courts so that they do not receive village court triable cases.
- UP Chair have the power to attach the property as per Section 68 of Local Government (Union Parishad) Act, 2009 that can assist the village court to execute its decision.

The Master Trainers has already provided ToT to all DTP’s member after the training course.

b. Develop and train District Training Pools (DTPs) in all project districts through TOT at NILG (8 days long per T0T)

During reporting period 27 District Training Pools (DTPs) were formed in 27 project working districts where each DTP is comprised of 12 members from the officials of National Legal Aid Services Organization (District Legal Aid Officer), Bangladesh Police (Additional/Assistant Superintendent of Police), Department of Social Services



Additional Secretary, District & Field Admin Wing, Cabinet Division is facilitating DTP training

(Deputy Director), Department of Youth Development (Deputy Director), Department of Women Affairs (District Women Affairs Officer), Partner NGOs and AVCB II Project. Knowledge and skill of members of each DTP have been developed through eight days (Training of Trainer) ToT in partnership with NILG so that they can provide training to the UP representatives, Officials, Village Courts Assistants and Village Police. In a total 315 DTP members received ToT through 15 batches of training. Among the DTP members 25 were from Department of Social Service, 26 from Bangladesh Police, 26 from Department of Youth Development, 23 were from Department of Women Affairs, 25 from NLASO, 27 from AVCB Phase II, 37 from Madaripur Legal Aid Association (MLAA), 45 from Eco-Social Development Organization (ESDO), 37 from WAVE foundation and 44 from BLAST. Considering sustainability of the village courts for ensuring legal services to the women and marginalized people of the rural areas, the DTP was formed so that the DTP members can provide capacity development training to the key actors of village courts like UP chairman, UP Secretary, Assistant Accounts cum Computer Operator on Village Courts after phasing out of the project.

The resource team used a participant-centered approach that encourages reciprocal learning through an exchange of experiences among participants and resource persons. The resource person team stimulated participants to share their views, opinion and thinking about the village court candidly. They used different participatory methods like presentation-discussion, brainstorming, large group discussion, small group discussion, role play, simulation, fish-bowl, question-answer etc. to ensure a congenial atmosphere in the sessions for guaranteeing mutual learning. Participants and facilitators dedicated themselves to engage in a process of mutual teaching and learning. Continued reflection and evaluation were central to the learning process. Transformative learning theory underpins the content and process. Participants gathered hands on knowledge and skill on facilitation and Village Court (Amendment) Act, 2013 and Village Court Rules, 2016 as well as its procedure, documentation etc. through ToT. Participants of the training already got engaged in capacity building training of VC's service providers.

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

1.1.4.a. Training on Village Courts for UP Chair and Panel Chair at district level (3 days long per training)

The members of DTP who received ToT provided capacity building training to 1028 UP Chair and 1119 Panel Chair. The DDLG of the respective district was responsible for organizing the training as Course Coordinator, with the assistance of the District Facilitators (DFs), NGO's District Coordinators and Upazila Coordinators. Training of UP Chair and Panel chair was three days and all of the trainings



were residential and hold at district level under the guidance of DDLGs.

1.1.4.b. Training on Village Courts for UP Secretary and VCA at district level (5 days long per training)

DTP members who received ToT provided capacity building supports to 1035 UP (Men-998 & Women-37) Secretaries and 1088 Village Courts Assistants (VCAs). All the trainings were residential and hold at district level under the guidance of DDLGs. DTP members were engaged in the training programme to provide training to UP Secretaries and VCAs.



1.1.4.c. Training on Village Courts for UP Members (except panel chair) at Upazila level (3 days long non-residential training)

During the reporting period, Upazila administration of project area organized 3 days long nonresidential training on VC for building capacity to 8,221 UP members. Among them 2,187 were women and 6,034 were men. Respective Upazila Nirbahi Officer (UNO) took full responsibility to organize and manage the training courses as Training Course Coordinator with the guidance of respective DDLG as Training Course Director and the technical assistance of respective DTP members as well as the project.



DTP members provided training to UP representatives

During the reporting period, a total number of 289 DTP members provided technical support in conducting different training sessions organized by district and upazila administration for building capacity of the UP representatives, UP Secretaries and Village Courts Assistants (VCA) at District and Upazila level. DTP members are comprised with National Legal Aid Services Organization (District Legal Aid Officer), Bangladesh Police (Additional Superintend of Police), Department of Social Services (Deputy Director), Department of Youth Development (Deputy Director), Department of Women Affairs (District Women Affairs Officer), Partner NGOs and AVCB II Project. Among 289 DTP members, 107 were Govt. Officials.

Table-01: Number of DTP member involved in capacity building training

District	National Legal Aid Office	Bangladesh police	Dep. Of Social Welfare	Dep. Of Youth	Dept. of Women's Affairs	BLAST	MLAA	ESDO	WAVE	UNDP	TOTAL
Satkhira		1	1	1					5	1	9
Bagerhat	0	0	1	1	1				7	1	11
Khulna	1	1	1	1	1				7	1	13

Table-01: Number of DTP member involved in capacity building training											
District	National Legal Aid Office	Bangladesh police	Dep. Of Social Welfare	Dep. Of Youth	Dept. of Women's Affairs	BLAST	MLAA	ESDO	WAVE	UNDP	TOTAL
Barguna	1	0	1	1	1				5	1	10
Patuakhali	1	1	1	1	0				5	1	10
Bhola	1		1	1	0			6		1	10
Pabna	1	1	1	1	1			6		1	12
Naogoan	1	0	0	1	0			7		1	10
Sirajganj	1	1	0	1	1			6		1	11
Gaibandha	1	1	0	1	1			5		1	10
Rangpur	1	1	1	1	1			6		1	12
Kurigram	1	1	1	1	1			7		1	13
Panchagarh	1	1	1	1	1			6		1	12
Gazipur	1	1	1	1	0		6			1	11
Madaripur	1	1	0	1	1		5			1	10
Gopalganj	1	1	1	1	1		4			1	10
Faridpur	1	1	1	1	1		7			1	13
Mymensingh	0	0	1	0	0		4			1	6
Jamalpur	1	1	1	1	1		5			1	11
Netrokona	1	1	1	0	0		4			1	8
Chittagong	0	1	1	1	1	6				1	11
Chandpur	0	1	1	1	1	6				1	11
Cox'sbazar	0	1	1	1	1	7				1	12
Noakhali	0	1	1	1	1	7				1	12
Sylhet	1	1	0	1	0	7				1	11
Moulvibazar	1	1	1	1	1	5				1	11
Sunamganj	1	1	1	1	0	4				1	9
Total	20	22	22	25	18	42	35	49	29	27	289

Resource Persons (Out of DTP members) Involvement During the Training

Role of the local administration is highly knowledgeable and appreciable in organizing and managing the training. They also have conducted training sessions as a resource person though there were not members of District Training Pool (DTP). Out of DTP members, a total of 159 resource persons took different training session at 27 districts during the reporting period. District Judge, Additional District Judge, Director, Local Government, Deputy Commissioner (DC), Chief Metropolitan Magistrate, Police Super (SP), DDLG, ADC (Revenue), ADC (General), ADC (Education and ICT), ADM, Assistant Commissioner, Additional Police Commissioner, Deputy Director (Regional Public Administration), Senior Judicial Magistrate, Assistant Judge, General Secretary (Bar Association) were involved with this process.

Findings of the trainings at districts and Upazilas

During the training at districts and Upazilas, following findings were made:

- Involvement of District and Session Judge, CJM, DC, SP as guest and DTP members (GoB) were inspiring for the participants. Their positive and supportive attitude helps in running VC;
- Contents of the training is very much relevant with the field and it would be very much helpful for them;
- Earlier UP representatives practiced VC without maintaining process in line with VC Act and Rules. But the training will guide them to run the court in a systematic way;
- Time for practical demonstration (Mock trial) on VC and case file preparation was very short. Training duration should be increased;
- This type of training or refresher should be organized in every year;
- If the police station sends the VC's triable cases to the respective union then community people will be encouraged to seek the justice from UP through VC.
- UP representatives feel that this is an opportunity to ensure justice for poor people through village court;
- Upazila level training course may be organized at district level. And could be residential for more attention and interaction among the participants as a part of learning;
- Few DTP member's training session was not interactive and participatory;
- Attitude of some participants were not positive to participate in the training as well as Village Courts.

Challenges faced during the training for UP representatives at district and upazila level

- Ensure all UP-members presence in planned time is very difficult due to distance, local transport & less self-eagerness. Unless and until all participants come to the venue, it's create concern and challenges to start the training session;
- DTP members (GoB) were found not interested to conduct session at upazilla level due to less honorarium and lack of transport facilities.
- Understanding level of UP member were found very poor as a large number of them of are illiterate who can sign only.
- Quality facilitation specially use of training methods and process according to training manual by some of the DTP members were found very poor.
- Running training more than two Upazilas simultaneously was a big challenge to ensure quality training.
- Most of the female UP representatives were found very shy to perform, participate and contribute in the training.
- Video show killed huge time in a non-residential 3 days training.
- Ensure quality mock trial on VC in a non-residential (3 days) training become very tough.
- Lack of positive attitude of the organizer to utilize the training budget properly.
- Frequently changing of training venue due to another program at UNO office impact on training badly.
- Maintaining the resource person's schedule at upazila level were found very difficult due to their own business and urgency.

Recommendations

- DTP members should have rearranged for conducting effective session/ training.
- ADM/UNO/AC Land/OC should be included in the DTP as resource person.
- A copy of training manual need to share with DTP members individually.

- Frequent UP visit and communicate with UP Chairmen and UP members, VCA should be increased by respective DF, DCo and UC to activate the VC in line with Act and Rules.
- Residential training should be organized for UP representative at district level.
- Respective trainers should be more attentive to create an environment so that the female participants feel encouraged to actively participate in the training.
- The training budget should be reached to the organizer at least 10 days prior to the starting date of training.

1.1.4.d. Orientation program on Village Court for Village Police (1 day non-residential at Upazila level)

This activity has shifted in the first quarter of 2018.

Activity 1.1.5 Sensitise key stakeholders (UNOs; DDLGs; judges; police; Women's Development Forum etc.) in project area on gender and village courts

1.1.5.a Capacity building of women UP representatives

With the aim of enhancing knowledge of women UP members about VC process and to enhance their motivation to act as panel member, total 128 day-long workshops were organized with the women UP members during the reporting period. The workshop contents included video show on VC process, discussion about opportunities and importance for women UP members to participate in VC panel, and roles and responsibilities of VC panel members. In a total, 4,516 people participated in 128 workshops where 3,789 were women.

1.1.5.b Develop a gender guideline for Village Courts

During the reporting period, project has drafted a gender guideline for village courts that comprise the basic aspects of gender responsiveness of the village courts while outlining specific roles and responsibilities of the UP/VC in carrying out the village courts in an environment where specific needs of both women and men are addressed both as justice seekers and service providers. The draft has been shared with the PMU for feedback and comments. After finalizing the guideline, as an official guideline on gender mainstreaming, the guideline is to be circulated across all UPs through the ministry.



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

On March, a day-long session held with all project areas' Deputy Director, Local Government (DDLG). The session was chaired by the National Project Director, AVCB Phase II and

facilitated by Md. Golam Yahya, Director, Training and Consultancy of NILG with Dr Syed Naushin Parnini, Senior Assistant Secretary, LGD and Sarder M Asaduzzaman, National Project Coordinator, AVCB Phase II. During the day, an introduction to the project along with its key aims and planned outputs were discussed.

The roles and responsibilities of the DDLG along with local administration were shared, discussed and agreed on. The DDLGs with DFs sat together to discuss and come up with the draft proposal of field training in the 2nd quarter. Ms Mahmuda Afroz, Portfolio Manager (OiC), Governance Cluster, UNDP Bangladesh joined the session also. The NPD and NPC responded to different questions from the DDLGs. They also shared thoughtful recommendations to the project management. This event enabled the DDLGs to be on board with common understanding and clarity about project design, implementation strategy, timeline, funding flow, expenditure modality, reporting etc.

Half Yearly Coordination meeting with Deputy Director, Local Government on AVCB Phase II District Level Project Progress

On July 2017, a day-long a Half Yearly Coordination Meeting held at the Multipurpose Hall Room, BIAM Foundation, Dhaka where 70 participants including all project areas DDLGs, District Facilitators (DFs), Government officials from Local Government Division (LGD), NGOs staff, and Project team from AVCB Project II participated. The overall objective of the Half Yearly Meeting was to make DDLGs accountable for accelerating field level capacity building, outreach and monitoring activities to active Village Courts in their area and to ensure effective coordination among all stakeholders. The specific objective of the events were to - share the achievements of last 6 months of phase II, facilitate exchange of information of learning and to ensure cooperation and coordination to make the project successful and sustainable in future.

After rendering of the last 6 months (from January-June'2017) progress on Village Courts activities the guests along with the participants had an opportunity to get an idea about the



Half Yearly Coordination meeting with Deputy Director Local Government (DDLG)

status of ongoing activities, future target, and challenges. The plan jointly developed by DDLGs & DFs through group works in guidance of LGD and PMU briefly oriented the audiences on how and where the planned activities will be executed, what type of support and coordination are required for executing the plan and role of local administration to implement planned actions and monitor the village courts performance. During the workshop following decision was taken:

- Concern UNO will submit separate budget for village court trainings at UP level to DDLG. DDLG will submit to LGD for approval;
- UNO in association with DF and in guidance of DDLG will arrange, monitor the overall process and quality of the training;
- DDLG will take necessary measure to activate Village Courts Management Committee (VCMC) and to regularize the committee meeting for ensuring monitoring and reporting at their districts based on the Government Order (GO) circulated by LGD dated on 22/03/2012;
- Proper monitoring is required to see if the village courts are functioning properly or not. In this regard, a monitoring mechanism need to be developed to ensure monitoring of village courts by DDLGs and DLGs. Separate monitoring or visit date can be fixed by UNO for observing the hearing process of Village Courts to know whether VCs resolve the disputes following the village courts Act or not.
- UNO will receive Report on VC's performance (quarterly, six-monthly and yearly) from concern chairman and will share with DDLG after compilation. Concern DDLG will share with LGD after compilation of his/her feedback with cc. to DC and District Judge;
- UNO and DDLG will provide guideline and instruction for eflash (court bench) provided by Project

The Coordination meeting was graced by the participation of Mr. Iqramul Haque, Additional Secretary, Local Government Division and National Project Director, AVCB Phase II as Chief Guest while Mr. Emdad Ullah Mian, Joint Secretary, Local Government Division and Ms. Sharmeela Rasool, Portfolio Manager (In-charge), Governance Cluster, UNDP Bangladesh as Special Guests.

Orientation to Project Area's Upazila Nirbahi Officer (UNO) on AVCB Phase II

The Project with the assistance of Local Government Division (LGD) organized two events titled "Orientation to Project Area's Upazila Nirbahi Officer (UNO) on AVCB Phase II". Between two workshops, one held on 20th July at Multipurpose Hall Room, BIAM Foundation and the other one held on 23rd of July 2017 at LGED-RDEC Hall Room, Dhaka where UNO, District Facilitators (DFs), GOB officials from LGD and relevant staff of PMU were participated. The aim of the event was to orient UNOs about the activities of AVCB II project and their role and responsibilities to implement these.

The roles and responsibilities of the UNOs along with local administration were shared, discussed and agreed on. The UNO with DFs sat together to discuss and come up with the draft proposal(plan) of field level capacity building training of VC's service providers, holding Upazila level VCMC meeting and other relevant activities. This event enabled the UNOs to be on board with common understanding and clarity about project design, implementation strategy, timeline, funding flow, expenditure modality, reporting etc. Because of carrying out of these activities jointly, a strong ownership has been developed among the concern UNOs in implementing the project.

Because of the events, PMU has received 3rd quarter field level capacity building plan (Service providers training and VCMC meeting plan) and budget from each project upazila through

DDLGs and disbursed plan accordingly to DDLGs account getting approval from the LGD. Afterwards, each project upazila successfully executed the plan taking assistance from DDLGs, DFs, District Coordination Officers and Upazila Coordinators.

The Coordination meeting was graced by the participation of Mr. Iqramul Haque, Additional Secretary, Local Government Division and National Project Director, AVCB Phase II as Chief Guest while Mr. Maksudur Rahman Patwary, Additional Secretary (Admin & Rules Wing), Mr. Emdad Ullah Mian, Joint Secretary, Local Government Division, Dr. Syeda Naushin Parnini, Senior Assistant Secretary, Local Government division and Sarder Asaduzzamnan, national Project Coordinator, Activating Village Courts in Bangladesh II, UNDP Bangladesh as Special Guests.

Half Yearly Coordination Meeting with UP Chairmen (project area) at District level:

During this reporting period in total 27 day-long Half Yearly Coordination meeting with Union Parishad Chairman held at the DC conference room of respective district where near about 2000 participants including all project areas DDLGs, DTP members, SP, District Legal Aid officer, District Facilitators (DFs), UP Chairman & Panel Chairman, Government officials, NGOs staff, representative from media and project team from AVCB Project II attended in the workshop. The overall objective of the Half Yearly Coordination meeting was to review the last six months progress and lessons learnt of respective district and make the UP Chairmen, UNOs and other stakeholders accountable for accelerating village courts, field level capacity building, outreach and monitoring activities.



Through this workshop the guests along with the participants got an idea about the status of ongoing activities of the project, total target of the project, VC's performance, learning vs challenges. During the meeting following decision was taken:

- DDLG and UNO will take necessary measure to activate Village Courts Management Committee (VCMC) at their respective areas and to regularize the committee meeting for ensuring monitoring and reporting based on the Government Order (GO) circulated by LGD dated on 22/03/2012;
- Proper monitoring is required to see if the village courts are functioning properly or not. In this regard, a monitoring mechanism need to be developed to ensure monitoring of village courts by DDLGs and UNOs. Both of them will visit UPs for observing the hearing process of Village Courts to know whether VCs resolve the disputes following the village courts Act or not;
- UNO will receive quarterly VC's performance report from chairmen under his jurisdiction and send it to DDLG after compilation. Compiling UNO's report DDLG

will his/her district report and will share it with LGD with a copy to DC and District Judge;

- UP Chairman will fix one or two days in a week for VC's hearing coordinating with UNOs.

Annual Planning Workshop of AVCB II:

Effective planning is key in achieving the results and target of the project and hence the project has organized three days Annual Review and Planning Workshop 2017 from 30 November 2017 to 2 December 2017 at The Palace, Bahubal, Habiganj, Bangladesh. In a total 88 participants attended in the workshop from different ministries and departments of government and UNDP. Overall objective of the workshop was to develop a work plan of 2018 involving different stakeholders by reviewing success and lessons learnt of 2017. The specific objectives were:

- To share basic information, achievements and challenges faced between 2016– 2017;
- To share the thematic priorities of the project (Gender, Institutionalization, Outreach, and strengthening LGD's link) and stakeholder's role and responsibilities in achieving intended results;
- To setting priorities for 2018 and prepare draft AWP 2018.



During the three day workshop there were one inaugural session and four technical sessions titled ‘AVCB II project journey’, ‘Reflection (*Achievements of AVCB II, challenges and lessons learning*)’, ‘Discussion on thematic area: -Outreach strategy, Institutionalization (Capacity building and Monitoring), and Strengthen LGD links to relevant justice coordination mechanisms’, and ‘Setting priorities for 2018: Prepare AWP 2018’. Each of the session was very interesting and interactive as at the end of each session there was an open discussion session where participants raised different questions and gave their opinions for the betterment of the village courts. Findings/recommendation that came out from the workshop are given below:

- Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) contain a series of questions and their answers that the service recipients and service providers may face during service delivery and service obtaining will be developed and distributed to the relevant stakeholders;
- NGO should submit progress report to DDLG for getting their consent;
- Coordination meeting with local administration specially DDLGs, UNOs, DFs, VC’s service providers and NGOs should be organized. Ministry may issue a circular on this;
- DFs can share the approved AWP 2018 to the DDLGs and UNOs for their better understanding.
- The NILG will keep training on VC in their yearly training calendar;
- Incorporation of VC issues in to the curriculum of JATI, BPATC and Police academy are very important and project should give more emphasize on this;
- DDLG, Faridpur and Sylhet has committed to provide hardware support to replicate web based VCMIS in Faridpur and Sylhet district;
- MoLJPA committed in the meeting that they will negotiate to ensure presence of DDLGs in DLAC meetings for early screening of cases in formal court and forward to the VC. They will also coordinate to ensure participation of DDLGs in case coordination committee meeting and police magistracy committee meeting as observers.
- LGD will issue two GOs- one on outreach activities instructing local administration to motivate local NGOs to include VC issue in their outreach activities; and another one on DMIE system instructing local administration to replicate DMIE system.

Scaling up of AVCB (project launching workshop):

Project with the assistance of Local Government Division organized the event Scaling up of Activating Village Courts in Bangladesh Project on 9th April 2017 at the Pan Pacific Sonargaon Hotel with 180 participants from all relevant government and non-government stakeholders from AVCB Pilot and AVCB Phase II areas, government officials from central, division and district administration, representatives from local government institution- mostly UPs, NGO Officials, media professionals and the community peoples who were directly benefited by village courts steered by AVCB Project.

The aim of the event was to acknowledge the achievements treasured in Pilot phase, share reflections, experience, and learning of the AVCB Project with a view to encouraging all relevant stakeholders in making the AVCB Phase II successful following the pilot phase.

The Celebration was graced by the participation of Mr. Abdul Malek, Secretary, LGD as the Chief Guest while Mr. Mario Ronconi, Minister-Counsellor, Head of Cooperation, Head of Unit, European Union Delegation to Bangladesh, and Mr. Sudipto Mukerjee, Country Director, UNDP Bangladesh as Special Guests. Mr. Iqramul Haque, Additional Secretary, Local Government Division and National Project Director, AVCB Phase II Project chaired the event.

After screening of the TV spot (60 seconds) on Village Courts process the guests along with the participants had an opportunity to listen to two real stories by two of the beneficiaries from the community took part in the Celebration.

The one minute spot briefly oriented the audiences on how and where village courts session takes place, what type of disputes village courts can attend together with basic information on village courts legal framework. After that participant shared their following opinion, feedback, and recommendations to enrich the project target.



Findings/recommendation of the workshop:

- Separate budget for village court activities is needed at UP;
- Award /reward could be given to the UP for their outstanding performance in village courts;
- Linkage with the Legal Aid Committee should be established for increasing efficiency of village courts;
- Police should refer the case to the Village Court which could be tried under its jurisdiction instead of sending it to the magistrate or higher court and rules should be changed in this regard;
- Separate human resources are required for the Village Courts;
- UPs outside of the project areas does not resolve the disputes following the village courts Act. They resolve the disputes which are out of village court's jurisdiction. A Government Order (GO) should be issued to all UPs instructing to resolve the disputes following the village courts Act;
- Proper monitoring is required to see if the village courts are functioning properly or not. In this regard a monitoring mechanism need to be developed to ensure monitoring of village courts by DDLGs and DLGs. An app could be developed to monitor village courts by DDLGs and DLGs;

- The name of the village court should be changed to Union Court as it functions at the union level;
- UPs allocation should be based on village courts performance;
- A GO need to be issued for setting up ejlas in all UPs outside of the project areas from UP's budget;
- Fees of VC should be increased for increasing the faith of people on VC;
- There should be separate budget for the Village Courts at GoB mechanism;
- Jurisdiction of Village Court should be increased to minimize the case backlog in formal courts;
- Intensive promotional campaigns are required to aware community people about village courts and its function.

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

The Capacity Development Unit made eight (8) field visits aiming to provide technical supports to the DTP members through observing the training session organized by local administration. They have covered following districts: Shunamgonj, Moulvibazar, Khulna, Bagerhat, Gopalganj, Faridpur, Barguna, Sylhet, Gaibandha, Rangpur, Panchgrah, Faridpur, Barguna & Patuakhali, Gazipur, Mymensingh districts during the reporting period. Few critical observations are given below:

Observation of District level training on VC for UP Secretaries and VCAs:

- Local administration was involved in organizing the training;
- Training venue was found well-furnished with colorful group work's materials;
- Training participants were found very responsive and supportive;
- Case '*Nathi*' was prepared during training but quality of the *Nathi* was not good. *Nathi* was incomplete (relevant document was not found attached with order sheet), sequence of organizing *Nathi* was incorrect, order sheet was incomplete, etc.. Respective facilitators (DF & District Coordinator) didn't check the "*Nathi*" whether it is correct or not;
- Respective organizer (DF or District Coordinator) didn't use still camera for better documentation of the event.

Upazila level training on VC for UP Members:

- Involvement of DTP members in conducting the training sessions were satisfactory;
- Training venue was good in most of the cases;
- Most of the training session started at 10 am and ended at 5 pm;
- Facilitation of few Upazila Coordinator were very good and interactive;
- Female participants were found less spontaneous;
- Participants could explain the process of VC clearly;
- Most of the cases multimedia screen kept in wrong place, as a result 50% participants could not watch the sessions that were displayed on the screen;
- Few Upazila Coordinator was found not active in terms of his roles and responsibility in organizing the training;
- Coordination gap between UNO, District Facilitator (DF), District Coordinator (DC) and Upazila Coordinator (UC) were found during the visit.

Conclusions and Recommendations:

Role of local administration including cooperation of DTP members and partner NGOs staff in organizing and conducting the session was commendable. Few recommendations are given below for further improvement.

- Project personnel should be more aware on overall preparation in organizing any events at district and upazila level;
- DFs, District Coordination Officers, UCs are required to be more sincere, and sensitive during the training session to make it effective;
- DF should be more involved with the upazila administration in organizing upazila level training to ensure the management compliance
- During training at upazila level, if any incompliance regarding management, food etc. from upazila administration is observed Upazila Coordinator should bring it immediately to the knowledge of respective DF and District Coordination Officer;
- Respective PNGO staff member should use their still camera for better documentation of different events;
- Respective organizer (UC, DC & DF) should be more aware in placing multimedia along with screen in right place and other training materials so that all participants can get access to them;

Activity 1.1.7 Develop capacity of field level staff

On January, a two days' orientation was facilitated with newly recruited District Facilitators (DFs). The orientation was focused on basic understanding of the project, the project's M&E-Finance-Operation and other necessary UNDP and LGD's policy issues.

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

This activity is required 2 days full involvement of respective DFs, DCOs and UCs as it is a divisional level daylong event. But the expected participants of the event were solely engaged with field level capacity building initiatives. Considering this situation, the activity deferred to next year.

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

There were no planned activities under this.

Activity 1.1.9 Coordination and monitoring field-level activities

District Facilitators (DFs) deployed in 27 districts were engaged in the following activities in consultation with the respective DDLG and in coordination with the PNGO colleagues'.

- Setting up office at respective DC offices with support from the respective DDLGs.
- Building and strengthening the relationship with DDLGs to ensure their support to start project activities smoothly;
- Introducing AVCB Phase II with local administration such as District Legal Aid Officer, ASP, UNO, UP members and local journalist to extend their support as required;
- Communicating with local level government officers to form DTP in each district as per guideline from the PMU, and ensured their presence in TOT training in NILG as scheduled;
- Collecting information of NGOs working in the project working areas for NGO mapping;

- Providing supports to respective DDLGs to prepare training and VCMC meeting plan and budget and ensure timely submission to NPD for its approval;
- Monitoring *ejlas* (court bench) installation done by partner NGOs to ensure its quality;
- Monitoring and providing supports to partner NGOs to recruit 1,077 VCAs in 1077 unions ensuring engagement of local administration to complete the recruitment;
- Assisted local administration (DDLGs and UNOs) in organizing capacity building training for key village courts players (UP Chair, Panel Chair, Secretaries and VCAs);
- Provided supports to local administration in forming and activating Upazila and District Village Court Management Committees;
- Collected and analyzed relevant information (baseline information) on *ejlas* (court bench) set up to avoid duplication of its allocation;
- Monitored *ejlas* (court bench) installation done by partner NGOs to ensure its quality as per specification;
- Assisted UNOs and PNGOs to plan and budget for 128 forms handover event, provided support to organize 128 forms delivery events during reporting period;
- Checked quality of signboard installed by vendors in 1080 unions through spot check;
- Provided support to plan and budget to organize workshop on Importance of Women Participation in Village Courts Process at 128 upazilas. And provided supports to organize 35 workshops on Importance of Women Participation in Village Courts Process at Upazila;
- Assisted Union Parishad Chairman for providing incentives for Village Police at Union level;
- Provided technical support to PNGO to organize Court Yard Meeting, Video learning Show, Counseling support;
- Guided PNGO to organize Community sharing meeting at UP level;
- Assisted PNGO to organize rally in association with Union Parishad Chairman for awareness raising for mass people on Village Courts services.

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

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

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

Engagement and role of Judiciary and Police Officials in relation to effective function of VC is significant as appeal from VCs goes to assistant judge for civil dispute and judicial magistrate for criminal matters as well as many petty disputes can also be resolved at VCs without going to police stations. The Village Court Rules 2016 also includes District & Sessions Judge as one of the reporting channels, in addition to District Administration, making sure lower judiciary is informed about village courts progress and performance. It is essential to make the Judiciary and Police aware on the VC activities as well as how VC works and how the procedures can be simplified for effective functioning of VCs. Police can also play a pivotal role in reducing people's sufferings through promoting village courts information and message among justice seekers as well as a formal strategy/process could be devised for case referral from Police Stations. Thus, the engagement with lower the judiciary and police officials is critical to enhance cooperation and coordination among VCs, Judiciary and Police to make VCs effective and functional. Hence the project has planned to conduct

27 workshops/opinion sharing meeting with District Judiciary and Police. During reporting period 6 consultations were held in Gopalganj, Madirpur, Noakhali, Jamalpur, Sylhet and Naogaon Districts. The aim of the consultation meetings was to give an overview of Village Courts, share challenges and learnings from pilot phase, seek feedback and recommendations from the targeted stakeholders to increase early screening and case referral as well as to enhance cooperation and coordination. To organise these consultations and ensure participation of Judges, approval from the supreme court is mandatory. Therefore, the request letter for allowing the district judiciary to host and attend the consultation in project districts was sent to the Ministry of Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs and the ministry then sent a letter to the Supreme Court for formal approval. Finally, supreme court approved the proposal from the Law Ministry and the ministry has issued GO (Government Order) for the District Judiciary to attend the consultation and host the meeting at District Judge's Conference Room in project districts.

Series of recommendations are generated through this consultation with judiciary and police which will increase collaboration and cooperation with Judiciary and Police to make the VC full functional. It will also help to change the relevant laws and policies to remove the practical barriers.



Key recommendations from the consultations are given below:

- VC Act and Rules needed to be amended to remove inconsistency and weaknesses. Proper accountability mechanisms need to include in the law and clear connection with judiciary shall be in the law which will make VCs more effective and functional.

- Inspection from judiciary is crucial for quality assurance of VC cases in terms of justice delivery, VC act should be amended to include inspection mechanism. DJ/CJM should have the power to inspect the VCs for quality assurance, it should be included in the law.
- Large scale awareness programme on Village courts should be carried out to make the VC functional and change the justice seeking behavior of community people.
- Monthly/Quarterly VC Coordination meeting could be organized with UP chair, Judiciary and Police like Police-Magistracy Conference or DLAC meeting. A Judge could be designated for hearing VC matters and supervise VCs in the District.
- Introducing remuneration/incentive for Ups for conducting VC cases.
- Introducing clear proceedings for proving certified copies of case records to parties with certain time.
- VCs pecuniary jurisdiction needs to be increased considering the market, if the assistant judges pecuniary jurisdiction is increased (which is currently under process).
- All the UP Chair, Secretaries and UP members should be trained on VC and other relevant laws, continues mentoring should be ensured for developing judicial mind as there is already concern about the neutrality of the UP Chair due to their nomination from political parties, it is crucial to proof their neutrality as VC Chair as well as to build trust among the community people.
- In relation to appeal from VCs to District Courts, judges strongly recommended that right to appeal should available for all decisions taken by VCs as in Bangladesh Context, it is easy to bribe the panel members who may be initially nominated by the parties. Right to appeal shall not be taken away from parties under any circumstance.
- Proper referral/case transfer mechanism should be developed as currently there is no mechanism where Judiciary can get the update of the cases that they transfer to VCs for trial. Another issue is VCs often mix-up with cases that are send for investigation and referred cases for trial.
- As per Bangladesh Constitution every Court must be inspected by superior Court but no inspection power has given to CJM/JM/DJ, this is one the weakest part of the law. There should a system of inspection of VCs by Higher Court(CJM/DJ). VC Act should be amended to include this provision.
- Focused should be given on resolving disputes and to help the justice seekers, not to make the law too strict in terms of filling up the formats etc. Two types of VC Jurisdiction (formal and informal) could also be introduced.
- In parallel with Village Courts, Conciliation of Disputes(Municipal Area) Board Act 2004 (*Pouro Birodh Mimangsha* Board Act 2004) should be revised, the jurisdiction under this act is still 25000BDT, whereas many appeals come to District Court under this act. Participants requested UNDP to place this recommendation at national level for policy change.

In all six consultations, the Judges acknowledged that if VC is functional it will reduce peoples suffering, court burdens as well as case backlog, however, they emphasized on implementation and quality decision making. They also stressed the importance to build trust and confidence on Chairmen in the community mentioning the recent political influence in UP election in terms of nomination as well as power dynamics.

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

After completing 27 District Level Consultations with Judiciary and Police by June 2018, national level advocacy and policy dialogue on early screening and case referral will be organised in July/August 2018.

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

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

The key findings from the assessment are:

- Out of 27 DF, 2 DFs have attended DLAC meeting as observer member.
- Out of 27 DDLG, only 2 DDLGs have attended DLAC meeting as acting ADM.
- AVCB PNGOs are Co-opt member in 1 District, Observer member in 3 Districts, regular member in 4 Districts and no membership in 19 Districts
- DLAC meeting where DFs attended they raised VC issues with DLAO/DJ/DCM and Judges acknowledged that raising VC issue in DLAC is important as cases are referred from District Courts to VCs as well as applications also come from Ups. DLAC can also look at the applications they receive when they do screening for legal aid.
- Districts were NGOs are member of DLAC, in most of the occasions they did not discuss about VCs as there was no such agenda. 2 DDLG have attended DLAC meeting as an acting ADM but VC issues was not discussed.

It became evident from the assessment that most of the cases DF, DDLG and PNGO believe that it is important to raise VC issues in DLAC meeting, however, they think that it needs ministerial approval/permission. Many District Judge/Judicial magistrates also acknowledged the importance of inclusion of VC issues in DLAC meeting. Both VCs and DLACs could be benefitted through developing strong linkage as well as including VC agenda in the meeting and creating provision for VC representative's presence in the DLAC meetings. Strong coordination and collaboration among those institutions will lessen sufferings of the justice seekers as pressure on formal judiciary could also be reduced through this initiative.

Now the critical part is to formalize/facilitate the process in AVCB working districts from national level. The issue of VCs inclusion in DLAC meeting as well as other meetings is being raised during ongoing District Level Consultation with Judiciary and Police.

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

The objectives of this activity will be achieved through the Consultation with District Judiciary and Police under activity under 1.2.1.a. However, there is demand and need from field that referral from VC/Union Parishad to other institutions/agencies (District Courts, DLAC, Police Stations, NGOs etc) is essential for complete service delivery as applicants come to VC for various legal relief and many of those are not within the jurisdiction of VCs. Therefore, if a referral system is introduced to refer applicants to other legal service providers/appropriate authorities it will make the VCs more effective and full functional. Hence, project has planned to conduct this workshop with VCA, DLAC and Police to facilitate referral from VC to other agencies. There will be 27 workshops in 27 districts. Orientation for DFs to facilitate this workshop will be held very soon and all the workshops shall be completed by June 2018.

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

A primary meeting was held in October 2017 with the newly appointed Registrar General of Supreme Court Mr. Zakir Hossain and Special Officer to Chief Justice Md. Mr Saifur Rahman to discuss this issue. They have suggested the project to gather field experiences through consultation with the Judiciary at district level and submit proposal to Supreme Court with evidence and research, then they will pursue it for issuance. Thus, completing the ongoing consultations with judiciary and police by June 2018, project will submit the proposal for issuing Practice Direction by the Honorable Chief Justice

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

1.2.3.a. Assessment on legal compliance of village courts proceedings (through Institutional Assessment)

This activity has been shifted to 2019 in consultation with Programme colleagues and M & E component aiming to achieve quality assessment report.

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

There was no plan to carry out this activity in the reporting quarter.

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

Procurement process will start in next quarter.

Activity 1.2.4 Printed and distributed necessary VC materials and guidelines.

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

This activity has been shifted to 2019.

1.2.4.b. Print VC Booklet

VC booklet is used as a ready reference on VC law and procedure for VC officials, judicial and administrative officers as well as other stakeholders and facilitates the adjudication in VC. It contains The VCs Act, the relevant sections of the Penal Code, 1860, The Cattle-trespass Act, 1871 and Oaths Act, 1873, the VC Rules, 1976 and a guideline regarding the procedure of VC

During this reporting period, the project reviewed the content of the VC Bangla booklet developed during the first phase of the project. Already the content of the VC booklet has been vetted by Local Government Division (LGD) and now it is under printing process. The forwarding and preface have been signed the honorable secretary of MoLGRD&C and NPD. VC booklet shall be available in next quarter. In a total 20,000 copies will be printed and distributed to UP functionaries, local administration and other key stakeholders.

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

As Union Parishad is the core institution to activate, run and strengthen the Village Courts, it is very important to support UP Chairmen, UP Secretaries, Accounts Assistant and Computer Operators (AACOs) and Village Courts Assistants along with general UP Members to exercise/handle VC operational issues in an effective way without external technical support or lawyers' engagement. To develop VC Operational Manual, project hired a National Consultant.

National Consultant has started working from 11th October 2017, undertaken field visits in Sunamgonj, Jhenaidah, Satkhira and Gazipur districts. He has conducted 24 Key Informant Interview-KIIs (Judges, DCs, DDLGs, DLAOs, UNOs, District Women Affairs Officers, Deputy Director-Youth, Police) , 09 Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) with relevant stakeholders, examined the case records in VCs. Consultant also conducted 04 Consultation Meetings with key stakeholders of VC (UP Chairmen, UP Secretaries, UP Members, Village Courts Assistants (VCA), Accounts Assistant cum Computer Operator (AACO) and UNOs). The content list and structure for Operation Manual was developed and shared with the Ministry in a meeting and relevant official provided their guidance and expectations for development of the final draft. After incorporating field expectations and Ministry's guidance, Consultant submitted the first draft of Operation Manual on 11 December 17 which was shared with all project staff for reviewing and feedback. After incorporating the feedback from the project staff, the Consultant submitted the final draft which has been forwarded to the Ministry for reviewing and vetting.

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

Printing process shall start next quarter(January-March18) once the Draft Operational Manual get approved by the Ministry

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

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

Activity 1.3.1 LGD took over performance monitoring of 351 UPs with regard to Village Courts from pilot phase

A meeting- presided over by Mr ASM Mahbubul Alam, Director General (Additional Secretary), MIE Wing, Local Government Division- was held on 15th March 2017 on strengthening GoB's monitoring for evaluating Village Court's performance with MIE Wing of LGD. Mr Iqramul Haque, National Project Director, AVCB II Project and Additional Secretary, Local Government Division; Mashud Ahamed, Joint Secretary (Monitoring), Local Government Division; Ms Luthfun Nahar, Senior Assistant Secretary, LGD; Sarder M. Asaduzzaman, National Project Coordinator, AVCB II project; and Md. Sirazul Haq, Research & Evaluation Manager, AVCB II project were present in the meeting. With other agenda, it was discussed in the meeting that the project has a plan to provide technical support (reporting forms/formats) to LGD to take over the monitoring of Village Court's performance of 351 UPs which were handed over to local administration following the successful implementation of the pilot phase. Following decisions were made in the meeting:

- Mr. Mashud Ahmed, Joint Secretary (Monitoring), Local Government Division will be the focal point for Decentralized Monitoring Inspection and Evaluation (DMIE) System to be replicated under AVCB II project and he will provide necessary supports in the regards;
- An Individual Consultant (Monitoring Associate) will be hired under the project to assist the focal point of MIE Wing in implementing the DMIE System. National Project Coordinator (NPC), AVCB II project shared a draft ToR of the Consultant. Joint Secretary (Monitoring), Local Government Division is assigned to review the draft TOR and forward official comment to AVCB II project as soon as possible;
- A revised guideline of DMIE system was shared with MIE Wing for their feedback. Joint Secretary (Monitoring) is assigned to review and comments on the same;
- The AVCB II project will send the proposed activities listed in the TPP to MIE wing, LGD;
- The National Project Coordinator (NPC), AVCB II project shared the reporting mechanism of DMIE system where DDLG will send the report to MIE wing with a copy to DC and District Judge. It has been decided that a copy of the report will be sent to DLG also. DLG will also participate in different activities implemented by DDLGs regarding DMIE system.

Activity 1.3.2 Strengthen institutional capacity of MIE Wing of LGD, and District and Upazilla officials to manage the performance of UPs and oversee Village Courts through DMIE system.

a. Facilitate LGD/MIE wing to issue revised GO on DMIE system (No cost activity)

Revised guideline on DMIE system has already been submitted to MIE Wing, LGD for the feedbacks. Once the guideline is finalised by MIE Wing, LGD, necessary initiatives will be undertaken for issuing revised GO.

b. Develop ToR of National Consultant to be hired to provide supports to MIE Wing to implement DMIE system

Hiring of individual Consultant (Monitoring Associate) following GOB procurement policy is under process. Meanwhile Technical Evaluation Committee has reviewed the proposals received from different consultants. As a process, initially a ToR of Individual Consultant (Monitoring Associate) was developed and finalized incorporating feedbacks of MIE Wing, LGD and then went for advertisement following GOB procurement policy.

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

Develop proposal for revising GOs of VCMC:

The LGD issued two GOs- One for forming and functioning District Village Court Management Committee (DVCMC) and another for forming and functioning Upazila Village Courts Management Committee (UVCMC) across Bangladesh on 22nd March 2012 aiming to managing and monitoring village courts performance by local administration. Following the TPP, the AVCB II project has been providing necessary supports to make both committees functional in project working areas. During the meeting held with DDLGs at Dhaka, they raised some limitations and inconsistencies of both GOs and requested to address those to make both committees more functional and accountable. In this regard, the project has

conducted a study on both committees aiming to identify the limitations of both committees and produced an assessment report. The assessment has made following recommendations:

1. General recommendations (applicable for both committees)

Issues	Recommendations /Proposals	Justification
<p>1. Village Courts Management Committee is working as one of the AVCB project component. But as per the GO, VCMC is a Committee to monitor and ensure the quality of the Village Courts performance across the country.</p>	<p>Initiative may be taken for circulating a GO/Directive by the Cabinet Division for activating VCMC ensuring participation of the nominated persons (not his/her representative always) and reporting to the higher authorities with a view to making it functional. This directive will ensure regular and effective VCMC's roles.</p>	<p>After phasing out of the AVCB Phase-II, VCMCs will be the most important and close authority to play oversight role for ensuring the quality implementation of the Village Courts through regular monitoring. Therefore, VCMC should have the power, authority and scope to play strong oversight roles.</p>
<p>2. VCMCs are active within the AVCB phase-II project areas with project supports.</p>	<p>The directive from the Cabinet Division may ensure formation and functioning of VCMC in all Districts and Upazilas across the country.</p>	<p>Functioning of VCMCs in the Upazilas and Districts beyond the project areas will help in performing the Village Courts activities without project support and it will be the evidences for VC's sustainability.</p>
<p>3. Specific date and time for VCMC meetings are not mentioned in the GOs; therefore, the participants forget the date and remain absent in the meeting.</p>	<p>Date can be mentioned in the GOs for the both VCMC's meeting.</p>	<p>This will make the members of VCMCs more accountable.</p>
<p>4. Formation of VC Monitoring cell.</p>	<p>As VCMC itself plays main roles for monitoring VC's performance; therefore, forming a separate monitoring cell will limit scope of the works for the VCMCs.</p>	<p>Formation of VC Monitoring cell within VCMC is a duplication.</p>
<p>5. VCMCs as monitoring bodies don't have a prescribed M&E format/ system to use for smooth functioning.</p>	<p>An operational manual for the VCMCs with its objective, scope of works, monitoring and reporting tools may help the VCMCs to function its oversight role smoothly.</p>	<p>As operational manual helps the institutions and individual with the guidance and clarifies why this work is being done as well as indicates the way of doing works.</p>

2. District Village Courts Management Committee (DVCMC)

Issues	Recommendations /Proposals	Justification
A. Structure		
1. Representation from the District Judiciary in the DVCMC meetings will help in-depth discussion and providing clarification on legal issues as and when required.	Considering the importance, inter-ministerial or tripartite Negotiation among LGD, Law Ministry and the Supreme Court may help to find out a way to address the issue and ensure participation of a member of the District Judiciary in DVCMC meeting.	As the District Judiciary is the appeal authority of the Village Courts and also cases under VC's jurisdiction are sent to union parishad (UP) to resolve through VCs by the District Courts; therefore, their participation will help in discussing and getting clarification on the complex legal issues those come from the UP Chairmen and other VC members from the field levels.
2. Except the Sadar Upazila Chairmen, participation of all Upazila Chairmen in DVCMC meetings may not possible.	Upazila Chairmen can be included as one of the members of the UVCMCs where they have direct linkage with the UP Chairmen.	Upazila Chairmen live in Upazila level and they have political influence on the UP Chairmen. So, their influence through the UVCMC meetings may ensure efficiencies of the UP Chairmen.
3. Jatiyo Mohila Sangstha (JMS) works with its own focused agendas and their contribution is not significant in VCMC meetings as a civil society organization.	An option may be included for involving locally active civil society organization or even an individual civil society actor in DVCMC where JMS doesn't work.	Local civil society organization and/or Individual actors are vibrant and plays important roles on local issues through critical analysis and providing relevant inputs.
4. Number of Participants of DVCMC is not fixed.	Mention the Number of participants for VCMC against each designation in the GOs.	Create confusion whether one or all members of the same category/designation will be invited to attend the meeting.
5. Member Secretary is not nominated in the GO.	DDLG plays leading roles in coordinating DVCMC's all activities, therefore, DDLG should be the designated as the Member secretary of the DVCMC.	-DDLG is the responsible for LG related issues of his district. S/he plays lead role for VCMC and other activities of local government. As responsible, s/he can organize and make the committee fruitful through his/her experience on VC and position.
B. Functional		
1. Responsibilities of the DVCMC are	A detail and specific TOR indicating the tasks for the	Otherwise all responsibilities will be on the Member

Issues	Recommendations /Proposals	Justification
mentioned in very general way and difficult to understand who will do what.	VCMC chairman, members and monitoring cell can be enclosed as annex of the GO; that may help in building a common understanding of responsibilities and increase efficiencies and accountabilities.	Secretary's shoulder while other members will be free of responsibility and accountability.
2. Assigned members of the DVCMC sometimes remain absent and send others to represent him/her in the meeting which makes the DVCMCs decision making process delayed.	If the provision of strictly maintaining rule for the nominated participant to attend in DVCMC meetings is mentioned in the GO, all the nominated members will attend regularly instead of sending representatives.	If the designated persons remain absent in VCMC meetings, required decisions can't be made by the committee as and when necessary.

3. Upazila Village Court Management Committee (UVCMC)

Issues	Recommendations /Proposals	Justification
A. Structural		
1. Absence of Judicial Magistrate in UVCMC meetings at Upazila level has reduced the scope for discussing and getting clarifications on complex legal issues related to VC demanded by the UP Chairmen.	It will be helpful if the participation of Legal Aid Officer can be ensured in the UVCMC meetings through a national level negotiation with the Law Ministry and National Legal Aid Services organization (NLASO).	UP chairman frequently faces different problems with the proper application of VC Acts and Rules and other relevant legal issues in operating Village Courts. The delay in getting clarifications affects village courts' work directly; therefore, addressing this issue should be a priority work.
2. There are confusions for inclusion of district level officers as UVCMC member.	The revised GO can include upazila level officers of different departments, directorates instead of District Level Officers' position.	District level officers can't always attend meeting at Upazila level if they don't have their own office priority.
3. Nominating women UP members from the reserved seats for the UVCMC remains challenging.	If the number of participants from the institutions where several persons exist is mentioned in the GO, their participation can be ensured.	Upazila consisted of five UPs have 15 women members from the reserved seats, selecting one Woman member among the 15 is very difficult and due to this reason participation of this member in the UVCMC meetings is very poor so far.

Issues	Recommendations /Proposals	Justification
4. Number of Participants of UVCMC is not fixed.	To mention the number of participants for UVCMC against each designation in the GOs.	Mentioning the number of participants for UVCMC against each designation will make it clearer to all.
5. Member Secretary is not nominated in the GO.	Upazila Social Services Officer can plays leading roles in coordinating all UVCMC's activities, therefore, Upazila Social Services Officer could be the designated as the Member secretary of the UVCMC.	Member Secretary can plays leading roles in coordinating all UVCMC's activities.
B. Functional		
1. UVCMC has not yet played critical roles through close monitoring and evaluating performance of VC at UP level. It only discusses on the case related statistical status of the VC provided by the Upazila Coordinator of the partner NGOs.	Reviewing the scope of works for the UVCMC will help the committee members to focus on their specific roles.	UVCMC members attend in the meeting and discuss the issues based on GO. The SoW mentioned in GO is significantly brief. So, detailed SoW for VCMC members can lead them to play his/her role properly.
2. Coordination among the UVCMC members is weak.	Organizing UVCMC meeting bimonthly can increase coordination among the UVMC members.	The role of UVCMC is to provide feedbacks for maintaining and improving quality of the VC performance in a coordinated way. So, bimonthly meetings can help in discussing quality issues.
3. Gender related issues are not discussed in the UVCMC meetings.	Inclusion of Gender as a cross cutting thematic issues can be included within the scope of works for the UVCMC as a prioritized agenda.	Village Court works within the community where gender related problems are very common. And women in our society are the most vulnerable due to gender based discrimination. So, gender issues can be prioritized in all aspects of the VC functions.

Based on the assessment findings, a proposal has been developed for revising both committees and its functionalities.

Provide supports to VCMCs for conducting quarterly meetings:

In total twenty-six (26) District level VCMCs and one hundred twenty-seven (127) Upazila level VCMCs were formed in project areas following the GO till reporting period. Both committees are required to meet quarterly to monitor the village courts performance and

provide strategic direction. During this reporting period, the project provided technical and financial supports for holding District and Upazila VCMC meetings.

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

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

Develop outreach strategy: To develop an outreach strategy that builds links with the social development/legal aid NGOs as well as government institutions already active at the local level, and create a network to disseminate VCs information, the project conducted 32 Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) and 64 Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) during this quarter for collecting various data. For these activities, the project selected 16 districts randomly from 8 divisions focusing on urban and rural background, poverty, climate change issues and others. Following a concept paper FGDs were conducted in two upazilas of each district among community people and UP representatives. KIIs were conducted with DC, DDLGs, UNOs, police, district legal aid office and other GOB agencies as well as media and UP chairmen. Data analysis of these FGDs and KIIs are going on and a draft outreach strategy will be prepared by next quarter.

Major causes of this delay were producing a number of IEC/BCC materials like, printing leaflets, developing content and draft designs of AVCB II website, project's newsletter, drafting script of community video drama, printing project's brochure, installing VC signboards, producing branded caps, polo-shirts, pens and airing TVC on VC during October-December 2017.

Upazila level outreach workshops with GO-NGOs for promoting VC messages

During this reporting period project has organized 128 workshops in upazila level with local GOB institutions and NGOs for promoting village courts messages through their own outreach activities. The major objectives of the workshops were to identify relevant GOB institutions and NGOs having outreach activities at community level that would be able to encourage community people for receiving services from village courts. . Approximately 6,500 participants from GOB-NGOs explored their own outreach activities and processes to incorporate VC messages promotion. In the workshops, participants from GOB-NGOs mentioned that they will circulate VC messages through their group meetings, court yard meetings, beneficiaries meetings, capacity building activities, staff meetings etc. As technical assistance, they demanded presence of one technical staff in their outreach events to share VC messages, orientation on VC, CYM flipcharts, poster, leaflet and other IEC/BCC materials.

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

Community mobilisation initiatives for local citizens about VCs: Awareness of community members, service providers and other relevant stakeholders about village courts and its function will be increased through community mobilization initiatives to be conducted both at national and local level. During this reporting period, the project has delivered VC related

message to 36,79,383 community people (50% women) through 108,868 courtyard meetings ,1900 community meetings, 5843 video show and 1906 rally through its four partner NGOs.

Activities	# of activities	Total number of community participated		
		Men	Women	Total
Courtyard meeting	108868	588122	1250604	1838726
Community meeting	1900	66522	15751	82273
Video show	5843	911342	463287	1374629
Rally	1906	262210	121545	383755
Total		1828196	1851187	3679383



Courtyard meeting



Video show

and Upazila Coordinators hired by partners NGOs are the members of District Training Pools (DTPs) and are equipped with knowledge and skilled by the project to provide supports to local administration in organizing and conducting training for key village courts players. During this reporting period, they have provided supports in organizing and conducting training for 12,478 key VC actors.

Attend District and Upazila level GO-NGOs Coordination meeting: As mentioned earlier that the project has planned to develop an outreach approach that builds links with the social development/legal aid NGOs already active at the local level, and create a network to disseminate VCs information. In this regard partner organizations are supposed to use Upazila and District level NGOs coordination meeting as vehicle to influence local NGOs to disseminate VCs issues. Meanwhile partner organizations have participated 1024 number of district and Upazila level GO-NGO coordination meetings during this reporting period.

Organize youth workshop: The project has mobilized 45,797 (43% were girls) youth group through organizing 1,076 youth workshops at UP level to promote the VCs.

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

To ensure a participatory process and inform the awareness raising strategy with ground scenario on the gender perspectives of equal access to, and representation in village courts, project has organized four consultation meetings in 2017 in Sylhet, Rangpur, Chittagong and Khulna division. Total 143(60 women, and 83 men) participants of distinct categories such as UP Chairman, UP members Upazila vice chairman(woman) and government officials attended

these four consultation meetings. Areas have been selected considering region-specific socio-cultural differences.



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

On the issue of women's representation in VC panel, participants shared that negative societal attitude about women's decision-making capability, absence of liberal attitude of UP chairmen about women panel members, lack of community awareness about the provision of women's representation in VC decision making process, and lack of confidence of the disputed parties on women's representation, religious prejudice about women's role in public decision making, unwillingness and lack of confidence of women to act as panel member are the main constraints for women's representation in VC decision making.

To increase women's access to VC and increase representation in VC decision making, participants recommended for mass awareness and behavior change interventions at different ends of community. They recommended to ensure neutral and fair decision making at the VC, and emphasized on the need of changing attitude of the personnel associated with the VC. To encourage women's representation in VC decision making, participants recommended for organizing more trainings for women and publicizing success story of women's leadership through community awareness activities.

On completion of all the 4 planned consultations, the awareness raising strategy has been drafted in December 2017. In addition to these consultations, information collected from

different relevant stakeholders through FGDs, KIIs, learnings from the previous phase have also been taken into consideration in developing this awareness raising strategy and implementation plan.

Drafting Project Gender Strategy

In line with the M&E framework of the project, a gender strategy for the project has been drafted during the reporting period. Built on the directions provided in the project documents including ProDoc and TPP, and adhering to UNDP gender equality strategy 2014-2017, and policy directions embodied in National Women Development Policy of Bangladesh 2011, Seventh Five Year Plan of Bangladesh, and other relevant national and international policy instruments on gender equality, this draft strategy provides a framework for mainstreaming gender equality throughout the AVCB II interventions.

The strategy includes sections on the brief context of gender equality and access to justice and Bangladesh's experiences, mission and approach of gender equality strategy, mainstreaming of gender equality in AVCB II interventions, institutional arrangements supporting integration of gender equality considerations into project activities.

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

Place VC signboard for 1,080 new unions: Vendor hired following GOB's procurement policy have completed installation of 1080 village courts' signboards in Dhaka, Mymensingh, Khulna, Barisal, Rangpur, Rajshahi, Chittagong and Sylhet divisions to promote the VCs and its function. These signboards will play useful role to promote the VCs and its function among visitors of union parishads and other rural people.



Develop and print IEC/BCC/outreach materials:

To boost knowledge of the target audience on VCs, the project has printed 109,000 copies poster, 30,000 copies of English and Bangla version of the brochure, 3,00,000 leaflets, reprinted 20,000 note pads and 16,500 folders for using in different events, printed 5,000 polo shirts and 30,000 pens with project's branding. In addition, 40,000 pieces of branded caps are under production stage which will be available by next quarter. The project also completed designs of 23,450 copies of newsletter (combined issue 1 & 2) covering news, photo features, media coverages, publications from January-December 2017.

The project has initiated the process of development of a community video/enter-education drama in November 2017 and submitted a draft script, key performers' list and proposed shooting spot to LGD for their approval.

TVC (57 seconds) also aired in 4 electronic media (Channel I, NTV, Somoy TV, RTV) in December 2017.

Along with delivering message of village courts, partnership of EU, UNDP, and GOB has been promoted through the above-mentioned materials.

Develop and print materials for primary counselling on dispute resolution: Through a series of consultation with the AVCB Phase II team, the project drafted the VC counselling material and then National Consultant (Legal Compliance) has reviewed the draft. The materials have covered basic information on the village courts that is important to know during the process of filing a case and seeking a court decision. Village Courts Assistants (VCAs) will use this material during counselling sessions to be held at UP level while a justice seeker will visit village courts. The review process of this material is still going on to make it final. Printing will be done once it is finalized.

Develop and print Flip Chart of CYM: The project has printed a total of 1,130 copies Court Yard Meeting (CYM) Flipchart, an education and awareness raising material to be used by Village Court Assistants (VCA) during conducting CYM at village level and building awareness of community women and men about the village court services and its functions. The flip chart consists of 16 pages describes key messages on VC, benefits for seeking services from VC, cases under jurisdiction of VC, application process, functional procedures of VC, nomination of women as panel members and others. Easy and concise Bangla messages has been presented for community people so that they can understand the information related to village courts easily.

Activity 2.1.4 Organise workshop/seminars with journalists at national and local level to increase coverage of Village Courts

Initially, the project has planned to sign an MOU with Press Institute of Bangladesh (PIB), a government entity for organizing workshops/seminars with national and district level journalists but PIC did not approve this plan considering limited provisions in the Project Document and TPP. The meeting has advised to organize these meetings jointly with local press clubs with the leadership of DCs and accordingly the project has planned to accomplish these events in next year.

Activity 2.1.5 Update and maintain the village courts website and other social media

Consulting firm hired by the UNDP's procurement policy has started in re-designing the Website (<http://www.villagecourts.org>) which was developed during the pilot phase. During this reporting period news of village courts and AVCB Phase II project were covered around 100 times in national newspapers and around 700 times in local newspapers. News of different events were also disseminated through Facebook which has reached by around 20,000 people in each month. Among the news/coverage one of the significant coverages was honourable Prime Minister's Direction to Deputy Commissioners for making village courts' effective which were covered in different media. Another noteworthy coverage was in August 2017, is an article in the Daily Star urging for activating village courts in all unions of the country following law, which also mentioned partnerships of the government, EU and UNDP.

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

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

Provide training on M&E system for field staff including DFs (2 days)

The project has organized six two-day residential trainings on M&E System for field level staffs including District Facilitators (DFs) aiming to make field staff familiar on M&E system and reporting mechanism so that they can monitor the village courts performance at field level perfectly and provide VC performance report as per project requirement. The training was held at RDRS, Rangpur between 31 March to 1 April, 2017, at Hotel Ambassador, Khulna between 6 to 7 April, 2017, at BRAC Learning Center, Chittagong between 12 to 13 April, 2017, at CSS Ava center, Khulna between 3 to 4 May, 2017, at BRAC Learning Center, Mymensingh between 3 to 4 July, 2017, and at ASOD, Rangpur between 10 to 11



July, 2017. A total of 191 field staffs (Man-163 and Woman-28) including 27 DFs, 4 Project Coordinators (PC), 4 Monitoring & Reporting Coordinators (M&RC), 27 District Coordinators (DCo) and 129 Upazila Coordinators (one Upazila Coordinator was replaced) participated in the training. The major contents of the training were Basic Monitoring and Evaluation, Logical Framework, Monitoring & Evaluation plan of the project, Quarterly and Monthly Reporting mechanism, information flow etc. The training was interactive and participatory where massive interaction within the participants was ensured through group exercises. Technical Assistance (TA) was provided in each group during group works.

Provide training on Capturing Qualitative Results & Monitoring Documentation of VC's Proceedings (3 days)

The project has organized three three-day long residential training on Capturing Qualitative Results & Monitoring Documentation of VC's for field level staff and relevant staff pf PMU A concept note including training schedule and budget was prepared and obtained approval accordingly.

The training was held at Greentech Resorts & Convention Center, Gazipur between 4 to 6 December 2017, at BRAC Learning Center, Mymensingh between 8 to 10 December 2017



and at CSS Ava center, Khulna between 13 to 15 December 2017 respectively. A total of 68 field staffs (Man-58 and Woman-10) including 27 DFs, 4 PCs, 4 M&RCs, 27 DCOs and 6 staffs from PMU participated in the training. The main objective of the training was to develop a mechanism to document the qualitative achievements of the project through success case story and improve documentation of VC's proceedings. The contents of the training were capturing qualitative results and monitoring documentation of VC's proceedings. The training was interactive and participatory where massive interaction within the participants were ensured through group exercise. One-day field visit also carried out in each batch of the training. Besides, TA was provided in each group during group works. All of the trainings were successfully completed with the active participation of the participants. The participants highly appreciated the methods used to conduct the trainings. According to the participants the training was very effective and would help them in monitoring VC's performance and capturing qualitative results and monitoring documentation of VC's proceedings.

Provide technical assistance through field visits:

The M&E and Knowledge Management Component of AVCB Phase II Project made a number of monitoring visits in different project districts aiming to provide technical supports to the fields to ensure quality of interventions. Monitoring visits carried out in two phases - during field level trainings provided by 27 DTPs and during installation of *ejlas* (court bench).

Monitoring of field level Training provided by DTP: Research and Evaluation Manager has made field visit to Jamalpur and Mymensingh from 16-18th May 2017. Brief findings are given below:

Jamalpur District: Observed a training session organized for VCAs and UP Secretaries and consulted with UP chair and VCA of Mahamudpur UP of Melanandha Upazila on 17th May 2017. Findings are given below:

- Observed training session organized for VCAs and UP Secretaries at Unnayan Sangha, Daurpar Chandra, Jamalpur. 24 people participated in the training where 12 were VCAs and 12 were UP Secretaries. Among the participants five were female including one female UP Secretary. Engagement of the participants in the group works were high and they were enjoyed the session interacting with group members. District Facilitator and District Coordinator of Jamalpur district and Upazila Coordinator of Melanandha upazila were provided TA supports during group works. On 17th May DDLG was reviewed the training session of 16th May. Responses of participants in the review session were good. The training venue was good though accommodation was not up to the marks and training room was small. But participants forgot these limitations considering environment and natural beauty of the training center. Facilitation skill and knowledge of Upazila Coordinator of Melanandha upazila on VCs was good.
- Visited Mahamudpur UP of Melanandha Upazila on 17th May 2017 and met with UP Chairman, VCA and review registers. The VCA has joined on 5th March 2017 and did not receive VC training till visit day. But they are conducting counselling sessions and CYMs following the instruction received from Madaripur Legal Aid Association (MLAA), a partner NGO engaged in Jamalpur district for capacity building and awareness raising initiatives. Reviewing register of counselling session it was found that VCA provided counselling to 20 people between April and May 2017. According to VCA and District Coordinator, they have been conducting counselling sessions just after

the CYMs in the same place where CYMs conducted and they have been conducting the sessions with only the people whose disputes are outside the VC's jurisdiction. Their concept regarding the place of holding counseling session and target group of the counselling session were wrong because counselling sessions would be conducted with the legal service seekers irrespective of VC's jurisdiction. On the other hand, VCA conducted 34 CYMs between March-May 2017 where on an average 20 people participated. Quality of CYMs are also questionable as VCA has no good knowledge on VCs and its function. MLAA are running to reach the number keeping aside the quality issue as they have to reach the number as per the agreement.

- Case register, decree register, fees register, summon form (both defendants and witness), decree form, six monthly return form, and case transfer form which sent to all UP by pilot project in 2015 were found in Mahamudpur UP but VCA was not aware about those forms and registers. All of the registers and forms were blank and UP did not use till visit time.
- Mohammad Ali Zinnha, UP Chairman, Mahamudpur union, Melanandha Upazila attended a VC training organized by the AVCB Phase II project. According to him the training was good and he attended three days. According to him, running VCs following the procedures that he learnt from the training require full time staff. He requested to arrange same training for UP Secretaries and VCAs as early as possible.

Mymensingh district: Observed a training session organized for UP and Panel Chairmen and hold at ASPADA training academy, Bypass Road, Digharkanda, Mymensingh on 18th May 2017. Findings are given below:

- In a total 23 chairmen and panel chairmen out of 24 participated in the first day training and 19 participated in the second day training. Facilitation skill of DF and DC were good. But DF needs to be improved his listening skill. He should note down all comments of the participants during review sessions and should be summarized the findings at the end in a participatory ways.
- Scarcity of DTP member were found as members of DTP specially representative of Youth Department and Police who received ToT were not in their duty station during the training session. District Legal Aid officer, who did not receive ToT conducted a session. She started her session with the legal aid issues instead VC and took good amount of time on legal issues.
- Lack of synchronization between presentation and handouts observed. As a result it took time to find out the related topics from the handouts when facilitators referred handout.
- Providing training to UP Chair just after having ToT is not easy specially for these staff who have not come from training background. It is very difficult to keep the UP chair engaged throughout full day session.

Field visit made during installation of ejlas (court bench): Research & Evaluation Manager and Monitoring & Lessons Learning Officer have made monitoring visit on 2nd and 5th July 2017. Findings are given below:

Project Planning, Management, Reporting: Monthly work plan of all staff were found. Monthly plan of Upazila Coordinators and District Coordinator shows that they were mostly involved in organizing capacity building training of UP Chair, Panel Chair, UP Secretaries and VCA. VCA's plan shows that they were mostly involved in organizing Courtyard meetings, and Counselling sessions. VCA prepare and send monthly report of his/her unions to Upazila Coordinators, Upazila Coordinator prepare Upazila's reports compiling reports of

VCAs, and sent it to District Coordinator. Similarly, District Coordinator prepare district level progress report compiling reports of all Upazila's progress report under his/her jurisdiction.

MLAA has distributed union level village courts performance reporting format to all unions that they were received from PMU of UNDP. But did not send progress reporting format of awareness raising activities that they were supposed to prepare following prescribed format that they were received from PMU.

Knowledge of VCA on VCs and its function: All of the VCAs have received training on VCs and its function and is conducting CYM following the guideline that they were received from PMU, UNDP. Knowledge of VCAs on VCs and its function were good as they were correctly mentions following: VC's jurisdiction, VC's formation, decision making process, etc.

Knowledge and attitude of UP chair and Secretary on VCs and its function: UP Chair and Secretary of Amtoli and Swadeshi Union, Haluaghat upazila and Tarundia and Sohagi Union Parishad, Ishwarganj Upazila under Mymensing district received training on village courts and its function from the AVCB II project. Knowledge and attitude of UP Secretary about VC's and its function was good but UP chair's need to be improved as one UP chair said that *"I will not give chance to go any case to district court and will resolve all the disputes through village courts"*.

All the visited UPs are equipped with trained VCAs, UP Secretary and UP chair and *Ejlas* (Court bench) and are ready to provide legal services but cannot provide due to absence of VC's forms and registers.

Set up of *Ejlas* and furniture: *Ejlas* including 01 platform, 01 railing, 01 witness box, 01 *Ejlas* table, 05 Chair, and 01 oath plate has been installed in all visited unions (Tarundia and Sohagi Union Parishad, Ishwarganj Upazila; Amtoli and Swadeshi Union, Haluaghat upazila). In all unions *ejlas* was covered by red cloth. Apart from these all said UPs received 02 wooden bench, 01 wooden table, 01 wooden chair, 01 wooden rack and 01 still Almirah. Furniture and *Ejlas* were not well furnished and contractor hired by MLAA delivered these just coloring them. As a result, all unions of Haluaghat upazila did not receive the *Ejlas* and furniture. Also furniture and *ejlas* of two unions has been kept in the open space of Amtoli union and thus the furniture are wearing out due to rain.

NGO's performance Assessment:

Activating village courts in Bangladesh project (AVCB) has engaged four NGOs (MLLA, ESDO, BLAST and Wave foundation) for 33 months starting from 10th December 2016 to 09 December 2019 to assist UPs in respect of setting Village Courts in 1080 Union Parishads of Dhaka, Mymensingh, Chittagong, Sylhet, Khulna, Barisal, Rangpur and Rajshahi divisions. According to clause 4 of the contract, four NGOs have been initially contracted for 1 (one) year with an option of 02 consecutive extensions based on satisfactory performance annually. So, their performance assessment in-terms of program and operational point of view were important requirement and hence the project management team has conducted performance assessment starting from 10 December 2016 to 30 September 2017. The purpose of the assessment was to identify and critically evaluate the activities as well as to assess the achievement against the deliverables during 1st year of the contract from 10 December to 30 September 2017.

The assessment was carried out under the leadership of Knowlagent Management and M&E unit. Two teams where each team was formed with three members. One team was formed with Research and Evaluation Manager, Monitoring and Lessons Learning Officer and Finance Officer (Field Monitoring) and were responsible for conducting performance assessment of two NGOs (ESDO and MLAA). Another team was formed with Operation Manager, Monitoring and Lessons Learning Office and Finance Manager and were responsible for conducting performance assessment of two NGOs (BLAST and Wave foundation). Assessment of WAVE foundation and ESDO were carried out between 10-17 October 2017 and other two were carried out between 21-31 October 2017. Data collection took place, having the consultation with UP chair, Secretary, reviewing documents (reports, plan, case statistics, case registers, forms, CYM registers, Counseling registers, visitor books, and attendance sheets of different events) and interviewing VCAs and service recipients. NGO wise performance assessment reports were prepared and submitted during this reporting period.

EU Delegation monitoring Visit:

Mr. Eduard Pesendorfer, Attache and Programme Manager, Governance, Economic cooperation section, Delegation of the European Union to Bangladesh and Mr. Jose Rodrigo, Attache Finance Manager, Finance, Contact and Audit Section, Delegation of the European Union to Bangladesh have visted Sylhet from 17-19 November 2017 to monitor the activities of AVCB II project. DDLG, Sylhet, National Project Coordinator, Activating Village Courts in Bangladesh phase-II Project, UNO Balaganj, Sylhet accompaned them during their visit. During visit they attened a consultaion session held at Sylhet district with judiciaries. In addition, they observed a VC's hearing session held at Boaljur UP of Balagonj upazila, Courtyard meeting held at Chanpur village of Balagonj Upazila and finally had a meeting with UP bodies, UNO, Balagonj upazila and DDLG, Sylhet district. They also see the documentaion process of VC's proceedings.



Documentation observing at UP



Meeting with UP, UNO, DDLG and other members



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

Roll-out of local dispute resolution efforts in the Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT):

On January, a dialogue was held between local (CHT) leadership with MoCHTA and LGD discussing their position with the proposed planned of actions by the project. Representatives from EU and UNDP were also present. During the meeting the Secretary, LGD proposed to visit Rangamati in February 2017 to meet with local leaders from different levels vetting the proposal and getting their endorsement as forwarded to the by the ERD. The local (CHT) leadership included a representative from Hill Districts Regional Council (HDRC) and traditional leaders i.e. Headmen and Karbaris. They welcomed the proposal and suggested to bring that to the broader local (CHT) leadership.

On February, the Secretary, LGD and Secretary, MoCHTA along with senior officials from the MoCHTA and LGD visited Rangamati and met with local leadership in CHT. The meeting participated by Circle Chiefs, representatives from HDRC, Headmen, Karbaris, UP Chairmen, local administration and civil society organisations. Everyone unanimously appreciated the proposal with a clear note of the fact that traditional norms and practices should be recognised in all course of actions as proposed and when implemented. The Secretary, LGD assured that the CHT and interest of its citizens is a high priority to the Prime Minister. And as she suggested no action would be taken in the region with appropriate consultation with local leadership.



PAGODA revision:

The PAGODA has been revised incorporating the component “Rolling out of village courts in CHT areas” and addressing the inconsistency exist in approved project document and PAGODA and submitted to EU. Under the rolling out of village courts in CHT areas, the project has designed the interventions, implementation plan and budget having intensive consultation and ensuring involvement of UNDP’s CHT project who has been working long time in CHT areas. In this regard, budget and Logical Framework including outputs and results and indicators where applicable have been revised incorporating EU’s feedback.

Impact Study of AVCB phase II project:

The project has commissioned a high-quality impact evaluation of AVCB Phase II project in Dhaka and Chittagong divisions through Randomized Controlled Trial (RCT) method in coordination with Innovation for Poverty Action (IPA), Yale University, USA, and 3ie (International Initiative for Impact Evaluation). In addition, the project also commissioned another impact evaluation in other six divisions through the pre-post method by IPA. Meanwhile IPA has submitted final draft baseline report of both studies.

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

This activity is deferred to the 1st quarter 2018.

Activity 2.2.4 Produce and print knowledge products

This activity is deferred to the 1st quarter 2018.

Section III: Networking

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

Section IV: Organization and Management**4.1 Organizational Structure and Management Composition**

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



PSC meeting

4.2 Project Operations

The day to day operational, administrative, procurement & HR business is being completed by the operations team headed by Operations and Procurement Manager who is guided by the National Project Coordinator. Some major accomplishment/progress by the project operations during the reporting period are summarised below:

4.2.1 Operational Progress during January-December 2017

Formation of TOC and TEC: Two Committees such as Tender Opening Committee (TOC) and Tender Evaluation Committee (TEC) regarding opening and evaluation of tender for GoB procurement were formed in this reporting period following GOB policy.

Preparation of AWP 2017: During this reporting period, the operation team provided supports to prepare AWP 2017 including HR and Procurement Plan 2017. Later on, the operation team provided extensive efforts specially to accomplish the planned procurement of AWP 2017 and to achieve the delivery target mentioned in the AWP 2017.

Procurement Plan 2017 and its implementation: Over the reporting period from January to December 2017, the following procurement has been initiated and accomplished:

- Procurement of National ICs for preparing Operational Manual, and FAQ; preparing proposal of revised GOs of Village Courts Management Committee (VCMC) and conducting VC's performance assessment in 15 UPs.
- Hiring vendor for printing of VC forms & formats and production of 1,080 signboards in 1080 Unions following GOB procedure (PPR 2008). Besides these, several vendors were also hired for printing of several promotional materials (Poster, Flipchart, VC Booklet, Brochure, Sticker, Note Book, Folder, Flow-Chart Newsletter, leaflet, pocket card, project pad and folder T-shirt, Cap and Pen, developing 30 minutes Community

Awareness video, and transportation of printed VC forms etc.). Also, hired a firm to design and update AVCB website;

- Provided extensive operational and logistic supports in organising different events carried out at national, district and upazila level (Annual sharing and planning workshop, event on celebrating the Scaling up of AVCB Project, orientation workshop with UNOs and DDLG etc.);
- Provided logistics and transportation support to conduct huge number of field monitoring visits during this year;
- Two project vehicles were procured, imported and cleared from Chittagong Sea Port where Custom duty paid by Custom House, Chittagong and CD VAT paid from GoB source;
- Procured Twenty-seven (27) cameras for 27 district offices and some necessary items for vehicle maintenance and project operation (such as office furniture , table fans, refilling of fire extinguishers etc.)

In addition, quarterly procurement for ensuring regular office stationeries and necessary logistics related works are accomplished through micro-purchasing.

Implementation of Recruitment Plan 2017: In line with approved Project Document (ProDoc) and the Recruitment Plan of 2017, recruitment of 14 positions completed in close coordination with CO HR. They are Project Assistant, Communications & Outreach Specialist, Gender Specialist, Legal Specialist, Finance Officer-Field Monitoring, IT Associate, Accounts & Finance Manager, Project Coordination Officer (02), Monitoring and Lessons Learning Officer, Procurement Officer, Driver cum Messenger (02) and Programme Specialist. On the other hand, the deployment of 27 District Facilitators in the respective duty station was completed successfully at the beginning of this year.

Provide ICT support to PMU and 27 district offices: During this reporting period the project has provided logistic and ICT supports for PMU and 27 district offices including trouble shooting for ICT equipment as regular work.

The internet, e-mail and data transfer through the network services have been ensured and file servers has also been installed to ensure common file archive for the office. Installation of new server room and automatic fire suppressing system for server room has been completed. In addition, installation of new LAN along with wi-fi support has been completed for better connectivity.

Procurement of Laptop & Desktop, computer server, UPS, printer, software etc. for 27 District Facilitators and PMU office has also been completed in this year.

Vehicle Management: Procured and received 2 new imported project vehicles after clearing Government Custom Duty, VAT and other required formalities and completed necessary Registration formalities from BRTA including its Insurance, Fitness and Tax-token etc.. Provided orientation to two newly recruited project drivers and properly distributed the duties among all four drivers. Necessary documents like insurance, Tax Token & Fitness etc. were updated accordingly for other project vehicles after depositing relevant govt fees through collecting the NOC from National Board of Revenue. Periodical maintenance works for those vehicles done properly from the UNDP authorized workshops.

Motorcycles: Procurement of 15 new Motorcycles completed. These 15 Motorcycles including 12 old motorcycles distributed to respective 27 District offices for use of District Facilitators after completion of its necessary registration works. BRTA Registration, Digital Number plate, smart card (DRC) for 15 new Motorcycles and comprehensive Insurance for

all 27 Motorcycles completed in this year. Beside the DF's Motorcycles Project has also procured 159 Motorcycles for field level staff of four partner NGOs and registration of those MCs including installation of Digital Number plates were completed in this reporting year.

During reporting period, field level female staff raised their concern to the project management through National Project Director (NPD) to provide them, women, friendly motorcycles as none of the procured motorcycles were women-friendly. Accordingly, the project management has consulted the issue with senior management of UNDP and has started a discussion with NUPRP, Logic and ICBA-AR projects for possible interchanging of 21 motorcycles. Meanwhile, a MoU has been signed with ICBA-AR project to transfer 7 unused NGO Motorcycles. Logic project has agreed to interchange remaining motorcycles.

Asset Management: As per the decision of Project Steering Committee, first lot of pilot phase Assets handed over to respective recipient office during this year and the next lot of the Phase 1 asset will be handed over to LGD soon it is approved in the next PSC. Some new assets have been procured for the project office such as bookshelves, drawers, Stand fans for newly joined staff members in this period and all Assets are properly recorded in the Asset Register.

Deal with Contract Management of four RPA agreement: During this reporting period operations provided administrative support to deal with contract management of four partner NGOs under Responsible Party Agreement (RPA) including the review of their quarterly progress and ensure the compliance of delivery milestones. Besides this, during this reporting period, operation unit provided extensive operational supports to four partner NGOs in recruiting their field level staffs (4 PCs, 4 Monitoring and Documentation Coordinators, 27 District Coordinators, 128 Upazila Coordinators, 882 Village Courts Assistants). Technical support also provided to parent NGOs for procuring ejlas for 1,078 Unions and office furniture for 27 districts as well as four central offices of PNGOs.

4.2.2 Budget and delivery by major outputs

According to approved AWP the total annual budget of 2017 was US\$10,668,516 where UNDP & EU's contribution was US\$8,000,000 and GoB's was US\$2,668,516. As of 31 December 2017, total expenditure against several activities for the project has been stood \$8,009,329 for donor budget. This equates to the delivery rate of 100% against the total annual revised budget of donor. This statement has been prepared based on IPSAS reports in ATLAS. Output wise budget and expenditure are given below:

Outputs	Component/Activity	Budget	Expenditure	Balance	% of Utilization
Activity Result 1.1	Capacity of relevant stakeholders at national and local level improved and key skills strengthened.	4,727,754	4,772,270	(44,516)	101%
Activity Result 1.2	Legal and policy framework reviewed and revised to enhance efficiency and effectiveness of Village Courts	52,580	30,355	22,225	58%
Activity Result	GoB monitoring capacity for evaluating Village Courts	27,984	24,882	3,102	89%

Outputs	Component/Activity	Budget	Expenditure	Balance	% of Utilization
1.3	performance is strengthened and systematized.				
Activity Result 2.1	Beneficiaries in project areas understand the roles and functions of the Village Courts.	1,884,545	1,967,862	(83,317)	104%
Activity Result 2.2	Evidence-base and knowledge-management on Village Courts increased.	266,809	172,239	94,570	65%
Activity Result 3.0	Technical Assistance and Management	1,040,328	1,041,721	(1,393)	100%
Grand Total		8,000,000	8,009,329	(9,329)	100%

Section V: Partnership

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

Section VI: Lessons learnt and future direction

6.1 Lessons learned/Challenges

- Recruitment of VCAs in some project areas (e.g. Chittagong and Sylhet divisions) had been challenging.
- Recruitment of VCAs in Gopalganj delayed targeted activities and delivery. As result the project could not initiate project activities in 32 unions of Gopalganj
- Delay in the disbursement of GoB funds (parallel financing) delayed in capacity building supports of the UP Chair, Panel chair, VCAs and UP Secretaries.
- Hampered field implementation including running of VCs due to flood during July - September 2017
- DTP members (GoB) were found less interest to conduct session at upzila level due to less honorarium and lack of transport facilities;
- Running training more than two upazilas simultaneously was a big challenge to ensure quality training;
- Frequently changing of training venue due to another program at UNO office has impacted the training badly;
- Maintaining the resource person's schedule at upazila level were found very difficult due to their own business and urgency;
- Absent UP Chairs refuse/fail to delegate VC functions to the Panel Chair;
- Procurement of motorcycles by UNDP resulted slowed down field level activities- Took time to get digital number plates;
- Involvement of local administration is crucial to implement massive residential training programme. Also involvement of District and Session Judge, CJM, DC, SP as guest and DTP members (GoB) in the field level training has inspired training participants. Their positive and supportive attitude will help participants to run VC;

- Closer liaison and coordination with LGD and Finance Division produced a good result for disbursing the GOB fund as early as possible.;
- Rolling out of AVCB phase II project in CHT region

6.2 Future Direction

The project will provide necessary supports to the service providers of village courts of 1078 UPs for continuing offering localised justice to approximately 21 million rural people of Bangladesh. It will increase capacity of GOB's national institutes for monitoring of Village Courts performance and to carry out capacity building initiatives on VCs. The project will review Legal and policy framework to enhance efficiency and effectiveness of VCs. Participation of women in obtaining and delivering justice services will be increased through awareness and sensitization initiatives. Rolling out of AVCB phase II project in CHT region will be the top priority areas during the remaining period of the project.

Section VII: Conclusion

Almost all UPs of AVCB II project's operation areas are equipped with *ejlas* (Court bench), VC's forms and registers, trained Village Courts Assistance (VCAs) and trained service providers. District Training Pools established and capacitated by the project supports have provided capacity building supports to the service providers of 1078 UPs. Four partner NGOs hired by the project were involved in creating demand of VCs services through outreach activities. As a result, 21,367 (an average 3.3 cases reported in a UP in a month) cases have been reported between July-December 2017 and 14,427 have been resolved. Of the resolved cases, 11,988 (83%) decisions have been implemented.