



Activating Village Courts in Bangladesh Phase II Project

Annual Progress Report (January – December 2019)



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



*Empowered lives.
Resilient nations.*

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Executive Summary

The Activating Village Courts in Bangladesh Project has scaled up to 1080 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 161,893 people filed cases to the village courts between July 2017-December 2019, of which 82,379 filed between January-December 2019. In a total 131,654 cases have been resolved till December 2019, of which 70,299 resolved in 2019. On the other hand, among the total resolved cases 1,243,00 decisions have been implemented, of which 67,623 have been implemented between January-December 2019. Project activities have targeted women to encourage in seeking remedy through Village Courts. As a result, in total 47,282 (29%) women sought remedies through Village Courts, of which 24,747 sought remedies between January-December 2019 and 17% women were involved in VC's decision-making process. Between July 2017-December 2019, VC have received 8,422 cases from District courts and other sources demonstrating that VC is contributing in case backlogs in the district courts. Among the referred cases 3,773 referred in 2019.

Four partner NGOs contracted in December 2016, got involved in providing supports to unions to activate village courts in 1,078 unions through its planned outreach and capacity building initiatives. They have provided supports to the local administration to run village courts following village courts proceedings and create awareness of community people about village courts and its function. In a total, messages of village courts delivered to around **1,865,000** community people (69% women) through CYMs.

27 district and 128 Upazilla Village Courts Management Committees (VCMCs) formed following the GO issued in 2013 has started functioning to increase Government's involvement in carrying out monitoring of village courts performance. During reporting period 41% DVCMC and all 42% upazila VCMC met following the GO issued in 2013 for monitoring of VCs performance.

The EU, UNDP and GoB supported AVCB Phase II project has created strong ownership and demand of the VCs towards the government, neighboring union parishads and beneficiaries. Government has demonstrated its support to this approach by amending VCs rule, issuing different directives to support the functioning of VC, expressing their willingness to scale up this project across all unions of Bangladesh, allocating addition cash contribution from its development budget (particularly for the hardware component), and providing UP-level staff support through completing the deployment of Account Assistant cum Computer Operator (AACO).

The exit strategy and sustainability of this project relies on the appointment of Account Assistant cum Computer Operators (AACOs). LGD has decided that the Village Courts Assistant (VCA) position, created by this project, will be taken over by the AACO following a recruitment drive. Meanwhile, 292 AACOs have been recruited in project areas out of 1,078

UPs. The project has provided training to 93 AACOs and plan to provide training to remaining AACOs so that they can assist UPs in running village courts, taking over the responsibilities from VCAs. The recruitment process in many districts currently stayed by a High Court order following a Writ Petition, which the Local Government Division is looking into. These new recruits will also be trained under the project so that they can work as the bench clerk (*peshkar*) of the village court.

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 2018.

1.2 Description of the key objectives and outputs of the project

1.2.1 Overall objective

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

1.2.2 Specific objective

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

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

Outputs of the project

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

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

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

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

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

1.3 Project Components:

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

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

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

Section II: Achievements

As per the AWP 2018, 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 and local justice mechanisms in CHT 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

During reporting period, the project has distributed VCs forms and formats to 1078 unions based on the requirement of each union. PMU has facilitated the process of distribution engaging local administration especially respective Deputy Director Local Government (DDLG), Upazilla Nirbahi Officer (UNO) and Union Parishad (UPs) along with PNGOs with active coordination supports of DFs on ground.

Quantity of each VCs' forms and formats (given below) has been determined based on the assessment made between July-September 2018 and then selected the printing firm following GOB's procurement process in October 2018 but could not make offer the taks to printing company due to absence of the National Project Director from October 2018 to mid-February 2019. However, in March 2019 project in coordination with and guidance of the LGD has been completed procurement process and awarded the work order worth BDT3,278,272.46 to the printing company for re-printing the VC's forms as per requirements given below and as per approved delivery schedule.

| Table-1 Brief information about types of VC forms and quantity distributed / | | | | |
|---|--|-----------------------------------|------------------------------|---|
| Sl | Name of the forms | Quantity distributed (set) | No. of pages in a set | Use of the forms |
| 1 | Form-1 (Application form) | 1443 | 150 Leaves | Use to file a case |
| 2 | Form-2 (Case Register) | 1250 | 72 Leaves/144 pages | Use to record a case |
| 3 | Form-3 (Order Sheet of the case) | 3142 | 120 Leaves | Use to record the order of the case |
| 4 | Form-4 (Summon to the defendant) | 2646 | 120 leaves | To issue a summon to the defendant |
| 5 | Form-5 (Summon to the witness) | 1513 | 120 leaves one side | To issues a summon to the witness |
| 6 | Form-6 (Instruction to nominate panel member) | 2514 | 120 leaves | To use for instructing to nominate VC panel member |
| 7 | Form-7 (VC panel member nomination form) | 1735 | 120 leaves | To use in nominating VC panel member |
| 8 | Form-8 (Request letter to the panel member asking attend VC session) | 3101 | 120 Leaves | To keep the record of the attendance of the VC panel members |
| 9 | Form-9 (Solemn-nama) | 1766 | 120 Leaves | To use for keeping record of dispute resolution through Solemn-nama |
| 10 | Form-10 (Attendance sheet) | 1398 | 150 Leaves | To keep the record of the attendance of the applicant, defendant and the witness. |
| 11 | Form-11 (Case Slip) | 500 | 120 Leaves | To provide information about following hearing date of the case |
| 12 A | Form-12 (A- Decree or Order form) | 1145 | 120 pages | To issue a decree or order of the case |

| Table-1 Brief information about types of VC forms and quantity distributed / | | | | |
|---|--|-----------------------------------|----------------------------------|---|
| Sl | Name of the forms | Quantity distributed (set) | No. of pages in a set | Use of the forms |
| 12 B | Form-12 (B- Decree and Order Register) | 991 | 120 Leaves/240 Pages | To maintain documentation about decree or order of the case |
| 13 | Form-13 (Compensation Register) | 995 | 50 Leaves/100 pages both side | To maintain a registration of the VC compensated money |
| 14 | Form-14 (Fees/ Fine receipt) | 1741 | 120 Leaves | To use in providing receipt against Fees/ Fine |
| 15 | Form-15 (Fees / Fine Register) | 1025 | 100 48 Leaves/96 pages both side | To maintain documentation about Fees / Fine |
| 16 | Form-16 (Dispatch Register) | 1414 | 108 Leaves | To use for registration of the UP letter dispatch |
| 17 | Form-17 (Quarterly report of dispute received and resolved) | 199 | 48 Leaves | Form-17, 18 and 19 will be used to monitor progress of VC performance |
| 18 | Form-18 (Quarterly report of dispute received and resolved under Upazila level) | 91 | 48 Leaves | |
| 19 | Form-19 (Quarterly report of dispute received and resolved under District level) | 68 | 48 Leaves | |
| 20 | Form-20 (Recovery of compensation/ fine) | 63 | 100 leaves | To use for maintaining recovery of compensation/fine |
| 21 | Form-21 (Transferring the case to the Criminal Court) | 62 | 100 Leaves | To use for transferring the case to the criminal court |

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

a. Develop and print guideline for providing information on legal services with distribution

During this reporting period project has published 1,210 guideline providing information on legal services and distributed 1078 UPs. This material will guide the Village Court Assistant/Secretary/AACO during providing information to the justice seekers. Its has been developed through a series of consultation and field testing.

b. Develop Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) module

Initially, ADR module has been drafted through a Consultant having series of consultaion such as KIIs, FGDs, meeting with with relevant stakeholders (NILG and PMU staff,,,,,) and then finalized doing field test and incorporating feedback of different stakeholders.

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

a. Provide refresher ToT (RToT) to District Training Pools (DTP) at NILG

Based on the recommendations of the Mid Term Review (MTR) 2018 the project has revised the structure of DTP and included 128 UNOs and 27 DDLGs of project working areas as DTP member having series of consultaion and getting approval of ministry. In collaboration with National Institute of Local Government (NILG) under the Local Government Division (LGD), the project has organized 2 days long 6 batches Training of Trainers (ToT) on Village Court for newly added DTP members i.e. Deputy Director of Local Government (DDLG) & Upazila Nirbahi Officer (UNO) under the project areas. Total 14 DDLGs & 118 UNOs attended in the basic ToT as DTP members. Among them total female participants were 27.

b. Provide refresher ToT (RToT) to District Training Pools (DTP) at NILG

Knowledge and skill of members of DTP established in 27 project districts have been refreached through three days (Training of Trainer) ToT in partnership with NILG so that they can provide refresher training to the UP representatives, Officials, Village Courts Assistants and Village Police. In a total 249 (Men: 221 and Women: 28) DTP members received RToT through 13 batches of training. Among the DTP mem bers 15 were from Department of Social



District Legal Aid Officer, Satkhira is conducting the session

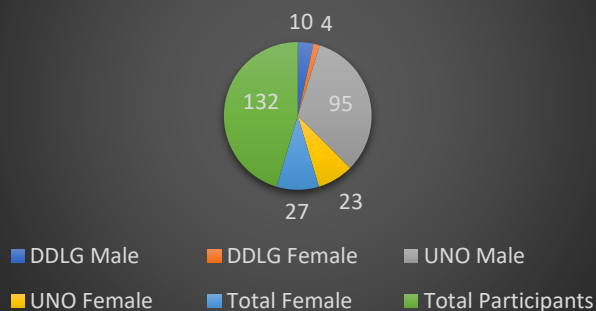
Service, 22 from Bangladesh Police, 21 from Department of Youth Development, 12 were from Department of Women Affairs, 22 from NLASO, 25 from AVCB Phase II, 145 from NGO. Considering sustainability of the village courts for ensuring legal services to the women and marginalized people of the rural areas, 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.

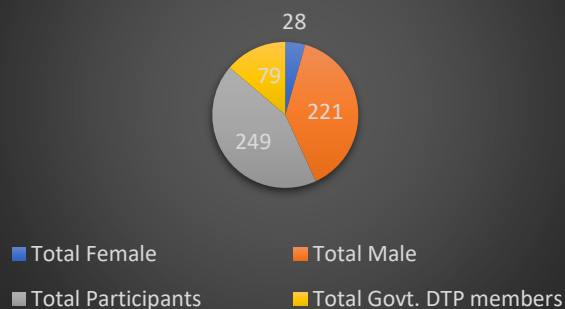
No. of DTP members attended in RToT

| DLO | | | BP | | | DY | | | DWA | | | DSS | | | PNGO | | | DF | | | Grand Total | | |
|-----|---|---|----|---|----|----|---|----|-----|---|----|-----|---|----|------|----|-----|----|---|----|-------------|----|-----|
| M | F | T | M | F | T | M | F | T | M | F | T | M | F | T | M | F | T | M | F | T | M | F | T |
| 8 | 1 | 9 | 22 | 0 | 22 | 20 | 1 | 21 | 3 | 9 | 12 | 13 | 2 | 15 | 130 | 15 | 145 | 25 | 0 | 25 | 221 | 28 | 249 |

Training on VC for newly added DTP members



RToT on VC for DTP members



The objective of the training were-

- To enhance knowledge and skill on VC of newly added DTP members i.e. DDLG and UNO
- To discuss on those issues were challenging to run the VC in line with VC Law and Rules
- To come up with the solution with the lesson-learnt gained from field level experience
- To refresh with the content revisiting VC process in line with Law and Rules.

The training sessions conducted by the resource person from LGD, Cabinet Division, Bangladesh Police, NILG AVCBII project and experts who have in-depth knowledge on Village Court and Justice hired them externally.

Major contents of the ToTs and RToTs: : There is a course outline for both the ToT and RToT with a set of contents along with all necessary training materials i.e. Village Court Act and Rules, Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR), procedure of VC, National Strategy of Integrity and VC, demonstration of VLA, Gender and Village Court and the documentation process of Village Court. All contents presented to the participants in an interactive manner in applying participatory methods i.e. Pre test, post test, pair group, buzz group, group work, presentation discussion, role play/mock trail, simulation, video show, open discussion, question & answer (Q/A) etc. During training participants gave few recommendations that quoted below in brief:

Recommendations by the participants

- The precuniary jurisdiction of VC i.e. 75,000 BDT set by the law should be increased;
- UP elected representative don't get any good facilities, thus, the provision of honorarium can be set for the panel members of VC;
- A monitoring team can be designed by LGD to bring UP representatives under the accountability regarding functioning VC;
- Officer in Charge (OC) of respective police station of the project area should be included as a DTP member. By this process he will be more aware on VC. As a result, while anyone will go to file any case to the police station then respective OC can send it to Village Court if it's under the jurisdiction of VC which is abided by the Law;
- Upazila Nirbahi Officer should have assigned responsibility to make UP representative motivated to activate Village Court;
- UP Chairman can be rewarded for their best performance for activating village court and to maintain the process following the VC Act and Rules.

- Forming Upazila level DTP can make the training more effective to get full involvement of DTP members whom are specially from the GoB.

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

The DTP members who were turned into trainers, in turn conducted training sessions for 967 UP Chair with 12 women, 1052 Panel Chair with 141 women, 11,507 UP members with 3,099 women, 1027 UP Secretary with 41 women and 1073 VCAs of whom 541 were women. All of the training took two days. Except for UP members, all trainings were residential and held at the district level under the guidance of DDLGs. DTP members were engaged to train 15,626 key VC actors.

It may be mentioned that some gender related content like how women can be more involved in running village courts, how could the sessions be more women-friendly, etc. are included in the schedule.

| Table-02 Number of key VC actors received training | | | |
|---|---------------|--------------|---------------|
| Name of the training | Male | Female | Total |
| Training to UP Chair | 955 | 12 | 967 |
| Training to UP Panel chair | 911 | 141 | 1,052 |
| Training to UP Secretary | 986 | 41 | 1,027 |
| Training to UP members | 8,408 | 3,099 | 11,507 |
| Training to VCA | 532 | 541 | 1,073 |
| TOTAL | 11,792 | 3,834 | 15,626 |



Group work is going on



Deputy Commissioner, Chittogram delivering his speech as a Guest Speaker

Recommendations/findings from the participants during the field level training cited below-

- Pecuniary jurisdiction of VC needs to be increased;
- Training duration should be increase;
- Earlier UP representatives practiced VC without maintaining process. But the training will guide them to run the court in a systematic way;
- Time for practical demonstration of trial (Mock trial) on VC and case file preparation was very short. Training duration should be increased;
- This type of refresher training should be organized in every year;

- All field level training should residential;
- Training for UP members should be organized at district level instead of upazila level;
- Training for UP Chair, UP members and VCA should organized at any suitable venue out of respective district instead of respective district.

Challenges faced during field level refreshers training at district and upazila level

- Ensure all UP-members presence in planned time is very difficult due to distance, local transport & lack of willingness. Unless and until all participants come to the venue, it creates concern and challenges to start the training session in time;
- DTP members (GoB) were found not interested to conduct session at upzilla 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 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.
- Ensure quality mock trial on VC in a non-residential upazila level (2 days) training become very tough.
- Frequently changing of training venue due to another program at UNO office impact on training badly.
- At district level training, most of the UP Chairman don't want to stay at night at the venue as they have own home at the city, though its completely a residential training;
- Most of the cases, respective organizer/DF shown interest/wanted to accommodate the DTP GoB members in the session rather than effectiveness of the session;

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

With the objective of enhancing sensitivity and capacity of different key stakeholders about gender responsive service delivery of the village courts, during the reporting period project organized 06 district level workshop titled "Sensitization Workshop on Gender and Village Courts" in Jamalpur, Chattogram, Faridpur, Sulhet, Kurigram and Bagerhat. Presided over by the DDLG of the district, total 250 men and 131 women from different stakeholders such as UP chair, members, government officials playing role as district training pool members, members of Village Courts Management Committees, judicial officers, NGO representatives, journalists, lawyers and district level women's rights activists attended the workshop. Among the participants, 61 attended at Jamalpur, 79 at Chattogram, 66 at Sylhet, 60 at Kurigram, 53 at Faridpur and 62 attended in Bagerhat district.

The workshop included both conceptual discussion about gender equality and its relevance to functioning of the village courts, and district focused discussion about the challenges that poor and disadvantaged women and men faces in accessing VC services, and about the challenges for women in representing in VC decision making process. Besides, the workshop discussed

about the roles and responsibilities of the respective stakeholders in promoting gender responsive VC services.

1.1.5.b Capacity building of women UP representatives

1.1.6 Establishment of clear and systematic coordination mechanisms with Upazila and District authorities

Annual Progress Review Meeting at District level

District administration of 26 districts have organized 26 Annual Progress Review Meetings where Deputy Commissioner and DDLG of those concerned districts attended as Chief guest and Chair of the session. The objective of these meetings was to review the VC's performance so far, address problems or difficulties faced by UPs to run village courts, learning gathered by UPs, views of service seekers, and capture the reflection of the field to provide more support through proper communication and coordination.

In total, 1,899 people (Male:1,657 and Female:242) along with representatives from the police department, district legal aid officer, media personnel, representatives from NGO, members of District Training Pool, UNOs, chairmen from the project area, representatives from partner organizations, etc. participated in the meetings. A presentation on village courts performance was displayed to draw attention on how to ensure qualitative justice services for the villagers. The meetings were carried out in Moulvibazar, Sunamganj, Chattogram, Cox's Bazar, Chandpur, Noakhali, Netrokona, Gazipur, Mymensingh, Jamalpur, Faridpur, Madaripur, Gopalganj, Khulna, Bagerhat, Satkhira, Bhola, Patuakhali, Barguna, Rangpur, Naogaon, Gaibandha, Sirajganj, Panchagarh, Pabna, and Kurigram districts.

Major recommendations yielded from district level workshop:

- To orient representatives of Police Stations and sensitize them to refer cases to VCs if those fall under VC's jurisdiction
- To digitalize the VC's procedure
- To activate VC in all unions beyond project area; exercising the success and learning from project area
- To amended VC Acts 2006 addressing the following topics: increase financial jurisdiction from BDT 75,000 (\$887.57) to BDT 100,000 (\$1183.43); giving appellate authority to UNO
- Clear instructions need to be given on what initiatives can be taken if the defendant does not come after being summoned by the Chairman
- Including family-related cases such as dowry, maintenance, early marriage into VC's law as now Union Parishads receive a high number of cases related to those issues.
- Women's participation in VC's decision-making process need to be increased through awareness raising and capacity development initiatives
- Awareness raising initiatives on village courts need to be continued through contributions of Union Parishads
- Progress review workshop explores the option for analyzing success, learning, and limitations for the way forward. Thus, it is suggested to organize the same event each year
- The Chairmen of almost every district are suggested to recognize their contribution by awarding UPs for their performance on VCs by the district administration
- The decisions of VCs must be executed, and UNO should play a prompt role for executing the VC decision through filing of certificate case

- Take necessary measures for continuation of capacity building initiatives after the end of the project
- Continuation of Village Court Assistance position is highly recommended
- Local NGOs working at union level will share VC related information during their own awareness raising event.

Commitments received from participants toward activation of VCs:

- District Information Officer of Chandpur committed to share the video made by AVCB Phase II project for sensitizing mass people on VC within their own interventions
- Islamic Foundation agreed to share message on VC during Jumma prayer through circulating a letter
- Deputy Commissioners and DDLGs said to take necessary steps to hand over the charges to Panel Chairman during the absence of UP chair
- Committed to run VC hearing session sitting on the *ejlas* (Court Bench) and following rules and procedure of Village Courts Act 2006
- Deputy Commissioners instructed all UNOs to visit village courts regularly to monitor their performance and report accordingly
- All UP Chairmen were instructed to operate VC following the rules and procedures and to document the VC proceedings as per law
- All Chairmen will conduct VC sessions at least once a week
- Village courts performance report must be shared with UNOs, DDLGs, and DCs for way forward.

Half Yearly Coordination Meeting

A two-day **Project Progress Review Workshop** was held with DDLGs and field level staff on 10-11 April 2019 at BIAM Foundation, Dhaka. Mr. Md Tazul Islam, MP, Honorable Minister, Ministry of Local Government, Rural Development and Cooperatives attended as

Chief Guest while Ms. Audrey Maillot, Team Leader-Governance of the Delegation of the European Union to Bangladesh and Mr. Sudipto Mukerjee, Resident Representative, UNDP Bangladesh were the special guests. Mr. S M Ghulam Farooque, Senior Secretary, Local Government Division (LGD) chaired the workshop. In total, 188 participants (Male: 169; Female: 19) including different government officials from ministries, 24 Deputy Director of Local Government, 8 UP Chairman, 27 District Facilitators, 4 NGO focal persons, 4 Project Coordinators, 4 Monitoring and Reporting Coordinators, 27 District Coordination Officers (DCOs), 23 Journalists, and Project Management Unit members took part in the workshop. Honorable Chief Guest recommended making the VC functional at all unions of Bangladesh, taking guidance from the project using its successes and lessons learnt.



Remarks marked by Guests:

Mr. Sudipto Mukerjee, Resident Representative, UNDP Bangladesh admitted that village courts, the only state-led rural justice systems, are found to be significantly faster than formal judiciary to ensure access to justice to the most vulnerable and poor.

Ms. Audrey Maillot, Team Leader-Governance of the Delegation of the EU conjured to the GoB to come forward and horizontally expand interventions, scaling up to cover hundred percent unions due to its unparalleled services and benefits to the community.

Mr. Farooque, Senior Secretary of Local Government Division (LGD) acknowledged efforts by of the AVCB II project to establish examples in ‘bringing services to the doorstep of the people.’ He asked all the concerned, including all the Union Parishad chairmen, to execute the village courts properly and sincerely to make the village courts more acceptable to the rural people.

Mr. Tazul Islam MP, Honorable Minister, Ministry of Local Government, Rural Development and Cooperatives (MoLGRD&C) recommended making the VC functional at all unions of Bangladesh, taking guidance from the project using its successes and lessons learnt.

An open discussion was moderated by the chair of the session where chairmen from different UPs shared their suggestions to carry forward VC. Recommendations documented from the participants are:

Recommendations from UP Chairmen:

- To increase financial jurisdiction of village courts from 75,000 (\$887.57) to BDT 100,000 (\$1183.43);
- To activate VC across Bangladesh as solving two cases in a week in each union could make a big difference in the country for ensuring local justice;
- To refer the cases that are triable at village courts from police station to village courts
- To introduce a clause in VC’s Act on how to deal with the case when respondents avoid the summon instead of returning the case to applicants.
- To reduce volume of documentations as it takes too much time
- To arrange training for young people at local level to activate VC accordingly
- To keep clause of punishment if anyone avoids VCs summon
- To increase the community mobilization initiatives and take necessary steps to reduce influence of frauds/brokers and vested interest groups who often exaggerated facts to keep complaints beyond the VC jurisdiction

Recommendations from DDLG:

- To increase the frequency of refreshers training or orientation for UP representatives and officials
- To take initiative to give award for best performing UP chairman
- To emphasize on training of UP secretaries as they will serve for a longer period than elected bodies

Recommendations from DF and NGO:

- To increase government monitoring which can contribute to make a significant change as well as confidence of the chairman for establishing village courts at their end
- To involve judicial officers more in field monitoring which also can motivate chairmen and other UP officials
- To organize special events for women leaders to involve them as panel members and sensitization workshops for UP Chairman, Members and Secretaries
- To do something special with identified women leaders and to invite males in CYM to address gender equity
- To support women-friendly environment at UP so that women can feel comfortable going there.

Activity 1.1.7 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 that gender and vulnerability issues are mainstreamed

In response to the letter issued by LGD to the cabinet division to integrate the VC issue with the training curriculum to the pertinent training institutes under the respective ministry, the Cabinet Division issued a letter (17 April 2019) to the respective Ministries (i.e. Ministry of Law Justice and Parliamentary Affairs; Ministry of Public Admission; and Ministry of Home Affairs) instructing for integrating the VC issue with the training curriculum to their pertinent training institutes.

LGD sent another letter (17 October 2019) to Secretaries of Ministry of Law Justice and Parliamentary Affairs and Ministry of Public Admission and Ministry of Home Affairs requesting to update the status of integration of VCs, referring to the letter from Cabinet division. In response to the letter of LGD, different ministers took following initiatives:

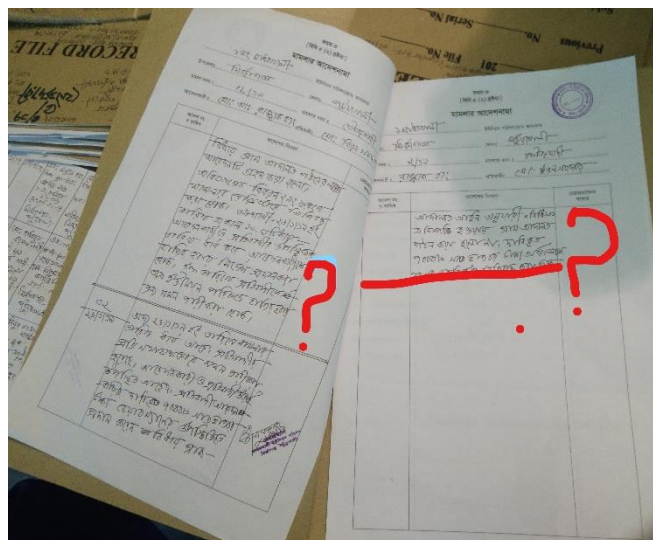
- The Ministry of Law Justice and Parliamentary Affairs informed that VC issue was already included in foundation training courts of JATI, and it was discussed in different training courses as Statute Review.
- The Ministry of Home Affairs issued a letter on 08 December 2019 to the Inspector General of Police (IGP) along with the head of other pertinent institutes of the Ministry of Home Affairs to include VC issues in their basic training curriculum. In response to this letter, Additional DIG (Training-01) issued a directive on 13 January 2020 to their pertinent training center /unit to include village courts issues in their training curriculum.
- In response to the letter issued by Additional DIG (Training-1) dated 30 June 2019, Bangladesh Police Academy informed on 6 July 2019 that at present village courts issues are not included in different training courses under the In-Service Training Department. However, they are committed to include in their training curriculum in the future.

Activity 1.1.8 Develop capacity of field level staff

Provide technical assistance and mentoring to CSOs, VC officials and other stakeholders through field visit and on the job capacity development support

The Capacity Development Unit (CDU) made three (3) field visits in Dhaka (Mymensingh district), Barisal (Patuakhali district), and Rajshai (Pabna & Sirajgonj districts districts) during the reporting period. During the field visit following findings were made:

- Signature of UP Chairman was not found in the specific place of the order sheet of every case.
- Total 12 cases resolved by Rule 31 but most cases, final order didn't write in proper manner.
- Aposhnama was found each of the cases which resolved by Rule 31 but signature of witness was not found.
- Most of the cases, application form didn't fill up properly. Specially the Disputed matter (Birodhiyo Bishoy) and Relief sought (Prarthito Protikar) which is the heart of application.
- In some cases, somehow applicant didn't present in 1st date of the case. But due to absence of applicant, UP Chairman canceled the case without re-informing to the applicant (case no. 03/18)
- Few VCAs didn't follow the Guideline of Legal Service Information as they didn't read and understand it properly.
- Didn't maintain register on IEC materials.
- A copy of computer composed formal application were found with each application form of the cases which is an extra expenditure for the applicant.



Activity 1.1.9 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 that gender and vulnerability issues are mainstreamed

In response to the letter issued by LGD to the cabinet division to integrate the VC issue with the training curriculum to the pertinent training institutes under the respective ministry, the Cabinet Division issued a letter (17 April 2019) to the respective Ministries (i.e. Ministry of Law Justice and Parliamentary Affairs; Ministry of Public Admission; and Ministry of Home Affairs) instructing for integrating the VC issue with the training curriculum to their pertinent training institutes.

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Activity 1.1.20 Coordination and monitoring field-level activities

Member of PCU visited Bhola, Barguna, Khulna, Bagerhat, Satkhira, Patuakhali, Madaripur, Gopalganj, Faridpur, Gazipur, Sylhet, Sunamganj, Moulvibazar, Chattogram, Coxsbazar, Chandpur, Panchagor, Sirajganj, Gaibandha, Rangpur and Naogaon district during this reporting period to assess the progress made against the target made in different quarters, quality of service delivery and results generated due to service delivery. At the end of each visit, findings was shared with field level staff and guided them for further improvement. Findings also shared with respective DDLG, DC and UNOs and sought their supports for making the village courts more functional. Meeting with UP chairmen and members also carried out to motivate them for resolving disputes properly following the VCs act and rules.

Member of Project Coordination Unit (PCU) attended four (10) Quarterly Coordination Meetings¹ (QCMs) organized by four partner NGOs in this reporting period. Among the meetings, ESDO organized 3 meetings, WAVE foundation organized 3, BLAST organized 2 and MLAA also organized 2 meetings. The participants of the workshop were Project Coordinator, Monitoring and Reporting Coordinator, District Coordination Officer (DCo), Finance Officer and Focal person of respective NGOs. District Facilitators deployed by UNDP in working areas of each partner organization also attended in the meeting. PCU has provided technical supports to four partner NGOs for organizing 04 meetings effectively. Both financial and programmatic progress, and type of challenges faced by NGOs during implementation were discussed in the meeting. Possible mitigation measures of foreseeable challenges have been identified during the meeting and later on, disseminated these to all partner NGO for common understanding.

Member of Project Coordination Unit (PCU) has supervised/monitored the work of 27 District Facilitators and provided management and capacity building supports for smooth implementation of field level awareness raising and capacity building through four partner NGOs. They also guided and regularly monitored four (4) Partner Organizations. They checked all necessary documents both financial & program and ensured timely fund transferred to four partner NGOs. They have maintained close communication with Project Coordinators, Finance Officers and Monitoring & Reporting Coordinators for MIS data entry, documentation of VC's proceedings, and upholding union wise village courts performance and intensively involved in trouble shooting.

District Facilitators (DFs) deployed project districts were fully engaged to coordinate with local admin to ensure their guidance and leadership, facilitate and guide partner NGO's to produce

¹ *Quarterly Coordination Meetings (QCMs) is a NGO's activity organized by partner NGO quarterly where all District Coordination Officers, PC, Monitoring and Reporting Coordinator, Finance Officer and Focal person of AVCB II project of respective NGO attend. In addition, District Facilitators deployed by UNDP in NGO's working district also participate in the quarterly meeting of the respective NGO.*

result mostly. In beif DF are doing the following activities in consultation with the respective DDLG and in coordination with the PNGO colleagues.

- District facilitators invested most of their working time to monitor the performance of Village Courts. To achieve this aim they regularly review the documentation mainted by VCA and observed village court hearing session at their respective areas. They coordinate with UP Chairman and members to run the VC as per approved law and to ensure the implementation of the decision made during hearing session;
- Monthly case status also being monitored and validated during field visit/report analysis or discussion during Monthly Coordination Meeting to find out where they need to contribute for upraising the status. With those analysis they prepared presentation, one pager, report to be shared with DDLG, concern Chairman, DC and District legal Aid Officer for their support to motivate, mentor and make the Chairman responsible for doing so.
- Always in close contact with the Union parishad Chairman to extend their support for regularize village court by following the rules and procedure thourgh contineous mentoring support. Apart from that they also update DDLG based on the field findings to enage them for furtehr support as and where required thourgh letter circulation, meeting during field visit, etc;
- Provided necessary supports to the local administration to organize quarterly Upazila and District Village Court Management Committees. As part of that, they coordinated to finalize the agenda consdiering the challenges & needs faced local staffs during implementation, take necessary to approve and ensure well circulation of the minutes, etc. Later on, contineously coordinated and communicated with those concern persons related to the implemenation of the decision for proper execution. Furthermore, number of field visits to monitor VC by the members was also intiated during this reporting time;
- Continued advocacy with local administration for issuing government directive instructing local NGOs to disseminate message on VC through their community mobilization initiatives. During last reporting period Upazila Nirbahi Officer from Project area circulated 92 GO to all local NGO's for sharing VC related information through their different inifitatives and to submit progress report regarding that. During this reporting period DF engaged themselves to communicate with those NGO's for submission of the reports, to check and to measure the result;
- Contineously the assisted PNGOs concern staffs to organize and facilitate CYMs following the guideline provided by PMU through CYM visit, interviewing the attendant and the members of the local area. Apart from that they also analysed the facilitation skill, participatory guided to the concern VCA to update their facilitation skill to make the session more participatory and to cover the whole are by selecting the areas;
- Provided technical support and ensured local administration for organizing Gender Workshop to sensetize the project staffs and other relevant key stakeholders in consultation with PMU;
- Provided support to the PNGOs for planning, budgeting and organizing community sharing meetings and video shows as per agreed plan by achieving the target. They also guided them to preparfe the agenda, presenation to make those evenet effective;
- Guided and provided all sorts of technical support to PNGO to attend in the quarterly coordination meeting organized by Upazila Nirbahi Officer to orient local NGOs about VC and to make them responsive to integrate VC in their regular activities. They analyzed the work plan and monthly target plan and provided feedback after reviewing to perform it properly by using the local resources;
- Assisted Union Parishad Chairman for providing incentives for Village Police at Union level;

- Maintained close relationship with local journalist to encourage them to publish report and related information highlighting the benefits of the VC to make it more popular;
- Ensured effective use of IEC materials by field level staff through monitoring;
- Provided technical support to improve the quality of reporting including quality of VC's performance data through field visits regularly as guided by PMU. At present they have stated to monitor the VCMIS for case data input;
- Assisted Union Parishad Chairman for providing incentives for Village Police at Union level;
- Provided technical support to improve the quality of reporting including quality of VC's performance data through field visits regularly as guided by PMU. At present they have started to monitor the PMIS for case data input;

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

Local initiatives for awareness raising and capacity building:

Chandpur: Deputy Commissioner of Chandpur Mr. Mazedur Rahman Khan initiated video conference with Concern UNO, Chairman and UP body to provide their all kind of support for village court. He has instructed to all UNO to monitor the progress the regularly. As part of that he organized the first session in February. Another follow up session is fixed to be held on the 11 July to observe the progress made as per decision. An open letter has been circulated to all Imam to discuss about Village Court after Jumma Prayer. DDLG circulated a letter to all UP Chairman for miking regarding VC for awareness from UP budget from 1st April' 2019. SP Chandpur included VC as an agenda to be discussed in their monthly coordination meeting.

Patuakhali: UP chairmen of Patuakhali district started rally, miking, club meeting with their own budget for creating awareness on VC among rural people. UC conducting tea stall session where Village people passing their leisure time with entertainment. Those people are not reached through court yard meeting. In this reporting period total 541 tea stall session have been conducted by VCA & UC where approximately 6805 people known about village court.

Noakhali: Mr. Tonmoy Das, Deputy Commissioner of Noakhali organized a special meeting on 7th April' 2019 with all UNO and Chairman focusing on how to extend support to ensure VC services at Noakhali. He also circulated a letter to all UNO to observe the court performance, to monitor the quality and to guide accordingly. Besides those he attended Village Court Management Committee meeting, put his importance on activation of VC, instructed to visit those members to facilitate the challenges.

Moulvibazar: Mohammad Tofayel Islam, Deputy Commissioner and Mohammad Rokonuddin, DDLG of Moulvibazar organized an orientation for all Chairman including non-project area to make them sensitized on effectiveness of VC. He guided the team to collect information, IEC materials from Project area to activate the VC in non project area.

Noagaon: Office of Deputy Commissioner of Noagaon district organized a view exchange meeting with VCA on 31st July, 2019 at the Deputy Commissioner's conference room. Deputy Commissioner attended as chief guest and urged the VCAs to assist UPs to resolve the disputes within short period of time.

Naogoan: Chief Judicial Magistrate of Naogaon called a meeting for all UP Chairmen of the district in July 2019 and had a very positive discussion about referral case dealing by Chairmen. After this meeting VCs of Naogoan district have started receiving more cases from district courts.

Gaibandha: DDLG Gaibandha along with Local Govt. section has organized a half day workshop on VC on 20.11.2019 at DC conferenc room, Gaibandha. The main objectives of this half day workshop to identify the gaps, provide technical support to maintain VC registers and forms, and reduce pending cases at UP level. Ms. Rokhsana Begum, DDLG Gaibandha presided over the workshop. 30 UP Secretaries and 10 AACOs of non-project areas were participated in the workshop. The major outputs of this workshops are as follows;

- All the participants have got clear direction from the district administration for activation of village courts;
- All the UP Secretaries and AACOs have got clear concept how to prepare monthly VC report & where the report will be submitted.

1.1.21 Capacity development of traditional institutions, local CSOs and local administration in CHT as well as judiciary, legal professions, and other relevant actors in CHT

Revise and printing of ToT training manual of traditional justice system

The ToT training manual/module of the traditional justice system (case management and documentation) was revised and customized by following internal and external consultation processes with different stakeholders. The internal consultation meeting was held on 12th November 2019 at the UNDP Rangamati office with the project team while the external consultation workshop on reviewing content of ToT module was held at the Chakma Circle Chief's Office on 9th December 2019. 32 participants (Male-22, Female-10) from different professional backgrounds (i.e. traditional leaders, lawyers, development activists, social workers etc.) were present and gave their opinions to revise and improvise the ToT module content. The module will be used to provide training to grassroots level traditional leaders.

Based on the recommendations and opinions from the external sectoral experts, the project staff have revised the ToT module on case management and documentation. Finally, the revised module was endorsed by all key experts and the Chakma circle chief. The content of the training module are : case management, documentation and archives systems in traditional justice in CHT, history and background of the traditional justice systems in CHT, gender, justice and human rights, roles and responsibilities of traditional leaders, institutional and administrative features of CHT, differences between formal and informal justice systems, equality and justice, office management, traditional forest and land management systems in CHT, and facilitation skills etc.

Provide Training of Trainers (ToT) on basic training, Traditional System (Case management, documentation etc.) for traditional leaders, civil society members and NGO staff at District level

During the reporting period, two intensive Training of Trainers (ToT) on the “*Case Management & Documentation for Strengthening Traditional Justice Systems in the CHT*” for selective traditional leaders were conducted between 17-21 December 2019 in Bandarban District. The main objective of the ToT was to create a resource pool with potential traditional leaders, development activists, lawyers, women leaders, social workers etc. to provide training to the grassroots level traditional leaders. 41 participants (Male: 33, Female: 8) from both Khagrachari and Bandarban Districts participated from different ethnic communities (i.e. Chakma, Marma, Tripura, Bawm etc). Participants were selected based on the following criteria: previous experience of facilitation and conducting training, in-depth knowledge on the training topics, possibility of future engagement, leadership quality, educational qualification, and personal interest for training facilitation.



Key resource persons of the training were Chakma Circle Chief Barrister Raja Devasish Roy, renowned educationist and development practitioner Professor Mong Sanu Chowdhury, Senior advocate from Rangamati district Judge Court Mr. Hla Thowai Prue Marma etc.

Organize Launching Ceremony and Inception Workshop

Launching Ceremony of ‘Strengthening Traditional Justice Systems in the CHT’ of AVCB II Project was held at the Parjatan Motel Complex, Rangamati hill district on 25th September 2019. The main objective of the event was to inform and share about the project activities of the AVCB Phase II project with all relevant government and non-government stakeholders, local administration & public representatives, local traditional leaders and CHT institutions etc. The Launching Workshop was presided over by the National Project Director, AVCB Phase II Project and Additional Secretary, Local Government Division. Secretary, Ministry of Chittagong Hill Tracts Affairs attended the workshop as Chief Guest while EU Ambassador to Bangladesh, UNDP Resident Representative, UNDP Deputy Resident Representative, and Additional Secretary, MoCHTA & National Project Director of SID-CHT were present as special guests.



Around 76 participants including representatives from different CHT institutions, traditional leaders, representatives from different government line departments, public prosecutors from 3 districts, public representatives and representatives from local administrations, etc. participated in the event. In the program, all respective stakeholders from central government and CHT institutions committed proactively to extend their support for proper implementation of the project across the CHT.

During the launching event, there was a demand to arrange similar events in other two CHT districts, hence the project organized two inception workshops in Khagrachari and Bandarban districts on 26th November 2019 and 30th November 2019 respectively. Like the launching workshop, the main objective of the inception workshop was to inform and share about the project activities with all relevant government and non-government stakeholders, local administration & public representatives, local traditional leaders, journalists, CHT institutions and government line departments. Altogether, 204 participants attended both inception workshops where 59 were females. Representatives from Hill District Councils (HDCs), Deputy Commissioners, DDLG, representatives from Police department, CHT traditional leaders (i.e. Mong Circle Chief, Headmen and Karbaries), local government representatives (i.e. Upazila Chairman, Upazila Vice Chairman, Union Parishad Chairmen & members), development workers, journalists, representatives from district bar associations, women leaders etc. were present in these workshops.

Organize Planning/review Workshop

Two days Annual Planning workshop for AVCB Phase II CHT component was held on 22-23 December 2019 in Bandarban where all staff of AVCB Phase II CHT component were present. The objective of the workshop was to review the progress of 2019 and prepare a plan for 2020. The workshop enabled participants to understand the project activities, their roles and responsibilities and future plans as this was the first meeting of the full team since the project started in CHT in September 2019.

The workshop started with the sharing of brief background information of the project by Mr. Sarder M. Asaduzzaman, Senior Project Manager, AVCB, Dhaka. After that, both project and financial progress including challenges faced in 2019 were discussed. Finally, a realistic and effective work plan for 2020 with specific timeframe was developed in line with the approved project document in consultation with all participants. Action Research intervention that will be conducted in 15 UPs of CHT aiming to explore feasibility of village courts in three CHT districts as well as selection criteria of 15 UPs were also discussed in the workshop.

Organize Project Reflection workshop

During this period, one project reflection workshop was held at the Chakma Circle Chief Office, Rangamati on 17th November 2019. The main objective of the workshop was to learn and observe the case management and documentation of the Chakma Raja/ Chakma Circle Chief Office and to reflect on the self-action and documentation of case management and documentation. 44 participants (Female- 23 and Male- 21) including 37 traditional leaders from different upazilas of Rangamati district attended.

The entire Project Reflection workshop was facilitated by Raja Devasish Roy, honorable Chakma Circle Chief, Subrata Chakma, PS to Chakma Raja & Chakma circle chief office and Advocate Bhabatosh Dewan, Traditional Leader (Headman). The participants learnt about the

operational procedures of the Chakma Circle Chief Office and documentation processes of cases and practices of traditional courts at local level i.e. (operation, management and documentation of cases for customary courts etc.) and duties and responsibilities of traditional leaders as Headman and Karbari.

Through the workshop, all the participants got the opportunity to see the Chakma circle chief office, record rooms and learned about the documentation procedure of Chakma circle office, which will help them to document and maintain procedures of case management as traditional leaders.

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

This activity will be arranged after compiling and analyzing recommendations of 27 district level consultations with judiciary and police, local administration and UP representatives on case referral and complained disposal. As district level all consultations did not complete yet it was not possible to arrange National level advocacy seminar.

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

In total 12 workshops have been organized in 2019 as planned in Sirajganj, Naogaon, Gaibandha, Panchagarh, Khulna, Bagerhat, Cox's Bazar, Shunamganj, Sylhet, Gazipur, Netrokona and Gopalganj. In total around 609 persons were present in these 12 workshops, out of which 64 were women. The main participants of these workshops were from district judiciary, district administration, Police personnel and selected UP chairpersons by DDLG basing on performance from project area of respective districts. The main findings and suggestions from the workshops held so far were as follows:

- The pecuniary jurisdiction is required to be increased
- Procedure of execution of VC decisions should be simplified
- Monitoring tools should be developed for effectively monitoring the quality of the decision making by VC
- Full time designated staffs should be engaged for VC
- VC system should be made functional all over the country
- System should be developed so that Police can refer the disputes to Union Parishad so that it can be solved through VC system
- More awareness program should be carried out
- Need to train UP chair further on VCA 2006, VC Rules 2016 and ADR
- A link can be introduced with UP office and district legal aid office so that UP chairs could take assistance of DLAO in need of any legal support.
- Attendance of respondents after serving the summon should be ensured by making necessary amendments in the VC Act

- Coordination with police regarding VC should be arranged so that VC triable cases can be sent to UP
- VC can resolve disputes amicably thus ensuring win situation for both parties. So to ensure harmony between the parties an effective role of the UP Chair is very crucial
- At present Police is under an obligation to refer even the VC triable cases to formal court due to CrPC
- Provisions should be made to continue village court proceedings if respondents willingly disobeys the summon
- Intergrity of the UP Chair is the first criteria to have a successful VC system
- CrPC acts as an impediement for Police to refer the cases to UP without referring the case first to the Magistrate court
- UP Chair – Judiciary meeting should be held regularly
- There should be a focal point for VC and District court for regular communication
- UP Chairs neutrality will give more better result to VC

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 letter has been issued dated 20th August 2019 from LGD upon lobbying from AVCB sent to the ministry of home affairs. This letter has sought necessary actions from home ministry so that cases could be transferred from police station to VC. Regarding the Practice Note from Chief Justice, the National Consultant has prepared a draft and working to finalize the letter and also carrying out the preparatory work so that proper documentation can be placed before Chief Justice to get the directive

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

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

National Consultant(NC) has been haired on September 2019 aiming to Legal review and draft proposed amendment of Village Court Act and Rules. Meanwhile he has prepared a draft proposal to get vetted over a national event to be organized in Dhaka with the presence of concerned ministry personnel, donor agencies and others.

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

Consultaion with district judiciary in Panchaghar, district administration in Noakhali, and district Police in Bagerhat were carried out during this reporting period. Apart from these 5 FGDs with UP chair, beneficiaries, PNGO staff, VCA and UP Secrateries and 16 KIIs with CJM, DDLG, UP Chair, Asistant Judge, Judicial Megistarte, Access to justice expart, AVCB Staff, DFs and DCOs were carried out in Jamalpur, Madaripur, Noakhali, Moulvibazar, Naogaon, Bagerhat and Panchaghar where 135 people attended and gave their feedbacks and recommendations on existing legal framework of Village Courts. Some of the noted findings from those events are:

Noakhali (Consultation with District and Upazila administration, UP Chair, Lawyer,)

- Need to think to arrange incentive for UP Chairman and Members when they conduct adjudication of a complaint in the Village Court
- When the UP Chairman Serve notice to the defendant and the defendant do not appear before the Chairman, the objective of the VC become ineffective. Thus, the law needs to amend by introducing the mandatory provision of defendant's appear in the VC
- Dowry, maintenance and divorce matters need to be vested upon VC
- The pecuniary jurisdiction of the VC can logically be increased to 150,000/- BDT.

Bagerhat (Consultation with Police Officers)

- To develop a referral system between Village Court and Police Station, amendment of section 155 of CrPC will not be an effective measure. It will create procedural gaps and complexity as well as an adverse impact on other sections of the CrPC (Section 107 - 118). Thus, it is necessary to examine the whole procedure before making an amendment proposal
- Develop accountability mechanism by amending laws to minimise the biasness of the UP Chairman
- A coordination/reporting system can be developed between Police Station and Union Parishad though an informal coordination is existing between them.

Panchaghar (Consultation with District Judiciary):

- An accountability mechanism for both in administration and judiciary need to be developed for Village Court by amending Village Court Act and Rule. The judicial accountability can be vested upon District and Session Judge and Chief Judicial Magistrate
- The objective of the Village Court Act is to resolve the disputes in easy and speedy manner, not to trial the cases. The name of 'Village Court' can be named as Dispute Resolve Board/Council/Committee.

FGD and KII findings:

- Need to amend the law by including the provisions on mandatory appearance before the VC. It can impose fine or ex-prate trial provision or mandatory provision to appear before Village Court need to include in the law. Need to impose fine if the respondents do not appear before the village court after getting notice.
- The amount of fine need to be increase and thus the relevant section of the Act needs to be amended.
- There should be a supervision from formal Courts of the country.
- The reporting system provided in the Rule need to be more elaborative and need to include provisions for providing VC report to Chief Judicial Magistrate.
- There should be a referral mechanism between VC and Thana. This mechanism should be supported by the relevant law and rules.
- If possible, the case fee for both Civil and Criminal matters could be common and need to increase up to 50 taka.
- The monitoring system of the DDLG need to enhance for effective VC functioning.

- There should be a mandatory provision for attending court day.
- The circular on VCMC need to be include in the Act or Rule for better attention by the local administration.
- Increase of financial jurisdiction including subject matter jurisdiction.
- Need to allocate honorarium for the Chairman and Members of the Village Courts.
- Need to provide power of police to bring the perpetrator in the Village Court.
- Need to allocate a separate Court Room, as the present Court room is used for other meeting also.
- There is no separate room or corner for women in the UP premise, thus they feel uneasy while feeding their babies and no washroom for women.
- Peoples' confidants are less over Chairman and Members due to biasness, malpractice and politicization.

Activity 1.2.4 Printed and distributed necessary VC materials and guidelines.

2800 copy of Operation Manuals that were printed last quarter has been distributed during this reporting period. Field reports so far gathered were quite promising. According DFs and UCs it has made the day to day job easy and many of the grey areas were crystalized.

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

During this reporting period field visits were carried out in Mahimaganj Union of Gaibandha district, Aronghata Union of Khulna district, Haridashpur Union of Gopalganj district and Bagha and Lamakazi Union of Sylhet district. These visits were aimed to observe the quality assurance of VC decisions and other documentary records. Views were shared with Union Parishad Chairpersons along with the Upazila Coordinator and Village Courts Assistant (VCA) on the findings of field visit

The main findings of the field visits are as follows:

- In Khulna the VC ejlash of Aronghata Union is set up in a very unusual way. It seems that the Ejlsh is carried out in an abandoned building. There are no sitting arrangement for people neither there is any IEC materials.
- The Signboard of VC at Aronghata Union is placed no where near the UP building or the building where the VC activities are carried out.
In Bagha Union of Golapganj Upazilla in Sylhet district there were missing important documents in Case files. Upon observation of random case files, in Case no. 14/18 which was civil in nature, the order No. 7 mentioned that statements of the petitioner and respondents are taken but they were not found in the case file. It is very likely that statements were not recorded. The only recorded statement that was found in the case file was that of a witness appearing behalf of the respondent.
- Attendance form (Form-10) in case 02/19 were wrongly filled. Applicant signed in the Respondednt column and respondent signed in the applicant column.

Review of existing customary laws & practices and codification/ documentation of laws as well as support to existing harmonization efforts of different justice systems in CHT.

Organize regional and district level yearly advocacy dialogue on harmonization

Two district level yearly advocacy workshops on harmonization of traditional laws and justice system were organized on 18th December and 19th December 2019 at the Rangamati and Bandarban Hill District Council respectively. The objective of the workshops were to harmonize the local justice system, streamlining the functions of three circles and developing institutional linkage between the Circle Chief offices and CHT institutions to strengthen the dispute settlement process.

The keynote speaker Raja Devashish Roy, Honorable Chakma Circle Chief presented a brief presentation followed by an open discussion. After the speeches of both special guests and Chief Guest, group exercise was conducted in four groups. Finally, all the groups shared their findings.

In Rangamati, Rem Liana Pangkhua, Member, Rangamati Hill District Council, Sharmin Alam, Deputy Director of Local Government, Rangamati District, Mohammed Saiful Elahi, Joint District & Sessions Judge, District Judge Court, Rangamati District and Mr. Main Uddin Chowdhury, ASP, Rangamati Hill District were present.

In Bandarban, Mohammad Mahbubur Rahman, Chief Judicial Magistrate, Bandarban District, Ms. Ting Ting Mya, Member, Bandarban Hill District Council, Mr. SM Mobasher Hossain, ASP, Bandarban participated in the program.

Issues discussed in both dialogues were: multi-marriage, marriage registration, marriage related inheritance law, inheritance, functionalization of traditional courts judgement, writing vs non-writing law and custom, reform of traditional rules/ modernizing the traditional system, codification of all community's customary law and good governance of the traditional courts and monitoring. The findings and information



Workshop on harmonization at Rangamati

gathered through both workshops will be shared in the regional and national level workshops to mobilize the process of harmonization and strengthening of the traditional justice system.

Consultancy for Technical Assistance on harmonization of local justice system (person), IC for reviewing the existing customary laws and practices of different tribes, IC for editing and updating of CHT laws and regulations compiled by CHTRC

During this reporting period, two (2) individual consultants - one for technical assistance on harmonization of the local justice system in CHT and another for updating and compiling CHT laws and regulations were hired. The main objective of hiring the first one was to review all relevant legal and regulatory frameworks and conduct an in-depth study for harmonizing local justice systems in CHT following the existing laws, acts and practices in consultation with all

respective stakeholders and line departments/ ministries. Another consultant will compile a compendium of updated and compiled laws, which are directly linked to CHT and submit a report to UNDP on updating and compilation of laws directly linked to CHT.

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

Activity 1.3.1. Support LGD to take over village courts performance monitoring of 351 UPs in pilot phase

The project has provided support to Monitoring Inspection and Evaluation (MIE) wing, LGD for developing Decentralized Monitoring Inspection and Evaluation (DMIE) system for monitoring village courts performance across the Bangladesh including 351 UPs of pilot phase. Meanwhile, GO has been drafted by MIE wing with project support highlighting roles and responsibilities of union parishad, upazila and district to implement 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 in 1,080 unions.

Review Village Courts rules and revise guideline of DMIE system:

A meeting on Implementation of DMIE System and Future Action was held on 3 April 2019 at Local Government Division of Bangladesh Secretariate. Dr. Kazi Anowarul Hoque, Additional Secretary (Development) and NPD of AVCB (Phase II) project chaired the meeting. Joint Secretary (Monitoring & Evaluation), National Project Coordinator of AVCB (Phase II), Research & Evaluation Manager of AVCB (Phase II) and Monitoring Associate of AVCB (Phase II) participated in the meeting. This meeting decided two influential decisions a) take immediate initiatives to finalize the DMIE system through calling a meeting including cabinet division under leadership of Director General, MIE wing of Local Government Division; and b) gather feedback on quarterly VC reporting format mentioned in VC Act from DDLG and UNO who participated in DTP training at NILG.

Based on the decision of the earlier meeting, a meeting was held at MIE wing, Local Government Division on 13 May 2019 with the participation of Cabinet Division representative. Mr Nikhil Ranjan Roy, Director General of Monitoring, Inspection and Evaluation wing of Local Government Division chaired the meeting. Joint Secretary (M&E) of LGD, Deputy Secretary of Cabinet Division, Deputy Secretary (Monitoring-1) of LGD, NPC of AVCB (Phase II), R&E Manager of AVCB (Phase II) and other personnel attended in this meeting. Two decisions had been taken to expedite the process of DMIE system implementation. Those are, a) a letter need to be sent to the cabinet division to request the collection of VC performance as per format of the VC Act 2006 instead of their format; and b) It can be recommended that the columns of cancel/dismiss and cases referred to higher court can be included in VC performance reporting format during next amendment of the Act.

LGD has received a response of the letter sent to cabinet division on 19 August 2019 seeking their support to circulate direction regarding the data collection forms attached in VC Act as Cabinet Division has been collecting the VC performance using different format. In the letter cabinet mentioned that it will not possible for them to collect data using the format attached in VC Act as the objective of data collection of cabinet and LGD are different. They mentioned

that LGD can collect data using the format mention in the VC Act as LGD is supervisory authority of Union Parishad and responsible for implementing Village Court Act.

Activity 1.3.3 Strengthen Village Courts Management Committee (VCMCs) across the project areas and lobby for increased balance in gender representation

As reported earlier that twenty-seven (27) District level VCMCs and one hundred twenty-eight (128) Upazila level VCMCs formed in project areas following the GO issued in 2012 and started functioning. According to GO, both committees are required to meet quarterly to monitor the village courts performance and provide strategic direction. The project has provided both technical and financial supports for holding VCMC meeting following GO. But during reporting period 41% DVCMC and 42% UVCMC meet following the GO issue in 2012 and following issues were discussed in the VCMC meetings.

| # of Meeting | Name of districts |
|---------------------|--|
| 4 Meeting | 54 UVCMCs (Atwari, Badalgachhi, Bakshiganj, Baralekha, Boda, Chakaria, Chitalmari, Companiganj (Noa), Debiganj, Fakirhat, Faridganj, Fatikchhari, Gazipur sadar, Gobindaganj, Gopalganj sadar, Haluaghat, Kabirhat, Kachua (Bag), Kachua (Chand), Kaliakair, Kaliganj (Gazi), Kapasia, Kaunia, Kendua, Kulaura, Lalmohan, Lohagara, Mahadebpur, Matlab (North), Matlab (South), Mongla, Muksudpur, Muktagachha, Niamatpur, Pabna sadar, Palashbari, Panchagarh sadar, Patnitala, Porsha, Rampal, Ramu, Sadullapur, Sandwip, Sapahar, Sarankhola, Satkania, Sitakunda, Sreemangal, Sreepur, Subarnachar, Sundarganj, Tentulia, Tungipara and Ukhia) |
| 3 Meeting | 33 UVCMCs (Amtali, Atgharia, Bamna, Beanibazar, Begumganj, Betagi, Bhangura, Biswambarpur, Biswanath, Dacope, Dighalia, Durgapur, Fulbari, Fultala, Golapganj (Syl), Hatia, Iswarganj, Jagannathpur, Koyra, Kutubdia, Madan, Manpura, Melandaha, Nageshwari, Patharghata, Rajibpur, Shahrasti, Sonaimuri, Sujanagar, Tahirpur, Taraganj and Tazumuddin) |
| 2 Meeting | 42 UVCMCs (Alfadanga, Assasuni, Badarganj, Balaganj, Bauphal, belkuchi, Bhanga, Bhurungamari, Boalmari, Borhanuddin, Char Bhadrasan, Charfassion, Companiganj (Syl), Cox's Bazar sadar, Faridpur (Pab), Faridpur sadar, Galachipa, Gowainghat, Kaliganj (Sat), Kalkini, Kazipur, Kurigram sadar, Maheshkhali, Mirzaganj, Paikgachha, Patuakhali sadar, Pirganj, Rajair, Rangpur sadar, Raumari, Royganj, Rupsa, Sadarpur, Sarishabari, Shibchar, Shyamnagar, Sirazganj sadar, Tala, Tarash) |

Activity 1.3.4 Replicate web-based Village Court management Information System (VCMIS) in 100 project unions for efficient performance monitoring

The project has upgraded the online based VCMIS² for piloting it in 100 project unions before implementing it across the project areas. The project has carried out following activities during reporting period:

²VCMIS is a web based case management system developed keeping in mind different steps of case resolutions as per village courts Act 2006 (Amended in 2013) and different forms and register used to document the village courts proceedings. It has option in generating different reports as per pre-defined criteria of user. VCMIS application software has been piloted in 15 unions of Bangladesh during Phase-I of this project.

Upgrade the Village Court Management Information System (VCMIS): During this period below tasks were carried out for the upgradation of VCMIS

- Review the existing VCMIS windows server and migrate VCMIS software from windows to Linux-based server to ensure better security and performance.
- Development version installed on Linux server.
- Assessed current VCMIS software and did the following for its improvement.
 - ✓ Improved features for compensation (Taka) instatements
 - ✓ Fixed VCMIS core system bugs
 - ✓ Checked existing union mapping and implemented Bangla Unicode based location (Union, Upazilla, District, Division)
 - ✓ Added option to add different district's applicant/defendant /witness in VC case application
 - ✓ Fixed cases' status and associated with latest options and order
 - ✓ Changed labels
 - ✓ Fixed Miscellaneous bugs



Identification of 100 UPs for piloting: The project has identified 100 UPs for piloting web-based VCMIS based on following criteria: availability of electricity, speed of internet, technical knowledge of VCA and UP Secretary on computer operation. In this regard an assessment was carried out.

Collaboration regarding IT hardware support: A meeting was held between AVCB Phase II project and Local Government Support Project-III (LGSP-III) on 24 April 2019 for getting the ICT hardware support, especially computer and other relevant accessories for running web based VCMIS in 100 unions. Based on the decision of the meeting with LGSP-III, a letter was issued by NPD, AVCB Phase II Project to the NPD of LGSP-III on 2 May 2019 for seeking their support to get ICT equipment and other accessories. On 14 May 2019, LGSP-III confirmed that ICT equipment for all UPs of Bangladesh under LGSP-III is under procurement process. Once ICT equipments is available in all UPs, AVCB Phase II project can use the equipment for piloting VCMIS in 100 UPs.

1.3.5 Advocate for the inclusion of the monitoring system into the updated Village Courts Rules and for setting up a monitoring system of access to justice for the most vulnerable in CHT

Logistic support for upgrading of traditional courts (3 Circle Courts, 377 Headmen and Karbari courts)

For upgrading traditional courts, the project has planned to equip three circle courts with *Ejlas* (Court Bench), Chair, Table, File cabinet, bench, fan and water dispenser; 377 Headman courts with *Ejlas* (Court Bench), Chair, Table, File cabinet, bench; and 4000 Karbari courts with Chair, Table, File cabinet, and bench. The vendor has been selected for purchasing required file cabinets for three circle courts, 377 Headmen courts, and 4000 Karbari courts. It is expected that vendors will deliver the required number of file cabinets directly to headman offices from where Karbari will receive their file cabinets. Procurement of other logistic items such as *Ejlas* (Court Bench), Chair, Table, and bench for all three levels of courts are under process. List of Headmen and Karbaris who will be receiving these items has been finalized after consultation with Circle Chief offices. Distribution points have also been finalized to ensure smooth distribution of the items.

Support to Circle Offices, Headman, Karbari and Women Karbari Network offices

In order to improve communication channels among the traditional leaders, better reporting and monitoring of headman and Karbari courts, the project has planned to equip association/network of Headman, Karbari and Women Karbari with logistical items such as desktop, printers, camera, file cabinet, etc. Vendors selected by following UNDP's procurement policy have already delivered a few items and others are under process.

In CHT it is very difficult to reach all Headmen and Karbari individually as they live in very remote places. Hence, the project has decided to use their networks and associations as a means for disseminating information. Furthermore, these offices will also be used as resource centers and Headman and Karbari will use these centers for preparing reports using project supported logistics items.

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

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

Community mobilisation initiatives for local citizens about VCs: Awareness of community members, service providers and other relevant stakeholders about village courts and its function will be increased through community mobilization initiatives to be conducted both at national and local level. During this reporting period, the project has delivered VC related message to around 1,865,000 community people (69% women) through 1,16,700 courtyard meetings

Attend District and Upazila level GO-NGOs Coordination meeting: As mentioned earlier that the project has planned to develop an outreach approach that builds links with the social development/legal aid NGOs already active at the local level, and create a network to disseminate VCs information. In this regard partner organizations are supposed to use Upazila and District level NGOs coordination meeting as vehicle to influence local NGOs to disseminate VCs issues. Meanwhile partner organizations have participated 1,153 number of district and Upazila level GO-NGO coordination meetings during this reporting period.

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

Printing and distribution of VC gender guideline: As part of capacity building initiative, during the reporting period, project printed and distributed the village courts gender guideline across the all working unions and other relevant stakeholders. Along with providing conceptual clarity about gender and gender responsive functioning of the village courts, the guideline outlines the roles and responsibilities of the respective stakeholders in delivering VC services in a gender responsive manner.



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

Develop and print IEC/BCC/outreach materials:

- Printed 1,501 maps indicating project locations and distributed among UPs, UNOs, DC, DDLGs and other relevant stakeholders. In addition, five smaller size maps (in English) printed and shared with EU, UNDP and LGD, which will also be used as a take away material in various project events.
- Produced and printed new designs 11,500 envelopes (both small and large sizes) including branding and slogan of Village Courts
- A leaflet on Village Courts had been reprinted (369,000 copies) and delivered to 27 districts to disseminate with outreach GO-NGOs at district and upazila levels and UPs to share with potential beneficiaries of Village Courts.
- Two bi-annual Bangla newsletters (July-December 2018 and January-June 2019) highlighting the progress and success of the project were developed and 37,000 copies of each were published and distributed to relevant stakeholders.
- 4,48,000 stickers and 4,84,000 leaflets on services of Village Courts were published and sent to field for circulation. Major content of the sticker is, 'for getting justice within **shortest time** and minimal cost let's go to Village Courts', a popular slogan adopted by the project since its piloting phase. And in leaflet benefits of Village Courts, its legal jurisdiction, application process, access to women etc. had been narrated.
- Printed and disseminated 346,800 poster among beneficiaries, and outreach GO-NGOs including District Information Office to share with their beneficiaries
- Printed 30,000 branded folders and distributed during trainings and various events with stakeholders
- Printed 30,000 branded notepads and distributed during trainings and various events with stakeholders
- Produced 20,000 branded pens which will be used in various events with stakeholders
- The project has produced one minute TVC/ Public Service Announcement (PSA). It has been produced in drama form where a widow having a disabled child got justice from Village Court over a land related dispute. Key messages and slogan of Village Court along with branding had been ensured on the TVC. Initially the project had finalized script, performers' list and shooting location for developing a one-minute TV commercial/Public Service Announcement (PSA) and took approval from LGD. It will be aired on 3 private TV channels in 2020 and a copy already being shared with BTV to air free. Meanwhile it has been shared on Social media which attracted more than 2.5 million viewers.
- An introductory video has been produced

- Link and 200 copies DVDs of ‘Gram Adalat’ a community video drama which was developed in 2018, will be disseminated among local administrations in 2nd quarter along with a letter from GOB. This video is planned to air on local cable/dish channels through district and upazila level local administrations following outreach strategy of the project.
- Three radio advertisements were produced in local dialects following the script of the TV commercial with support from three community radios of Barguna, Gaibandha and Moulvibazar and aired on 3 community radios of Barguna, Gaibandha and Moulvibazar. In addition, six dramas and six magazine programmes were developed in local dialect focusing on gender, services of Village Court etc. which will be aired during January - February 2020 in three community radios.

Broadcasting SMS on Village Courts:

Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulatory Commission (BTRC) broadcasted three SMSs on services of Village Courts during this reporting period to its 160 million mobile phone subscribers. Content of the SMSs were: fee to resolve a criminal case is BDT 10 while for a civil case it is BDT 20 in Village Court. No other cost is incurred for this service; if any case has interest related to woman/women as panel member there must be a woman/women; Village Court does not have provision to deploy a lawyer. This free SMS service is a monthly initiative of the project jointly with BTRC started in July 2019.

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

There was no plan activity

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

A national level consultation titled ‘Role of media for raising massive awareness on village courts’ with journalists was held on 29 September 2019 in Dhaka, attracting 120 participants including 40 leading journalists (e.g. news editors/chief reporters of various TV channels, newspapers, radio and online). As a Chief Guest of the event Md Tazul Islam, MP, Honorable Minister, MoLGRD&C remarked, “promoting services and successes of village courts in media will significantly contribute to reduce case back logs in the courts as well as maintaining peace locally by resolving petty disputes.” Mr. Helal Uddin Ahmed, Secretary, Local Government Division; Ms. Rensje Teerink, Ambassador of the European Union to Bangladesh and Mr. Sudipto Mukerjee, Resident Representative, UNDP Bangladesh were present as special guests in the event. A nationally known and leading journalist was deployed as moderator of the event to facilitate the open discussion session. In the meeting, performance of VC, findings of 27 district-level consultation meetings, success in media coverages on VC, role of media to promote VC etc. were shared. One UP chair of Madaripur and one beneficiary of Bagerhat also shared their experiences regarding services of VC.

During open discussion session, journalists recommended to promote successes of village courts through social media, arranging talk shows on TV with the participation of beneficiaries and field level stakeholders, publishing articles, providing training to field level journalists on VCs, using local news/programmes' timeslots of TV time, buying time slot from media to broadcast talk shows, forming a reporting pool to cover news of VCs, taking VC in government's revenue activities rather than a project for ensuring better and sustainable access to justice among rural audiences. The event drew coverage in 42 national media and news agencies including 13 TV channels.



Workshop with journalists at national level

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

Update and maintain the Village Courts website and other social media

During the reporting period project received 515 news including 20 national news on successes, events and analytical features of Village Courts. “Trust is increasing towards Village Courts in Tentulia”, “Ethnic minorities are getting justice in Panchagarh’s Village Courts”, “Creating gender friendly environment in Village Courts is essential”, “People are getting justice in Atowari (Panchagarh) through Village Courts”, “Ayesha Khatun is contented after getting justice from Village Court in Kawnia(Rangpur)”, “2,558 cases resolved in Village Courts of Chandpur”, “Arifa got back BDT 70,000 (\$833) through BDT 20(\$.23) as fee”, “Village Courts reduce case backlogs in Chandpur: 2,678 cases registered and resolved 2,558 cases in 18 months”, “116 cases resolved in Kamalapur (UP) in 18 months” are some key headlines in various national and local media covering successes of VCs during the quarter.



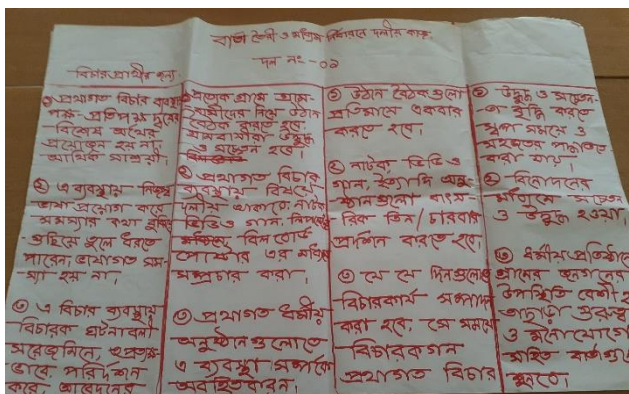
In January 2019, Bangladesh Sangbad Sangstha (BSS), a state own news agency published an analytical news on Village Courts' performance of Chandpur. The report said, "AVCB II Project has developed capacity of relevant stakeholders on Village Courts, as a result, like, Khurshida Begum, Akhnti Aktar, Khrushid Alam, Arifa Akhtar and many others are getting justices within short time". In addition, it said, "Following rules the courts resolve cases and ensure compensation e.g. money, recovery of land to the applicants. Most of the applicants of these courts are rural poor and vulnerable women. Therefore, case backlogs are reducing in district court." Most of the news coverages mentioned partnership of Bangladesh Government,

European Union and UNDP for implementing Village Courts in 27 districts apart from analysing case performance data of Village Courts i.e. number of cases registered, resolved, compensation received etc.

2.1.7 Raising awareness on existing legal systems and options for redress mechanisms in CHT.

Awareness campaigns (organize discussion sessions, cultural programmes, film shows, theatres, leaflet and poster distribution etc.) at upazila level

Legal awareness among the tribal as well as the whole CHT community is extremely low, which seriously impairs their ability to access justice institutions. To address these problems, the project has planned to deliver the key messages through suitable and effective means. Three consultation workshops were organized in Rangamati, Khagrachari and Bandarban to identify key messages to promote traditional justice system in CHT and best-suited communication tools for message dissemination. On an average, 33 people, including headman, karbari, representatives of local NGOs, lawyers, teachers, and journalists participated in each event.



Group work by participants in Rangamati district

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

Conduct case audits along with NGOs' performance assessment:

Activating Village Courts in Bangladesh project has engaged four partner organizations a) Bangladesh Legal Aid Service Trust (BLAST), b) Eco Social Development Organization (ESDO), c) Madaripur Legal Aid Association (MLAA) and d) Wave Foundation for three years starting December 2016 for assisting the Local Government Division in activating village courts in 1,080 UPs by providing support to UP representatives to provide legal service and creating demand of village courts to the community people.

During reporting period, the project took an initiative to evaluate the performance of the organizations for the period of 10 December 2018 to June 2019. The objective of the evaluation was to identify and critically evaluate the activities as well as to assess the achievements against the deliverables of the 3rd year of the contract.

As the assessment took place in August 2019, so performance/achievement between 10 December 2018 to June 2019 were covered. Intensive document review at the organization's HQ, district offices, and union parishad (UPs) level, including interview with district facilitators (DFs), UP representatives, and village courts assistants (VCAs) took place to collect the information. The team found that the organizations completed most of their activities and achieved more than 90% of its targets in review period.

Court User Survey:

To measure the efficiency and effectiveness of the village courts, the project has conducted a Court User Survey. Both qualitative and quantitative data collection methods were used to collect the citizen's feedbacks on village court's services and its decisions. A total of 542 service recipients were interviewed in 27 working districts under 8 divisions across the country during the period of December 2018 - May 2019, covering 326 unions under 27 districts. Interviews took place at the households' level both with complainants and/or defendants whose disputes has been settled by the VC. In addition, intensive document review took place to collect basic information of 542 cases at Union Parishad (UP) level. A report has been drafted and will be finalized by January 2020.

VC's performance assessment of piloted UPs:

The project has conducted an assessment to know the status of VC's performance of the UPs that were phased out in December 2015 after successful implementation of Pilot project (2009-2015). The study carried out in 15 UPs of eight upazila under four districts (Faridpur, Rajbari, Rangpur, and Nilphamari districts). Meanwhile a report has been prepared.

Study on VC monitoring by government officials:

An inhouse study on VC monitoring by government official was completed by the M&E and Knowledge Management unit. The aim of this review was to understand the situation of the monitoring, inspection and evaluation carrying out by the government officials (DDLGs & UNOs) and make suggestion to accelerate the process of establishing the DMIE system through

the MIE wing of the Local Government Division of MoLGRD. M&E unit collected the data through semi structured checklist and monitoring reports of the government officials from five districts of the project area. Those are 1)Madaripur, 2)Pabna, 3)Naogaon, 4) Chattogram, and 5)Bagerhat. A report has been drafted with some influential recommendations which will be used for the implementation of the DMIE.

Monitoring of field implementation :

Six monitoring visits carried out during this reporting period covering Chittagong, Rajshahi, Sylhet, Mymensingh, Rangpur and Dhaka divisions. Findings are given below:

A. Monitoring visit carried out in Chittagong division:

Monitoring visits carried out in six unions (Sirajpur, Rampur unions of Kompaniganj upazila and Sundolpur union of Kabirhat upazila under Noakhali district and North Meher and Roysree union of Sahrasti upazila and Fotehpur union of North Motlab upazila under Chandpur district) of Noakhali and Chandpur districts under Chattogram division from 2 February 2019 to 7 February 2019. Brief monitoring findings are given below:

- All of the UPs were equipped with VC's forms & registers, trained VCAs, trained UP chair and *Ejlas* (Court bench)
- Knowledge, attitude and perception of UP chairman of South Roysree of Shahrasti under Chandpur was good. On the otherhand, opposite scenario was found in Sirajpur UP of Kompaniganj Upazila under Noakhali district. UP Chairman of this UP is familiar with UP Act and rules but was not aware about VC Act and rule. He couldn't participate in training on Village Court due to living outside of his working area. He was not aware about VC trial process even the jurisdiction also. He is less interest to run VC and give emphasize on solving the local disputes locally through *Shalish*.
- Among the UPs, VC performance in-terms of documentation of VCs proceedings and dispute resolution following VC's law were good in Rampur UP, Kompaniganj upazila of Noakhali district.
- It was found by discussion with VCAs and reviewing the documents that knowledge and skill of maximum VCAs were good. The knowledge of VCA working in Sirajpur union of Kompaniganj in Noakhali, North Meher union of Sharasti upazila under Chandpur district were not satisfactory. In terms of skill, the VCAs of Rampur, Sundolpur of Nokhali and South Roysree and East Fatehpur of Chandpur are better than Sirajpur of Noakhali and North Meher UP of Chandpur.
- All six UPs were well furnished with IEC materials. They have received pocket cards, VC brochures, Leaflets and Newsletters- Uchhwas, factsheets, posters and gender related IEC materials and maintained stock register. In most of the cases VCAs were not aware about the guideline of IEC materials that provided by PMU on how to use IEC material.
- Reviewing the cases, it was found that on an average 16 days were required to resolve a dispute through village court. On the other hand, VCs took 40 days to resolve a dispute through full hearing.
- Document of resolve cases depicts that overall 19% women were involved in decision making process of village courts. In Rampur UP of Noakhali district, 27% women were involved in decision making process. In Chandpur, 16% and 9% women were involved in decision making process of village courts at North Meher and East Fatehpur respectively.

- The mission found differences between reported data and actual data. There are some data quality issues regarding VC performances as well as program performance.

B. Monitoring visit carried out in Rajshahi division

- All the visited UPs were equipped with trained VCAs, trained UP chairmen, VC's forms & registers, steel almirah, wooden shelf and *Ejlas* (Court bench);
- Knowledge, attitude and perception (KAP) of UP chairmen towards village courts and its functions are fine. They informed that they earlier used to resolve all types of disputes through shalish rather than following village courts act. Now their attitude has been improved enough in providing legal services among the local people through village courts after receiving VC's forms & registers and VCA as well as receiving the training on "Village Courts" and participating in different types of awareness raising activities organized by the project.
- Skill & knowledge of VCAs on documentation are almost good. But there are scopes to improve documentation and knowledge on VC Act and Rules;
- Total reported cases up to February 2019 are 1101 (including received 17 cases from Higher Courts) at 8 unions in 20 months.
- Average reported cases are 6.9 per UP per month in total while average reported case per month is 3 in Bhangura unions and 10 in Mithapur and Mathurapur unions.
- Cases resolved through VC are 828 (75%) and solved through other ways (applications return, cases cancelled/dismissed and forwarded to the Higher Courts) are 268 (25%).
- Out of 828 resolved cases, 78% cases resolved through Rule-31, 16% cases resolved through Pre-trial and 6% cases resolved through full Hearing.
- Implemented decisions are 789 (96%).
- A total of 712 community people took participation in the decision-making process of whom women were 7%.
- 95% cases were resolved through Rule-31 in Astamanisha and Bhangura unions while no cases were resolved through full hearing in Mathurapur, Astamanisha and Bhangura unions.
- From observation of 80 resolved cases from 8 unions, in average 10 days (analysis has been done through SPSS software) were required to resolve the disputes through VCs. But averagely 5 days were required for Rule-31, 25 days were required for pre-trial and 29 days were required for full hearing. In the visited unions, woman members in the VC's panel is 13% in total while 0% at Astamanisha and Bhangura unions and highest 23% in Mithapur union.
- In the visited unions, with a view to making aware about VC and its judicial services, 9 Court Yard Meetings (CYM) were organized monthly in average where averagely 16 community people (women-53%) participated. Besides, in average 10 community people (women-30%) per month per UP were sensitized about VC and its judicial services through Counselling Sessions.
- Very minimum error was found in the VC's statistical performance report which is ignorable. But most of the VCAs have not clear concept about disputes resolution methods and solution like difference between resolution through Rules-31 and Pre-Trial, full hearing, return of application, cancel and dismiss of case, refer the case to the Higher Court etc. still now.
- Order sheets are written following sample copy provided by project which are almost same for different cases with different disputes.

- All the UPs are maintaining the Court Yard Meeting Register, Counselling Register, Stock Register, Attendance Register, Movement Register and Visitor Register as well as VC's Register.
- Three interviews were taken with VC' service receivers which took place at community level. The VC-service receivers are satisfied on VC's legal services and VC's decision. One VC-service receiver, Mst. Hasina (48), father- Tamir Uddin, village -Nagorgola, union- Patichara, upazila- Patnitala, district- Naogaon said, *"I have received Tk. 16,000 as compensation through village court. As a poor and vulnerable woman, I couldn't realize the amount of money in absence of VC. VC Chairman and other panel members were neutral in passing decision. The local poor people are getting judicial services through VC. I am asking the community people to approach VC to get justice within a short time at minimum cost."*

C. Monitoring visit carried out in Sylhet division:

The first monitoring visit was carried out between 27th July to 1st August, 2019 in 8 unions of 4 upazilas under Moulvibazar districts. Findings are given below

Knowledge and skill of maximum Village Court Assistants (VCAs) are good while knowledge and skill of few VCAs are moderate level. But most of the VCAs have not clear concept about the steps about different methods of disputes solution process like return application to the applicant, cancel/dismiss/refer of case etc. In maximum unions, documentation is good while in other few unions, over writing was found in order sheets and monthly progress report. On the other hand, both skill and knowledge of maximum Upazila Coordinators (UCs) and District Coordinator (DCo) are good about village court (VC) and its functions. All the UCs are trying their best to assist UPs in running the VC following proper procedures. As the key actors, UCs provide technical supports to the VCAs in documenting all procedures and producing VC's performance report. In fact, where UC's field visits are more, there documentation is better.

Knowledge, attitude and perception (KAP) of UP chairmen towards village courts was seemed good while moderate regarding section 5(1) of VC (Amendment) Act 2019 added towards women empowerment. Presently they are resolving the disputes under village court's jurisdiction following VC procedures.

Courtyard meeting (CYM) is one of the major interventions of this project to make the local people aware about village court and its legal services. In the visited 8 unions, averagely 19 community people (women-58%) were made aware about VC and its judicial services through CYM. The community people were informed about village court's services including types of disputes with fees, process of VC formation etc. in the CYM. Counseling session is another important activity to make the community people aware on sources of legal services as well as village court.

In visited 8 unions, a total of 842 cases were reported including 34 cases received from Higher Courts (4.4 cases per UP/month), 537 cases were resolved through VC while 482 decisions (90%) were implemented during July 2017 to June 2019. Reviewing 70 resolved cases from 8 unions, it was found that VC took on average 12 days to resolve a dispute. A total of 918 community people participated in the VC's decision-making process of whom 10% were women.

A total of 65 cases resolved through pre-trial and full hearing were analyzed to assess the status of women empowerment of which 31 cases were women-interest related. From observation, it was found that a total of 260 panel members took participation in the decision-making process of 65 cases where women panel members were 12.7% (33 women) statistically. Separately, women panel members were statistically 28.8% in 31 woman-interest related cases and 4% in other 34 cases where both parties were male.

D. Monitoring visit carried out in Mymensingh division:

The field monitoring visit carried out at 4 Union Parishads (UPs) at 3 Upazilas under Mymensingh from 6 August 2019 to 8 August 2019. Findings are given below:

The field monitoring team found that all four UPs equipped with VC furniture, forms and formats and trained Village Courts Assistant (VCA) supervised by the Upazila Coordinator (UC) recruited by the partner organization. Out of 4 VCAs, knowledge and skill of 3 VCA were good. Knowledge and skill of VCA's working at Tarundia in Iswargaj was not satisfactory.

UP Chairmen can play a vital role to activate Village Court. The UP Chair of Tarundia of Iswarganj is less motivated and preferring to do *Shalish* at local level. On the other hand, UP chair of Amtoil of Haluaghat is highly motivated. Both chairmen recommended to review the legal framework to increase jurisdiction of village courts and include penalty/punishment for avoiding village court summon.

The partner organization has been distributing the IEC materials provided by Project Management Unit (PMU) since inception of the project but in most cases guidelines of IEC materials were not found. UPs preserved the IEC materials in the project provided Almirah and kept the status in the common stock register. In some cases, VCAs could not explain properly that how many IEC materials they had received. Even, some IEC materials have not registered due to misunderstanding. There were some anomalies between stock register and materials in hand.

On an average, 5 cases were filed per month per UP. Of the reported cases, 82% were resolved and 6% cases were cancelled or dismissed due to several reasons. The most significant observation is that out of total resolved cases, 60% case resolved through rule 31 and remaining 40% cases solved following pre-trial and hearing which need to be monitored. Out of resolved case, 67% cases were implemented.

Reviewing 10 resolved cases of each visited UPs it has been found that VCs took on an average 30 days to resolve a dispute. Taking decision through full hearing took 38 days. One beneficiary expressed her satisfaction on VC services while interviewing but not fully satisfied as the respondent did not follow the decision properly. The primary reasons of their satisfaction were low costs and prompt and quick decision-making process of village courts.

The partner organization Madaripur Legal Aid Association (MLAA) operates field level activities with a structured monitoring system. Everyone prepares his/her work plan and monitored by his/her supervisor. Each level of staff prepares monthly progress and VC performance report and submit it to the supervisor. There were some anomalies in report against the registers. The team found different participants number against the registers

which indicate compliance issue regarding data quality. The visit number of DF and DCO is not satisfactory specially at Tarundia of Iswarganj.

Most of the UP chairmen and UCs were participated in Village Court Management Committee meeting and expressed their dissatisfaction as the meeting took place with other meetings. GoB officials are not interested in doing this meeting for long time as there are lot of issues/meetings prioritized for them. However, UCs share the Union wise progress in this meeting and UNOs direct the UP chairmen to take necessary steps to increase paying time to Village Courts.

Government reporting system for village court performance is varied among Upazilas. In Iswarganj and Haluaghaty, concerned VCA prepares Union level Monthly VC report. UC collects UP reports from VCAs and prepare Upazilla level report and submit it to UNO office. UNO office prepares a case status report and to send the report to DDLG with the signature and forwarding letter of UNO. In this process, they did not use the Act prescribed format. In Muktagacha, UC compile the VCAs monthly VC performance reports and sends it to the UNO office by 3rd day with another report which format provided by UNO office. The reporting format is different from other two visited Upazilas. However, UNO office prepares a report and send it to DDLG office by 7th day of the month.

The mission recommended some issues need to be addressed for the betterment of the project. Those are a) taking immediate measures to improve the knowledge and skill of the project staff (VCAs & UCs) of Tarundia UP and Iswarganj Upazila respectively; b) build rapport with chairman of Tarundia to motivate him for operating village courts; c) Motivate UP Chair to resolve the disputes through pre-trial and VC hearing more instead of Rule-31; d) ensuring data quality during reporting; e) enhance frequency of field monitoring by DFs and DCOs; f) guideline sharing with IEC materials distributors (VCAs); g) reporting formats of the UP need to be reviewed to make easy and avoiding duplication; h) review the VCMC meeting conduction modality to make it effective; and i) Issuing GO on DMIE can be accelerated the reporting system.

E. Monitoring visit carried out in Rangpur division:

The field monitoring visit carried out at 2 Union Parishads (UPs) at 2 Upazilas under Panchagarh from 11 November 2019 to 13 November 2019. Brief findings are given below”

The field monitoring team found that two UPs equipped with VC furniture, forms and formats and trained Village Courts Assistant (VCA) supervised by the Upazila Coordinator (UC) recruited by the partner organization. VCAs of visited UPs have moderate knowledge on pilot project as well as VC operation.

The partner organization has been distributing the IEC materials provided by Project Management Unit (PMU) since inception of the project. UPs preserved the IEC materials in the project provided Almirah and kept the status in the common stock register. In some cases, IEC materials have not registered though it were distributed. There were some anomalies between stock register and materials in hand.

On an average, 7.5 cases were filed per month per UP at visited Unions. Of the reported cases, 78% were resolved and 18% cases were cancelled or dismissed due to several reasons. The most significant observation is that out of total resolved cases, 35% case resolved through rule

31 and remaining 40% cases solved following pre-trial and only 16% cases through full of hearing which need to be monitored. Out of resolved case, 95% cases were implemented.

Reviewing last three months resolved cases of each visited UPs it has been found that VCs took on an average 38 days to resolve a dispute. Taking decision through rule 31 took 6 days, pre-trial took 25 days and full hearing took 83 days on an average. One beneficiary expressed her satisfaction on VC services while interviewing. The primary reasons of their satisfaction were low costs and prompt and quick decision-making process of village courts. However, the case solved following rule-31 in the document but, it was settled through local arbitration revealed by interview.

The partner organization Eco Social Development Organization (ESDO) operates field level activities with a structured monitoring system. Everyone prepares his/her work plan and monitored by his/her supervisor. Each level of staff prepares monthly progress and VC performance report and submit it to the supervisor. There were some anomalies in report against the registers. The team found different participants number against the registers which indicate compliance issue regarding data quality

The mission recommended some issues need to be addressed for the betterment of the project. Those are a) VCA should revise the training manual on justice hub to internalize the concept and service providing modality; b) UCs should be oriented formally to ensure supportive supervision to the VCAs; c) PMU should establish a data flow at the soonest to making pilot program results; d) PMU should engage UC and DCo through their authority as they did not get any direction from their management; e) PMU should provide related forms and format for pilot program to documenting the services; f) VCAs should read VC Act, VC Rules and other related documents to increase their knowledge about village courts and process of disputes resolution through village courts; g) Upazila Coordinator (UC), District Coordinator (DCO) and District Facilitators (DF) should meet with UP chairmen of the concern Unions (Satmera) and motivate him to resolve the disputes properly following VC Acts and avoid using VC forms and formats for local arbitration; and h) UC should play proactive role to ensure data quality as over reporting observed Debiduba UP.

F. Monitoring visit carried out in Dhaka and Mymensingh division:

A monitoring visit was carried out between 27th October to 1st November 2019 in 9 unions of 5 upazilas under Gazipur, Netrokona and Mymensingh districts. Findings are given below:

Knowledge and skill of maximum Village Court Assistants (VCAs) are good while it is at moderate level for a few VCAs. But most of the VCAs have not clear concept about the steps of different methods of disputes-solution process like returning application to the applicant, cancelling/dismissing/referring of a case etc. In maximum unions, documentation is good while over writing was found in order sheets and monthly progress report in other few unions.

Both knowledge and skill of maximum Upazila Coordinators (UC) and District Coordinators (DCo) are good about village court (VC) and its functions. All the UCs are trying their best to assist UPs in running the VC following procedures properly. As the key actors, UCs provide technical supports to the VCAs in documenting all procedures and producing VC's performance report. In fact, where UC's field visits are more, the documentation is better there.

Knowledge, attitude and perception (KAP) of UP chairmen and other UP representatives towards village courts and its functions was found fine. Presently they are resolving the disputes under village court's jurisdiction following VC procedures instead of shalish.

Courtyard meeting (CYM) is one of the major as well as important interventions of this project to make the local people aware about village court and its legal services. In the visited 9 unions, averagely 135 community people (women-79%) were made aware about VC and its judicial services through CYM monthly. The community people were informed about village court's services including types of disputes with fees, panel members nomination as process of VC formation etc. in the CYM. Counseling session is another important activity to make the community people aware on sources of legal services as well as village court. Averagely 10 community people (women-30%) were made aware about VC and its judicial services through counselling sessions monthly.

In visited 9 unions, a total of 908 cases were reported including 37 cases received from Higher Courts (3.7 cases per UP/month), 835 cases were resolved through VC while 772 decisions (92%) were implemented during July 2017 to August 2019. Reviewing 50 resolved cases from 9 unions, it was found that VC took on average 16 days to resolve a dispute. A total of 1,408 community people participated in the VC's decision-making process of whom 21% were women.

It was tried to find out the major causes for resolving too much disputes through Rule-31 during this visit. In some cases, getting summon after VC formation, the defendants settle the disputes with applicants through discussion locally. Then neither applicant nor defendant come to the UP. Then the cases were dismissed for absence applicant or defendant or both parties. But mixed experience was observed among the service-seekers whose disputes were resolved through VC Rule-31. Some applicants and defendant informed that they had gone to the union parishad after receiving summon and settled the disputes before the UP Chairman and submitted settlement agreement. On the other hand, some applicants expressed their dissatisfaction in this issue.

From findings mentioned above, a total of 1,408 community people participated in the VC's decision-making process of whom 21% were women which is very fine statistically. But from the discussion sessions made with UP Chairman, UP Secretary, UP member and other concern person, it was found that the UP women members rather than local women were nominated frequently by the applicants and defendants specially in the women-interest related cases. It was observed that the local women aren't interested to be panel member of the village court as they are not habituated to participate in the decision-making process formally. On the other hand, they usually are not permitted to participate in the decision-making process considering social culture/context.

Field monitoring by the EU

During the reporting period, the project has facilitated one field visit made by the European Union and the British High Commission in 2019. Ambassador of the European Union and Head of Delegation to Bangladesh, Rensje Teerink and British High Commissioner to Bangladesh Robert Chatterton Dickson visited Noihati union of Rupsha upazila in Khulna. Both the European Union Ambassador and the British High Commissioner observed the activities of VC at Noihati uUnion Parishad complex, having seen a live hearing session of VC and

consulted with elected representatives as well as beneficiaries of the union. The delegation comprised of Audrey Maillot, Governance Team Leader; Alexandru Calota, Programme Manager (Governance), and Philip Mellish, Programme Manager, Governance, the European Union, and were accompanied by the National Project Coordinator of AVCB II Project and Deputy Director Local Government of Khulna.



Ambassador of the European Union observing a CYM

HE Rensje Teerink remarked that VCs are substantially contributing to maintaining peace in rural areas as well as

ensuring good governance and reducing litigation in the higher courts. The roles of local administration to make village courts more functional are thus commendable. HE Robert Dickson praised the endeavors to deliver justice for the benefits of rural population in short time and at low cost.

Deployment of PMS: The project-initiated Management Information System (MIS) has been implementing since last quarter of 2018 at 27 District level offices and generate different reports (progress report by unions, upazila, district, division, HQ, etc.) based on the pre-defined query criteria. During this reported period, VCMIS officer provided maintenance supports immediate after joining such as troubleshooting, review and Checking of the PMIS data and technical support to the users. In addition, new features and new validation rules has added in PMIS for data accuracy. Here are core works which have already done in this regard:

1. Installed development environment for PMIS on both local and server.
2. Add union id in CSV export format, so that each union can be identified uniquely.
3. Removed home page error message before login
4. Statistics report for each form with date ranges for any area (Districts, Upazilla, Unions)
5. Cumulative statistics report for PNGO and District facilitators level
6. Adjust printing area
 - a. PNGO Level VC Statistics report for Full NGO
 - b. PNGO Level VC Statistics related with Women report for Full NGO
 - c. PNGO Level Compensation report for Full NGO
 - d. All levels Compensation report for Division, District, Upazila
7. Fix report area
 - a. Fix error on Compensation Report for Barishal Division
6. Develop Dashboard creation, graphical presentation, range-based report is in progress
 - a. Country wise cumulative figures for PMU level.

- b. VC performances based on % of Male and Female Applicant
 - c. Cumulative chart for resolved categories (Rule 31, Pre-trial, Hearing, Dismissed)
 - d. District wise cumulative figures for DF/DcO level
 - e. NGO wise cumulative figures for PC/M&Rc level
7. Validations:
- a. Compensations table validations for Recovered land / Amount
 - b. Applied user-friendly validation error message and translated those from English to Bangla.

As PMIS database size is increasing day by day, it is affecting overall performance of PMIS operations. So it needs some database tuning and checking query executing time to faster performance. In that manner, PMIS reporting modules have been upgraded with more organized functions, applied common templates to reduce resource requirements, changed joining in SQL query.

Two days Training on PMIS and Court User Survey (CUS) online application

The project carried out two days long refresher training for UNDP and Partner NGO's staffs (District coordinators, PC, M&RC and District facilitators) on MIS and technique of capturing both quantitative and qualitative results (Court User Survey and Success Story) to build up their skills on MIS and capturing both quantitative and qualitative results so that they can perform their assigned tasks efficiently. In total 68 participants were attended in three batches. Training started on 24 November 2019 and completed on 2nd December 2019 held at Village Well, UNDP, Level-19, IDB Bhaban, Agargaon, Dhaka. The project has done the following preparatory tasks for the training.

- a. Testing server (<http://stage.project.mis.villagecourts.org/>) prepared for PMIS data entry and monthly report submission procedures
- b. Testing server (<http://stage.project.mis.villagecourts.org/>) prepared for CUS data entry
- c. Prepared temporary user credential for both test environment.
- d. Prepared training material for PMIS new features and CUS online application system.
- e. Help logistics related tasks

Below issues have been covered through the training

- PMIS new Dashboard
- Range Based Report
- Summary Report
- PMIS data entry to review process
- PMIS data accuracy checking
- Given knowledge about basic excel features and to find out the difference between Resolved and Implemented cases using Excel Pivot table.
- Introduce with new CUS (Court User Survey) online system
- New survey information submits
- Survey information find and review
- Survey information edit
- Survey information print

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

Impact Study of AVCB II Project:

The project hired the internationally reputed firm, Innovations for Poverty Action (IPA) to conduct an impact study of AVCB phase II project. The impact study includes two rounds of surveys. The first round survey (Baseline Survey) carried out between January to May 2017 and a report was published. The second round survey was supposed to carry out in 2019 to measure the impact of the project but has shifted in 2020 due to following reasons:

- The baseline was conducted in May 2019 and the implementation of the program was delayed due to some unforeseen reasons. So, gap between baseline and end line is not enough to generate long term outcomes if endline conduct in middle of 2019. To correctly estimate the long term outcomes, the AVCB program shall operate for a reasonable period in a particular union parishad.
- the program has extended until December 2020.

Under the above circumstances, contract with Innovations for Poverty Action (IPA) has been revised and extended till December 2020.

2.2.3 Undertake in-house research and review interventions in order to support the knowledge base on village courts, and improve interventions (lessons learned studies; specific research topics on gender and village courts etc.)

Lessons Learned Study of AVCB II project:

Lessons Learned Study of AVCB II project by one national and one international consultants have been conducted. The mission was for 30 days starting from 18th November 2019 to 02 January 2020. They have completed their field works, shared findings with LGD, UNDP and EU through de-briefing sessions. Meanwhile they have submitted draft report incorporating feedback of AVCB II Project.

Impact Study on Women Empowerment:

Impact Study on Women Empowerment by one national consultant has been conducted. The mission was for 40 days starting from 26th November 2019 to 15 January 2020. The consultant has completed her field works, shared findings with AVCB II team through de-briefing sessions. Meanwhile she has submitted draft report.

Activity 2.2.4 Undertake and organise South-South Cooperation activities for mutual learning and exchanging

One international learning visit carried out in Philippines and Indonesia from 5-15 November 2019 where seven officials (three from LGD, one from IMED, one from ERD, one from Ministry of Finance, one from Planning) from Government of Bangladesh and two from AVCB Phase II visited. The objectives of the visit were:

- To learn about community-based and restorative or similar justice services from Philippines and Indonesia from their long and quality experiences
- To share knowledge and experiential learning for replicating best practices

- To build a partnership between Bangladesh and East Asian countries (Philippines and Indonesia) on best practices of customary justice with restorative principles

The visit included basic orientation about justice system of Philippines and Indonesia, Barangay Justice System of Philippines, customary justice system of Indonesia, observation of hearing session of Barangay Justice System, interactions with traditional leaders, judiciaries, target beneficiaries, and government officials. Village Courts, a local level disputes resolution mechanism of Bangladesh was shared with the stakeholders of both countries aiming to exchange learning. Village courts system was highly appreciated by them and they expressed their interest to visit Bangladesh to get more knowledge about village courts. The learning visits allowed the participants to learn from comparative international experiences, practices and initiatives in the advancement of justice services. The delegation recommended the continuation of such study tours.

Activity 2.2.5 Organize a National Village Courts Conference

The project did plan to hold a VC conference at national level in last quarter of 2019 with the presence of Honorable Prime Minister and accordingly, ministry sent a summary to the PMO for Honorable Prime Minister's kind approval but PMO office recommended to hold this conference in presence of Honorable President of Bangladesh. It will be held in 2020.

Activity 2.2.6 Produce and print knowledge products

During the reporting period, 1,000 copies of Annual Report published and shared with relevant stakeholders to disseminate the project results, success and different endeavors. Besides, a fact sheet also produced highlighting the project achievements.

Leaflet Highlighting the success of the project

Published 5500 copies of leaflets highlighting the success of the project. It will be distributed by January 2020 relevant stakeholders like DC, SP, DDLG, ADC, UNO, UP Chair, UP Secretary and others.

2.2.7 Action Research/feasibility study for exploring/scoping of VC's in CHT (15 UPs of 3 upazilas of 3 districts)

Two ToRs – one for hiring consulting firm for conducting the baseline survey and another one for hiring research firm for conducting action research have been developed. Baseline survey will be conducted in sample areas of 121 unions of CHT areas to learn the status of different indicators before the project implementation. On the other hand, action research will be conducted in 15 UPs of three CHT districts for exploring of village courts in CHT areas.

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.

Two PIC meetings (5th & 6th PIC meeting) held on 7 March 2019 and 4th December 2019 respectively where following issues were discussed:

- Approval of 4th and 5th PIC meeting minutes
- Follow up of the major decisions made in the 4th and 5th PIC
- Implementaion progress
- Updating on MTR mission completion
- Updating on EC-ROM mission completion
- Logframe revision as per ROM recommendation
- Status of ProDoc and TPP revision for expansion in CHT
- Procurement with recised budget in line with (proposed) Revised RAPP
- One-year extension (without additional cost) of the project
- Closure of AVCB II project and wayfarward
- Update on CHT component

In the meeting PIC members agreed with one-year extension pripsoal and recommended the project to initiate the revision once the on-going TAPP revision proposal is approved.

One PSC meetings held on 17 April 2019 wher3 20 people participated.

4.2 Project Operations

4.2.1 Operational Progress during Jan-December 2019

With the direction of Senior Project Manager, the day to day operational, administrative, procurement & HR dealings are being operated by the operations team headed by Operations

and Procurement Manager of the project. Some of the major accomplishment/progress achieved by the project during the year 2019 are summarized below:

AWP 2019 Implementation: Project Management team provided their utmost efforts to implement the Annual Work Plan 2019 and achieved targeted delivery against the USD 7.50 million including 1.96m US\$ of GoB money for procurement activities in the reporting year 2019.

A procurement plan 2019 along with details schedule including day plan was prepared and concern component of the project was requested to submit procurement request to operations along with specification or ToR. Accordingly, operations accomplish the requested procurement and contributed in implementation of AWP 2019 for the project.

Contract management with 4 partner NGOs: During the reporting period, operation unit provided necessary supports to ensure efficient contract management with four partner NGOs and certify the quarterly payment in compliance with contract provision and achievement of set milestone/deliverables outlined in the RPA document. Besides this, operations took the lead to extend and amend the Responsible Party Agreement (RPA) of four partner NGOs for three months starting from 10 Spetember'19 to 09 Decemeber'19 as no-cost extension. After that operations also provided their extended supports to amend the Responsible Party Agreement (RPA) with four partner NGOs for another nine months which will be ended on 10 Spetember'20.

Audit of four PNGOs by UNDP: The purpose of the audit was to carry out audit procedures to provide reasonable audit opinion and to provide advisory support to improve in the respective weak areas as identified by HACT assessment before. The firm named ARTISAN was deployed by UNDP for this audit business with a view to working with AVCBII-PNGO management and helping them to strengthen their (PNGO's) internal controls, governance and risk management practices in a way that was most practical for them. The engagement covered the period from October 2017 to 31st December 2018. The engagement was conducted by multiple team of ARTISAN Chartered Accountants in Chittagong, Sylhet, Dhaka, Rangpur, Rajshahi, Khulna and Barisal division, starting from 12th February 2019 and with an end on 5 March 2019. Preliminary findings and recommendations resulting from the audit were discussed with the project management at an exit meeting. Necessary clarifications were provided to audit team by AVCBII operation team in the exit meeting and it was reflected in a draft report later on.

Procurement of Goods and Services both GoB and UNDP fund:

Over the period of January to December 2019, Procurement team prepared GoB procurement plan 2019 and UNDP Procurement Plan 2018-20 respectively and ensured its approval from the concern UNDP authorities and LGD.

Procurement team contributed in different workshops, trainings and different knowledge sharing sessions arranged by the project in the year 2019. Also, provided an enormous support to the UNDP Country Office to achieve their procurement delivery target as a SURGE team member. AVCB Procurement unit became the part of different evaluation teams over the year and supported them to accomplish some big value and complex procurement cases on time.

AVCB II procurement unit accomplished its yearly procurement plan 2019 both for GoB and UNDP fund based on AWP and ProDoc. In the year of 2019 (from January 1 to December 19), operations issued approximately 50 Supply Orders for different items for the value below to

5000 USD. Approximately 12 Purchase Orders were issued for goods and services over 5000 USD. At the same time, operations prepared approximately 12 IC contracts both from UNDP and GoB funds. In addition, operations did two GoB IC contract amendments, four (4) RPA contract amendments for PNOGs, two (2) Professional service contract amendments, two UNDP IC contract (Local and Int.) and multi-year (service) contract amendment in 2019. In all the procurement cases of this year 2019, operations provided extensive supports to the country office there is an independent procurement buyer in our project.

To accomplish the GoB procurement, operations conducted several Tender Opening Committee (TOC) and two Tender Evaluation Committee (TEC) meetings and provided extensive support to the TOC and TEC teams for their openings and evaluations and also for taking final approval from NPD in the year 2019.

Besides this, operations provided widespread pre and post-procurement supports to the programme/requesting units to fix their specifications, to prepare the ToRs, conduct different negotiation meetings with vendors, ICs etc. In contract management stage, operations provided technical support to get the job done on time and to avoid some complexity of the delivery.

For GoB Cases, procurement has worked to release multiple tender securities and performance securities in the year 2019.

Last but not the least, as the regular task, operations provided necessary supports to clear all the bills and claims drafting notes, ensuring its approval from authority verifying compliances for the year 2019.

HR Recruitment: During the reporting period, the joining process of Senior Project Manager, Finance Associate, one Project Assistant and Finance Officer-Field Monitoring have successfully been completed. On the other hand, the separation process of two District Facilitators were also done smoothly. The recruitment of Five District Facilitators against the vacant positions were done successfully and the hiring of Gender Specialist was initiated. Additionally the Service Contract evaluation and Contract extension for 21 District Facilitators, Research and Evaluation Manager, Operations and Procurement Manager, Senior Capacity Development Officer, Legal Specialist, Accounts and Finance Manager, Procurement Officer, VCMIS Officer, Training Officer, Communications and Outreach Specialist, Programme Specialist, two Project Coordination Officers, two Monitoring and Lessons Learning Officers, one Project Assistant, IT Associate, Human Researches Associate, Logistics and Asset Management Associate, three Driver cum Messengers, Office Assistant for the year 2019 were processed in the reporting year as per contract provision and Annual Work Plan 2020.

In Addition, personal files of all those project staff (service contract holder-53 staff and 4 ICs) were maintained in 2019 in connection with their leave monitor, leave grant and other administrative matters. In addition, the recruitment of UNV Project Assistant, four National Consultants (IC) and two International Consultants were hired in this period. Regarding staff Training and HR Development, three staff were attended Security Awareness Training (SAT) from operations.

Provide ICT support for PMU and 27 district offices: During reporting period, the project has provided logistic and ICT supports for PMU and 27 field offices at district level in trouble shooting services for ICT equipment. The internet, e-mail and data transfer through the network services have been ensured. Several trainings regarding T&E module for PMU has

been conducted to make the staff aware about DSA submission process smoothly. Training on T&E module and basic photography has been also done for district offices.

Procurement of printer and photocopier toner for PMU and 27 district offices has also been done and the toners have been distributed as required basis. Removal of old tube lights system (partially) has been done and those are replaced with new LED panel lights. Renewal of project website and web-based MIS software domains has been done. Renewal and upgrading of software's and antivirus also done within this period.

Updating website content for photo's career & procurement opportunities are being done in regular basis. Providing technical and backstopping service for uploading content on Project Facebook page as well as project YouTube and google drive files for communication team during this period has been done on regular basis. Also helped on several design works for international workshop has been done along with national several workshops.

Travel and Transport Management: During the reporting period, project team conducted travels to different districts of the project intervention areas for field visit and monitoring. In this connection, operations had to provide extensive logistic support to arrange significant number of rented vehicles and provided air tickets for the travelers towards various locations of the country including the Chittagong Hill Tracts. Necessary logistics was provided for CHT Launching Meetings in Rangamati and Bandarban, Journalist Workshop held in BICC, PIC and PSC meetings at ministry during this year. Project organized international travel for project team for attending an International Workshop in Netherlands during May and team members travel to France to attend Paris Peace Forum during November 2019. Another team comprising GoB High officials as well as UNDP staff members visited Philippines and Indonesia for a study tour during November 2019. Necessary Logistic support was provided to them for ensuring visa, tickets and other facility for the dignitaries. Logistic and filed visit related support to two international IC consultants for their mission to Bangladesh in connection with lessons learning and legal aspect respectively was also provided during this year 2019.

Office supplies were procured on a quarterly basis including visiting cards, stamps, printing project envelopes, refilling of fire extinguishers, driver's uniform for winter and summer 2019, replacement of vehicle battery & periodical servicing work of the project vehicles, office renovation works in the entrance. NOC from National Board of Revenue (NBR) obtained in connection to fitness of two project vehicles. Provided advisory and technical support to the PNGOs in the field level while faced difficulties with motorcycles servicing and storing, due coordination and follow up was made with the Local administration. Explored venue information for pre-qualification in connection to various project events all around the year. Renewal of Tax tokens of vehicles and motorcycles, registration acknowledgement documents updated for newly procured female motorcycles of NGO from BRTA and finally SMART cards was received by December 2019. Receipt and verification of services to process payments was made during year-end rush closing of the project.

Asset Management: Asset management including maintenance of vehicles, field level motorcycles, ICT equipment, office furniture and other goods was done successfully during this year. Annual Physical Verification of project assets was completed by the verification committee in the beginning of the year 2019. Necessary approval and government order from implementing ministry regarding dispose of assets for 2nd lot of the ToT assets those were used in AVCB phase-I are in progress. Proper record keeping for stock management/store maintenance and other goods was done through rearranging the storerooms by installing an additional metal racks to maximize the store space. Office renovation work including the

knowledge corner preparation and setting up green indoor plants as part making healthy office environment was made in this year. Asset reviewed and signing of ToT for 83 motorcycles including surplus office furniture in connection with re-structuring and staff downsizing in four PNGOs in the extended project period up to 10 Sept. '2020 was done in this year for its disposal.

Office Management and Secretarial Support: During the reporting period, with the help of office assistant, Operation Unit provided office management and day to day administrative support to ensure office cleaning including all desks, meeting room, washrooms, floor, shelves etc. Also supervised office opening and closing, office safety and security. Provided necessary logistics support in terms of refreshment and materials supply for Launching Meetings in CHT, Journalist Workshop in BICC, PIC and PSC meeting, De-briefing meeting, Study tour with Govt. official meeting and others internal project meetings during this year. Also, regularly maintained meeting room booking schedule. Assisted in drafting letters, documents, gate pass to entrance in ministry etc. both in Bangla and English, made routine correspondence, updated relevant database, distributed information and incoming documents/letter to respective desk/persons. Ensured supply of papers for printers and photocopiers every day having approval of Requisition and also ensured logistic and urgent support doing photocopy, scan and spiral as assigned by the office. Prepared summery matrix for corporate mobile SIM issued to 27 DFs collecting their due bills through bkash and handover the money to HR/finance for its payment settlement with Grameen Phone in every month. Provided extended support to Drivers for claiming their overtime bills and payment clearance to Courier and other bills by the vendors. Provided support to all components for urgent delivery to courier for sending letters, VC Forms, materials to District and Upazila Administration, DFs, PNGOs, donors and other stakeholders within the planned time and properly record keeping in courier register. Maintained proper records for incoming and outgoing documents, mails, faxes, and preserved scan copy. Maintained new file opening register, classify the documents and prepared the files with appropriate tagging. Efficiently managed Outgoing/Memo Registers, Courier records, materials out pass records, monthly staff attendance during this year.

4.2.2 Budget and delivery by major outputs

At the beginning of the period, LGD & UNDP Senior Management had approved the Annual Work Plan (AWP) 2019 of the total budget of US\$7,501,509.90. The donor wise total budget of 2019 is as follows: EU & UNDP: \$5,543,322.90 and GoB: \$1,958,187.00

According to latest Revised Annual Work Plan (AWP) for the year of 2019, total budget is US\$7,480,252.44. The donor wise total budget of 2019 is as follows: EU: \$5,600,290.70 and GoB: \$1,879,961.74 and as of 31 December 2019, total expenditure against several activities for the project has been stood \$ 5,369,978.82 for donor budget. This equates to the delivery rate of 95.89% against the donor budget. On the other hand, the total expenditure for the GoB budget against various activities has been arrived to US\$ 699,045.52 which reflects 37.18% against the approved GoB budget of US\$ \$1,879,961.74. Overall financial delivery up to 31st December of 2019 is USD 6,069,024.34 that is 81.13% against the total approved budget US\$ 7,480,252.44 of the year 2019.

This statement has been prepared based on the IPSAS reports in ATLAS and GoB expenditure report.

Delivery status for the year 2019 shown in the below table (Donor Budget):

(Figure in USD)

| Outputs | Component/Activity | Budget | Expenditure | Balance | % of Utilization |
|---------------------|---|------------------|------------------|----------------|------------------|
| Activity Result 1.1 | Capacity of relevant stakeholders at national and local level improved and key skills strengthened. | 3,895,008 | 3,881,825 | 13,183 | 99.66% |
| Activity Result 1.2 | Legal and policy framework reviewed and revised to enhance efficiency and effectiveness of Village Courts | 117,801 | 86,323 | 31,479 | 73.28% |
| Activity Result 1.3 | GoB monitoring capacity for evaluating Village Courts performance is strengthened and systematized. | 85,976 | 44,892 | 41,085 | 52.21% |
| Activity Result 2.1 | Beneficiaries in project areas understand the roles and functions of the Village Courts. | 612,018 | 590,828 | 21,190 | 96.54% |
| Activity Result 2.2 | Evidence-base and knowledge-management on Village Courts increased. | 221,941 | 192,732 | 29,209 | 86.84% |
| Activity Result 3.0 | Technical Assistance and Management | 667,546 | 573,380 | 94,165 | 85.89% |
| Grand Total | | 5,600,291 | 5,369,979 | 230,312 | 95.89% |

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

Challenges and Lessons Learned

The types of difficulties encountered during the reporting period and most likely to be encountered in the coming days are given as follows with mitigating measures:

| Table-4 Difficulties encountered, and measures are taken to overcome problems | |
|--|--|
| Types of difficulties encountered during the reporting period and potentially encountered in the coming days | Possible steps already taken or will be taken to overcome the challenges/difficulties |
| A. Types of difficulties/problems encountered during the reporting period | |
| 1. On time releasing of GOB funds (parallel financing) to ensure implementation of actions funded by GOB. Delay disbursement of GOB fund causes delay in implementing actions funded by GOB | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project was ready with necessary files for approval so that project can start action just after getting approval from GOB. • Continuous follow up and close coordination with concerned ministry yield good results |
| 2. Due to delay approval of TPP the project could not rolling out its activities in CHT region as per plan. At one stage one year no cost extension also became uncertain as EU imposed condition that one year extension is subject to approval of TPP | Possible to get RTPP approval in August 2019 with continuous follow up and close coordination with relevant stakeholders including EU |
| 3. Replication of VCMIS system (piloted during Phase-I) across the project areas or piloting in 100 UPs is require hardware and capacity building supports from the government or other sources. Getting such supports are challangings | Possible to find out a solution with extensive supports of NDP, AVCB II Pproject. LGSP-3 under LGD confirmed that AVCB II project can use ICT equipment that LGSP-3 project will be provided to UPs. But procurement of ICT equipment under LGSP-3 project still under process. |
| 4.The project envisaged challenges in getting approval of one year extension due to following reasons: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EU agreed to extend one year subject to approval of TPP (rolling out AVCB II in CHT areas; • getting approval of project documents (PAGOda, ProDoc and TPP) on time | <p>Due to close and continue follow up from EU, NPD/LGD and UNDP it was possible to get approval of RTPP for rolling of village courts in CHT areas .</p> <p>Project was ready with necessary project documents (revised PAGOda, revised ProDoc and TPP) in advance having supports from EU, UNDP, and LGD and has started the process of approval just after getting approval RTPP.</p> |
| B. Type of difficulties/problems that may affect implementation in coming days | |
| 1. The project envisages challenges in rolling out village courts in CHT in terms of implementation. Furthermore, concerns persisted about effective coordination among Regional Council (RC), LGD and MoCHTA. | An agreed modality should be developed in consultation with Regional Council, LGD and MoCHTA |
| 2. VCs are authorized to deal with some cognizable offences. In case of these offences, police retain the power to investigate, which creates a barrier to activate VCs. | Both national and local advocacy and sensitization interventions have been planned to overcome these challenges. The project will work with the home ministry for issuing directives from the police chief to facilitate referrals to VCs. |

| Table-4 Difficulties encountered, and measures are taken to overcome problems | |
|---|--|
| Types of difficulties encountered during the reporting period and potentially encountered in the coming days | Possible steps already taken or will be taken to overcome the challenges/difficulties |
| 3. Mindset set-up of UP Chairman towards Salish may create barrier to activate VCs. | Capacity building and sensitization initiatives through follow up and mentoring will be carried out and so will a plan to change their mindset involving them in different activities, such as, VCMC meeting, half-yearly coordination meeting, etc. |
| 4. Achieving the results and objectives of CHT component within one year remains a formidable challenge. The CHT component was designed for two years where action research intervention are supposed to start in 2 nd year of the project. The implementation period is curtailed due to delay in getting GoB approval for the TPP. As a result, ensuring the success of the project, including the quality of services, adequate capacity building and sustainability of the interventions, might be of a major concern to UNDP as the implementation continues. The action research planned for village courts in selected 15 UPs also requires time for ground level implementation, lessons learning documentation and framing evidence-based policy recommendation for necessary reforms | UNDP wishes to engage with the EU on this issue in the coming months, to find a mutually agreeable solution. |

6.2 Future Direction

In coming months, the project will continue offering localised justice to approximately 21 million of rural people of Bangladesh by establishing village courts in 1,078 unions of Bangladesh. Increasing the involvement of the Government in carrying out of capacity development and monitoring of village courts performance, review legal and policy framework to enhance efficiency and effectiveness of VCs and rolling out of AVCB phase II project in CHT region will be the priority areas during the remaining period of the project.

Section VII: Conclusion

All UPs of AVCB II project's operation areas have been offering localized justice to their community people being sensitized and capacitated by the EU, UNDP and GOB supported AVCB II project. As a result, in a total 161,893 people filed cases to the village courts between July 2017-December 2019, of which 82,379 filed between January-December 2019. In a total 131,654 cases have been resolved till December 2019, of which 70,299 resolved during this reporting period. On the other hand, among the total resolved cases 124,300 decisions have been implemented, of which 67,623 have been implemented between January-December 2019.