

Activating Village Courts in Bangladesh

Phase II Project

Annual Report 2019



Co-funded by
the European Union



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Activating Village Courts in Bangladesh Phase II Project

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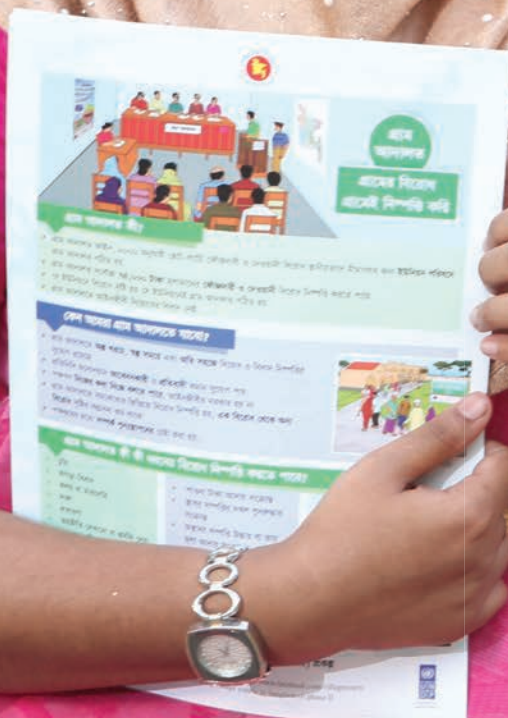
United Nations Development Programme



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Message MINISTER

I am pleased to know that Activating Village Courts in Bangladesh Phase II project of Local Government Division has passed another noteworthy year with notable achievement. In this Annual Report, project's key results of 2019 as well challenges is showcased with it's unique style of beauty.

This unparalleled endeavor is closely intertwined with Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), especially the Goal-16 which pledges 'ensuring access to justice for all' as a target to be achieved. The principle of rule of law requires that any person with a factual, reasonable legal claim must enjoy the easy access to an effective means of having that claim considered. In our country, poor and marginalized groups struggle with much barriers in accessing formal judicial services. Widening access to justice depends upon extending some facilities to the appellants and empowering them to overcome those barriers. Village Court is a unique, quasi-formal approach to address these barriers.

Bangladesh government has a keen interest to ensure access to justice across the country through this Village court System, which is reflected in the 7th five-year plan. Besides, Honorable Prime Minister persuades to ensure Village Court services in last two Deputy Commissioners' (DC) Conferences as it serves in less time with less cost to uphold the justice system. The project has shown its effectiveness and efficiency for the last couple of years, which can be scaled up countrywide for movement towards a just and equitable society.



I would like to convey my sincere appreciation and thanks to Local Government Division for implementing such a worthy and service-oriented project, international development partners such as the European Union (EU) and United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) for their valued and continued support in strengthening the local justice system of the country. I acknowledge the efforts of LGD officials and project team for the remarkable achievements.

During the celebration of 'Mujib Borsho 2020' there will be a commitment to achieve more significant successes in the area of access to justice.

Joy Bangla
Joy Bangabandhu

Md. Tazul Islam, MP
Minister
Ministry of Local Government,
Rural Development and Co-operatives



Message SENIOR SECRETARY

Increased access to justice through local justice system is one of the top priorities of the present government which is reflected in different policy documents including Government's Vision 2041, Awami League's Election Manifesto 2018, Sustainable Development Goals, and National Sustainable Development Strategy of the Government 2010 - 2021. I am delighted to see that LGD, EU, and UNDP have been working together in partnership and helping the government of Bangladesh in increasing access to justice through implementing the Activating Village Courts in Bangladesh Phase II (AVCB Phase II) Project.

The project has successfully contributed in improving the justice delivery system at local level by activating village courts to benefit grass-root people and generated strong community demand of village courts by demonstrating speedy, transparent and effective proceedings. The costs of establishing a Village Court to Government are low, while the social and economic benefits to the communities they serve are significant. Hence, Honorable Prime Minister Her Excellency Sheikh Hasina accredited its effectiveness and efficiency during Deputy Commissioners' (DC) Conference held in 2019 and directed the DCs to ensure running of village courts in their jurisdictions.

With the success of this project, the LGD is fully convinced and committed to bring village courts services across the country by rolling out its activation supports so that 4,571 Unions are capable to run this local justice service with equal pace as per the



procedural and legal compliance. Therefore, a country-wide scaling up project intervention is envisaged where LGD is expecting supports from development partners.

I would like to convey my sincere appreciation and thanks to our valued development partner European Union (EU) and UNDP for their continued all out supports to the government in furthering the village court interventions. Also, I would like to thank the LGD officials, AVCB project team, local administration and local elected bodies for their accomplishments stated in this report.

Joy Bangla
Long live Bangladesh

Helal Uddin Ahmed
Senior Secretary
Local Government Division
Ministry of Local Government,
Rural Development and Co-operatives



Message EU Delegation

Access to justice is one of the core values of the European Union. We are therefore proud to work together with the Government of Bangladesh in facilitating wider access to dispute resolution services through functional village courts for more than 20 million rural women and men; particularly the poor, vulnerable and marginalized at community level.

The Village Courts, supported financially by the European Union, are delivering justice in a more affordable, less intimidating and locally accessible context. Court fees for civil case BDT 20 (EUR 0.20) and criminal case BDT 10 (EUR 0.10) and it takes only 28 days for a dispute to be resolved. Since July 2017, the second phase of the Village Courts programme has tackled some 1,61,893 disputes including 8,422 cases transferred from District Courts, helping to reduce the heavy backlog of the judiciary system in Bangladesh. More than 80% of filed cases have been resolved, recovering around USD 15 million as compensations.

The Village Court programme has also significantly contributed to women's empowerment. In 2019, the overall number of women seeking remedies at the Village Courts rose to almost 30 percent and the involvement of women as female panel members in the Village Court decision-making process rose to almost 32,677 (18 percent).

Political independence and transparency of the Village Courts as well as an independent media play an important role in the judicial eco-system. Journalists freely monitoring and reporting on judicial procedures under-



pin the accountability and transparency of the judiciary system, including through the Village Courts. Hence, the Government should remain vigilant to ensure the independence and transparency of the judiciary while safeguarding freedom of expression for journalists.

The impressive achievements of the Village Courts are a tangible result of improved governance in Bangladesh, a process the European Union is proud to be supporting.

Since 2011, the European Union has provided more than EUR 30 million of funding and the Village Courts are operating now in 1201 Union Parishads of 30 Districts in eight Divisions of Bangladesh. With the expertise developed and the experience gained, the way is now open for the expansion of the coverage and the ambition is to activate the Courts all over the country in the shortest possible time.

On behalf of the European Union, I wish the Village Courts programme every success with this country-wide rollout, benefiting both the people and the Government of Bangladesh.

Rensje Teerink
Ambassador of the European Union to Bangladesh



Message

Resident Representative

Access to justice and protection of human rights are absolutely fundamental to universal human development. People who lack access to justice or whose human rights are not protected remain vulnerable to all other forms of social discrimination and exploitation and can over time become a cause of social instability and conflict. In Bangladesh, for several decades now UNDP has been working with multiple national partners to expand access to justice, especially for women, youth, persons with disabilities, marginalized groups and displaced communities through a human rights-based approach. In doing so, UNDP has not only worked with the formal judiciary but also through alternate dispute resolution platforms, such as Village Courts.

UNDP's Activating Village Courts in Bangladesh Phase-II project has played a tremendous role in rural Bangladesh, applying a unique form of justice delivery mechanism that is truly local. Village courts have transformed the way justice is accessed and ensured for a rural population of 21 million across the country. Last year, AVCB-II also expanded its coverage to CHT, reaching out to the ethnic groups living in Chattogram Hill Tracts (CHT), for whom accessing justice has long been a hurdle. This increase in reach helped millions living in CHT to have quicker, easier access not only to the village courts but also to the broader judiciary. However, challenges still lie ahead. It is imperative that all human rights are ensured and fair practices remain at village courts in the CHT.

The aspiration of the government to increasingly scale up village courts countrywide is noteworthy and serves to demonstrate its commitment towards delivering public services to its citizens in active collaboration with development partners. To that end, the Local Government Division has already started allocating resources from its Annual Development Programme (ADP) budget, which is a significant step forward towards the institutionalization and sustainability of the project's interventions.



Something that is truly commendable about the village courts' operations is the high level of participation from women, particularly in the project's intervention locations. In the coming days, I hope to see further increase in women's contribution to this mechanism, many of whom have struggled to access justice in the past. Ensuring legal rights for women will take Bangladesh closer to achieving Sustainable Development Goals 5 and 16 by 2030.

The project has completed its fourth year, leaving a tangible, positive mark in the lives of rural people, a feat that deserves utmost congratulations. The Annual Report 2019 will speak to the wider group of stakeholders about AVCB-II's successes, and I look forward to witnessing a remarkable contribution in rural justice delivery during the rest of the project's duration.

I express my sincere gratitude to the development partners—European Union for their financial support and the Government of Bangladesh for their stewardship in implementing this flagship project. I congratulate the National Project Director together with the UNDP project team for achieving such an amazing feat through their dedication and hard work.

A handwritten signature in black ink, likely of Sudipto Mukerjee.

Sudipto Mukerjee
Resident Representative
UNDP Bangladesh



Foreword

National Project Director

It is my immense pleasure to present the annual performance reflections of the Activating Village Courts in Bangladesh (AVCB II) Project through this Annual Report 2019. Another successful year is added to the project's colorful journey where people's access to local justice system is further increased with quality justice dispensation.

This project assists the government in bringing the fruits of the Village Courts Act, 2006 (amended in 2013) to rural people's doorsteps through making village courts efficiently and effectively functional. The interventions included strengthening capacity of union parishads together with providing required logistics for providing dispute resolution services among the local peoples within a short span of time. Therefore, AVCB II project is contributing country's progress towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goal 16.

This year was to celebrate for another reason as an important milestone was casted for the project through spreading its coverage in the Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) region covering 121 UPs there and initiated its interventions, with the aim to facilitate traditional justice system in three CHT districts and explore the possibility of village courts operation in CHT areas doing an action research.

I am proud to utter that the community peoples are now confidently receiving dispute resolution services in petty matters through village courts within a short time at their doorsteps. In 2019, a total of 82,000 community people (28% women) sought justice services, 70,000 disputes are resolved through village courts and 66,900 decisions (95%) are implemented. A sum of 3,700 cases are referred from District Courts to the village courts easing District Courts to concentrate on more serious cases. Another reason to celebrate the year 2019 is



women's increasing participation as panel member in decision-making process demonstrating women's empowerment and active participation in village court service delivery which increased at 19% in 2019 compared to 2% from baseline status.

I would like to express my gratitude to our valued partners both European Union and United Nations Development Programme for their uninterrupted supports to LGD in activating village courts in the country. I feel indebted to express my sincere gratitude to my LGD colleagues and congratulate my project team, UP representatives, and four partner NGOs (BLAST, Madaripur Legal Aid Association, Wave Foundation and Eco-Social Development Organization) for this fabulous achievement and performance. At the same time, I am looking forward to another successful and vibrant year in 2020.

Joy Bangla
Long live Bangladesh

Maran Kumar Chakraborty
Additional Secretary
Local Government Division and
National Project Director
Activating Village Courts in Bangladesh
Phase II Project



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VILLAGE COURT
গ্রাম আদালত
হাজিরাপুর ইউনিয়ন

মিলে মিশে থাকি ভাই
ন্যায়বিচার পেতে
গ্রাম আদালতে যাই...

INTRODUCTION



In order to improve access to justice and bring justice to the doorstep of the rural people, European Union (EU), Bangladesh Government (GOB) and United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) funded Activating Village

Courts in Bangladesh Phase II (AVCB Phase II) Project assists the Local Government Division (LGD) for activating village courts in 1,078 Union Parishads (UPs) of Bangladesh. It has helped LGD in setting up village courts in 1,078 UPs; building capacity of Village Court's (VC's) service providers (UP representatives and officials); reviewing legal framework; increasing awareness on role and function of village courts; and strengthening GOB's monitoring capacity. In 2019 the project has extended its supports in three Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) districts covering more 121 UPs and initiated its interventions aiming to strengthen traditional justice system in three CHT districts and explore possibility of village courts functions in CHT areas doing an action research.

With Project's support, village courts in 1,078 UPs have provided efficient and effective legal services to 161,893 rural people, including women and vulnerable peoples till December 2019. They accessed village courts services and obtained a quick remedy with high satisfaction – about 96% of the village courts users were satisfied.

The project has drafted amendment proposal of Village Courts Act 2006 (Amended in 2013) through series of

consultations with different stakeholders and beneficiaries. Once it is approved by parliament the Act will enhance access to the village courts for local citizens and more poor local peoples will be benefited from the village courts.

Institutional monitoring system developed by the project through forming and functioning District and Upazila Village Courts Management Committee (VCMC) and Decentralised Monitoring, Inspection and Evaluation (DMIE) system will ensure monitoring of village courts by local administration. Directive given in presence of all Deputy Commissioners (DCs) by the Honourable Prime Minister during DC conference held in 2019 for running village courts will further increase their supervision and monitoring of village courts.

This project promoted village courts as the best practice of a local justice mechanism in the World Justice Forum (Netherlands) and Paris Peace Forum (France) and gathered the best practices implemented worldwide on development sectors to improve access to justice in Bangladesh, which worked well to contribute to enhancing knowledge sharing among different countries.

The EU, UNDP and GOB supported AVCB Phase II project has created strong ownership and demand of the VCs towards the government, neighbouring union parishads and beneficiaries. Government has demonstrated its supports to this approach by amending VC's Rule in 2016, issuing different directives to support the functioning of VCs, expressing their willingness to scale up this project's success across all unions of Bangladesh allocating addition cash contribution from its development budget particularly for the hardware component, and providing UP level staff supports through completing the deployment of Accounts Assistants-Cum Computer Operator (AACO).





Key Results and Achievements

Access to justice

To-date, around a quarter of the total Unions (1,078 Unions out of 4,571) of the country have activated Village Courts providing a lawful remedy accessible to 21 million people.

In 2019, a total of 82,379 cases have been reported, 70,299 cases have been resolved and 67,623 decisions have been implemented. Among the cases, 25% is Civil matters and 75% is Criminal matters.

Type of issues dealt by VCs are land dispute (16%), fight (35%), credit and loan (26%), theft, tree cutting and livestock intrusion (13%).

Number of reported cases per month per UP has been increased from 1.37 (April'17) to 6.00 (2019).

Village Court Performance (2019)

**82,379**

CASES REPORTED

**70,299**

CASES RESOLVED

**67,623**DECISIONS
IMPLEMENTED**1.37**

BASELINE (APRIL'17)

**4.50**

DECEMBER 2018

**6.00**

DECEMBER 2019

Number of Reported Case (Per Month Per UP)

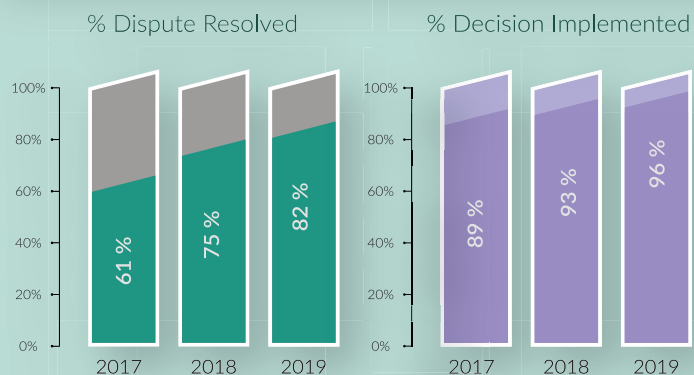




Increased capacity of UPs

- **Figure-01** shows that skills of service providers reflects disputes resolution and implementation of VC's decisions are gradually increasing in project areas.

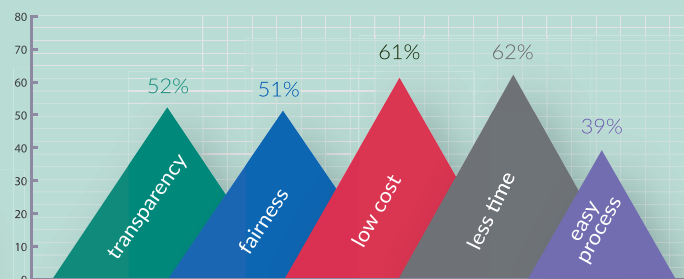
Figure-01 Trend of UP's capacity in-terms of dispute resolution and decision implementation



Village courts are efficient and effective

- Takes on an average 28 days to resolve disputes and settlements are generally enforced.
- Court user spent 192 takas (US\$ 2.27) as courts fees, conveyance and food/snacks cost on an average to get service.
- 96% service recipients expressed their satisfaction on VC services and its decisions.

Reasons behind people's satisfaction on VC



Increased recognition by district courts

- A total of 8,422 cases are transferred from district courts to village courts in project areas between July 2017 to December 2019 of which 3,773 referred in 2019.



3,773
Referred in
2019



8,422
Total referred
cases

- Upward trend of referred cases from district courts to village courts (Referred case: 3,100 in 2018 and 3,773 in 2019) indicates that recognition of village courts by district courts is gradually increasing.



3,100
Referred case
in 2018



3,773
Referred case
in 2019

“With continuous follow up and lobby by the project, LGD issued a letter dated 20th August 2019 to the Ministry of Home Affairs (MoHA) seeking necessary actions from MoHA so that cases could be transferred from police station to VC”

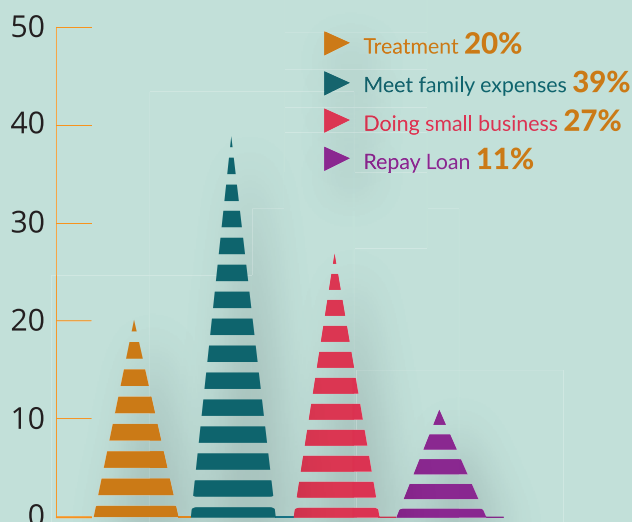
Impact on communities

BDT 70.22 crore (US \$ 8.46 million) recovered as compensation from respondents in 2019 and provided to the applicants.



Court User's Survey shows that applicants have received cash taka directly or against land as compensation through village courts. On an average each applicant received BDT 17,200 (USD 207.22) as compensation.

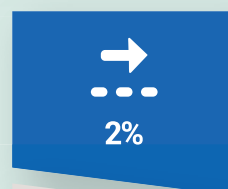
Compensation used by applicants



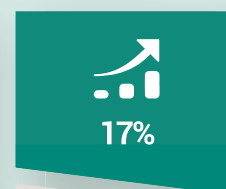
Women's access to justice improved

The project initiatives encouraged petitioners and respondents to nominate women as VC panel members. As a result, representation of women in village court's decision-making process has been increased from 2% (Baseline) to 17% (2019).

% of VC's female panel members



Baseline (April'17)



December 2019

“According to Gender Impact Study

“The Village Court is supportive as women can visit the place of their own after managing their household duties, less social stigma due to closeness with the UP Chair and members, receive justice within short time, transparency of the VC process, no scope for taking bribe, and scope to participate as audience and witness in the VC hearing session”

“Women participate in the VC sessions as VC panel members, applicants, respondents, witnesses, and audience. Though men and women's proportions are not the same, women's visibility at the justice system has broken century-old tradition. Observation of a courtroom session reveals that both men and women were not hesitant to sit together. Men and women both were sitting on the chair and receive equal opportunity and honour at the court hearing room”

মিলেমিশে থাকি ভাই
ন্যায়বিচার পেতে
গ্রাম আদালতে যাই...





Progress Towards Outputs

SECTION 2



Output 1.1

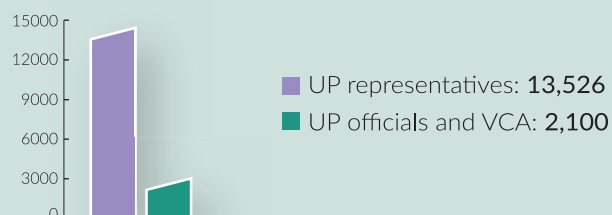
Capacity of relevant stakeholders at national and local level improved and key skills strengthened to enable Village Courts in new target Unions and local justice mechanisms in CHT to function effectively by the end of the project implementation

Reflection workshops with member of District Training Pool (DTP)

Knowledge and skills of members of the District Training Pool (DTP) established in 27 project districts have been refreshed through three days Training of Trainers (ToT) in partnership with National Institute of Local Government (NILG) so that they can provide refresher training to the UP representatives, Officials, Village Courts Assistants (VCAs) and Village Police. In a total 249 (Men: 221 and Women: 28) DTP members received Refresher ToT through 13 batches of training.

Build up capacity of village courts service providers

The members of DTP who received ToT provided capacity building training to 15,626 VC's service providers. Among the service providers, 13,526 (Women: 3,252) UP representatives, 2,100 UP Secretaries, VCAs and AACOs (women:582)



Establish clear and systematic coordination mechanisms



26 Deputy Commissioner's Offices in association with Deputy Director, Local Government (DDLG) and the AVCB Phase II Project have organized 26 Annual Progress Review Meetings.



One Half Yearly Coordination meeting with Deputy Directors, Local Government (DDLGs) and District Facilitators (DFs) held in 2019.

Output 1.2

Legal and policy framework revised to enhance efficiency and effectiveness of Village Courts and local justice mechanisms in CHT

Consultation with relevant stakeholders on case referral

12 consultations held in 12 districts where judiciary, district administration, Police Officers and selected UP chairpersons of respective district participated.



Drafted Amendment proposal of VC Act 2006

VC Act 2006 (amended in 2013) amendment proposal has been drafted having consultation with judiciaries, police officers, UP chairs, local administrations (UNOs, DDLGs), beneficiaries, NGO's staff, Village Courts Assistants, and UP Secretaries.

Output 1.3

GoB monitoring capacity for evaluating Village Courts and other local justice mechanisms' performance is strengthened and systematized

- 41% District Village Court Management Committee (VCMC) and 42% Upazila VCMC met quarterly following the Government Order (GO) issued in 2013 for monitoring of VCs performance.
- Finalized the revised Decentralized Monitoring, Inspection and Evaluation (DMIE) system taking concern from the Cabinet Division.
- Government Order (GO) is ready for circulation instructing DDLGs, UNOs and UPs for monitoring village courts.

Output 2.1

Beneficiaries in project areas understand the roles and functions of the Village Courts and other local justice mechanisms and are able to access their services when required

According to the Outreach Strategy the project accomplished following actions to boost up the knowledge of the target audience on VCs.

Workshop/seminars with journalists at national level to increase coverage

A national level consultation titled 'Role of Media for Raising Massive Awareness on Village Courts with journalists held in Dhaka with presence of 120 participants including 40 leading journalists e.g. news editors/chief reporters of various TV channels, newspapers, and radio.

Community mobilization initiatives for local citizens about VC:

The project delivered VC related message to 1,864,979 community people to make them sensitized through courtyard meetings, community meeting, rally and multimedia drama shows. Out of them 69% were women.



VC-related message
delivered to **1,864,979**
people

Develop and print IEC/BCC/outreach materials:

- Printed and distributed 480,000 posters, 448,000 leaflets and 480,000 stickers.
- Developed two bi-annual bangla newsletters and 37,000 copies of each item were published and distributed to relevant stakeholders.
- Printed and distributed 30,000 branded folders, 30,000 branded note pad and 20,000 branded pens.
- Printed and distributed 1,501 maps indicating project locations.
- One-minute Television Commercial (TVC) prepared focusing on how a poor widow having a disable child got justice through Village Court over a land related dispute attracted more than 2.5 million viewers shared on Social media.
- VC messages were broadcasted 6 times through Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulatory Authority to more than 160 million mobile phone subscribers of the country.
- VC messages have been broadcasted on three community radios of Barguna, Moulvibazar and Gaibandha districts through three Radio Commercials (RDC), six dramas and six magazine programmes.



(QR code for browsing all IEC materials of the project)

Gender Equality and Women's Participation

- Printed and distributed the VC gender guideline.
- Organized 12 district level sensitization workshops on gender and village courts in 12 districts.
- 135 meetings with Women Development Forum (WDF) members held in 128 upazilas where 3,835 women leaders participated.

Rolling out of village courts in CHT areas

The project has extended its supports in three Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) districts covering more 121 UPs and initiated its interventions aiming to strengthen traditional justice system in Village Courts functions in the CHT districts and explore possibility of village courts in CHT areas doing an action research.

- Launching Ceremony of 'Strengthening Traditional Justice Systems in the CHT' under AVCB Phase II Project held at Rangamati with the presence of Secretary, Ministry of Chittagong Hill Tracts Affairs (MoCHTA), National Project Director, AVCB Phase II Project, EU Ambassador to Bangladesh, Resident Representative and Deputy Resident Representative of UNDP Bangladesh, Additional Secretary, MoCHTA & National Project Director of SID-CHT and traditional leaders.
- Revised ToT training manual of traditional justice system.
- Held two Training of Trainers (ToT) on "Case Management & Documentation" for strengthening traditional justice systems in the CHT.
- Held two district level yearly advocacy dialogue on harmonization.

Media coverage





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Inception Programme of 'Strengthening Traditional Justice Systems in the CHT' under AVCB-II Project

Chief Guest : Mr. Bir Bahadur U Shwe Sing, MP, Honorable Minister, Ministry of Chittagong Hill Tracts Affairs

Guest of Honor : Mr. Mohammad Ismail, District & Session Judge, Bandarban Hill District

Special Guests : Brig. General Khandakar Md. Shahidul Emran AFWC, PSC, Region Commander, Bandarban Region
Mr. ATM Kawsar Hossain, Chief Executive Officer, Bandarban Hill District Council
Mr. Prasenjit Chakma, National Project Manager, SID-CHT, UNDP

Chaired by : Mr. Mohammed Daudul Islam, Deputy Commissioner, Bandarban Hill District

Venue : Arun Sharki Town Hall, Bandarban

30 November 2019

Organized by : Activating Village Courts in Bangladesh Phase II, CHT Component
Local Government Division







Output 2.2

Evidence-base and knowledge management on Village Courts increased

Study conducted

- Conducted Lessons Learned Study of AVCB II project by one national and one international consultant and report is available.
- Conducted study on impact of village courts on Women Empowerment by one national consultant and report is available.

South-South Cooperation for mutual learning and exchanging

UNDP organized a study tour in Philippines and Indonesia to exchange and sharing of experiences, knowledge, and best practices in the field of local justice with focus on community-based justice and restorative justice for broader human development and poverty reduction. This South-South Cooperation enabled the government officials in Bangladesh to learn about the local justice system of other countries, which will help them incorporate good practices in the local justice system in Bangladesh. It also worked well to establish the network with Philippines and Indonesia for further cooperation for information exchange on local justice. Village courts also has reflected in South- South Galaxy.

(<https://my.southsouth-galaxy.org/en/solutions/detail/village-court-in-bangladesh-bridging-the-justice-gap>)

Project Management Information System (PMIS)

Online project Management Information System (PMIS) has been deploying in 27 districts to monitor and track union wise village courts performance. One day refresher training has been provided to the 27 District Facilitators (DFs), 27 District Coordinators (DCOs), and 4 Monitoring & Reporting Coordinators (MRCs) to ensure effective implementation of project MIS.

Lessons Learned, Challenges And The Way Forward



Lessons learned/Challenges

- Ensure smooth phasing out through handing over the responsibilities of VCs from VCA to AACO as the recruitment of AACOs is in limbo due to a Court Order.
- 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.
- Replication of Village Courts Management Information System (VCMIS) that piloted during pilot phase is required hardware support from the government or other sources.
- 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 is supposed to start in the 2nd year of the project. The implementation period is curtailed due to delay in getting GoB approval for the Technical Assistance Project Proposal (TPP).
- The existing VC Act does not fulfil women's needs and priorities fully as family issues, such as domestic violence against women and dowry, are not incorporated in the Village Court Act 2006 (Amended in 2013).

- 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.

The way forward

The project will continue to provide support to the service providers of village courts of 1,078 UPs by offering localized justice to approximately 21 million rural people of Bangladesh. It will increase the capacity of GOB's national institutes for monitoring village court performance and carry out capacity building initiatives. The project will finalize amendment proposal of VC Act 2006 (Amendment in 2013) and place to the ministry for starting the process of amendment. Handing over village courts activities to AACOs, building capacity of AACOs, strengthening traditional justice system in CHT areas and conducting action research in 15 UPs of CHT areas for assessing feasibility of village courts in CHT areas will be the top priority of 2020.



Project Review and Reflection Workshop

BIAM Foundation, Dhaka Date: 10-11 April, 2019

Chief Guest : Mr. Md. Tazul Islam MP

Honorable Minister, MoLGRD&C

Special Guest : Mr. Swapan Bhattacharjee MP, State Minister, MoLGRD&C

Mr. S.M. Ghulam Farooque, Senior Secretary, LGD

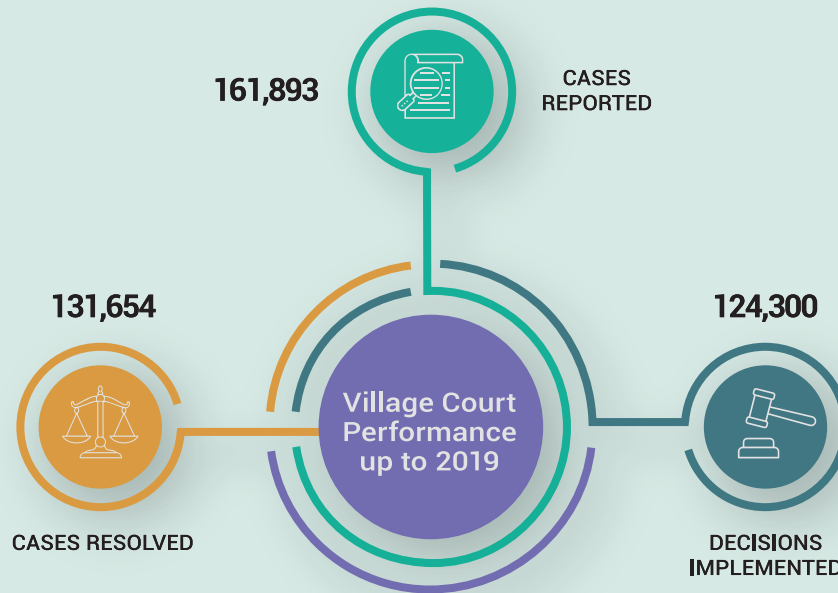
Ms. Audrey Maillot, Team Leader, Governance, EU Delegation to Bangladesh

Mr. Sudipto Mukerjee, Resident Representative, a.i, UNDP Bangladesh

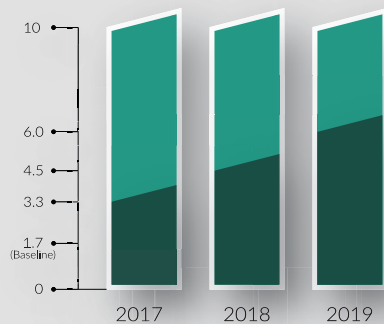
Activating Village Courts in Bangladesh Phase II



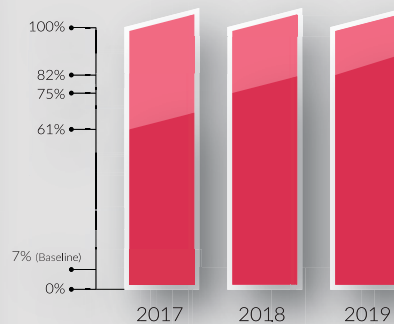
Glimpse of Project Results



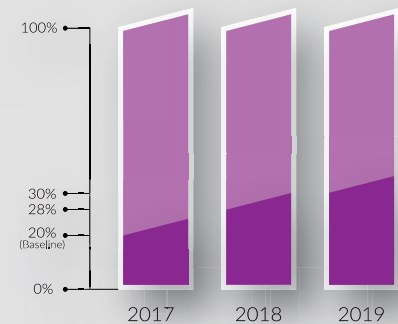
Average number of VC cases registered per month per UP



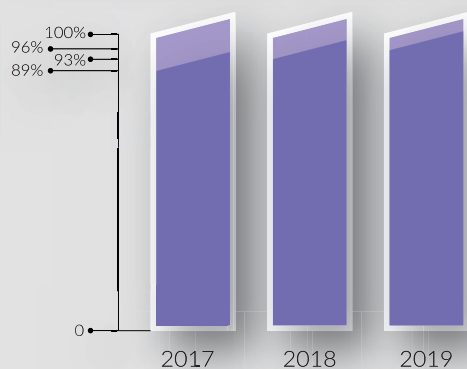
% of recorded resolved cases among the cases those fall under VC



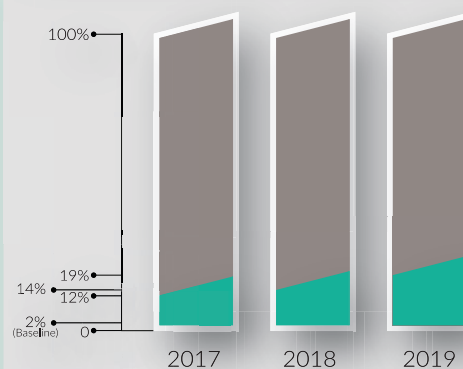
% of women complainants registered at VC



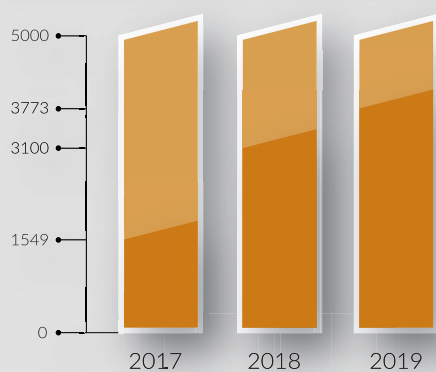
% of decisions implemented



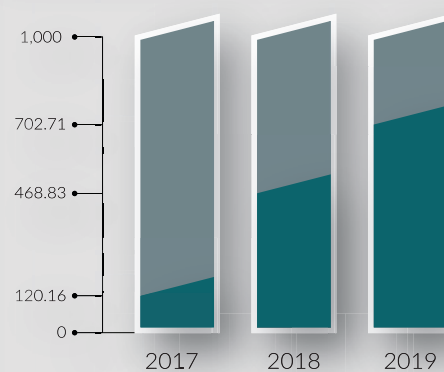
% of women involved as panelists



Number of cases referred from higher courts



Amount of money recovered (BDT) in million



NUMBER OF SERVICE PROVIDER TRAINED ON VILLAGE COURTS

TYPE OF SERVICE PROVIDERS	MALE	FEMALE	TOTAL
UP chair	1,985	24	2,009
UP panel chair	1,945	235	2,180
UP secretary	2,063	84	2,147
UP member	16,331	5,812	22,143
Village Court Assistant	1,120	1,123	2,243
Village Police	8,366	455	8,821
AACO	74	15	89

NUMBER OF PEOPLE REACHED BY SOCIAL MOBILIZATION INITIATIVES

ACTIVITY	NUMBER OF EVENTS	MALE	FEMALE	TOTAL
Courtyard meeting	342,277	1,753,190	3,871,111	5,624,301
Multimedia Show	11,800	1,651,691	877,093	2,528,784
Community Sharing Meeting	4,052	144,061	37,105	181,166
Youth workshop	1,076	25,907	19,890	45,797
TOTAL	359,205	3,574,849	4,805,199	8,380,048



A woman wearing a bright green hijab with a gold-colored decorative border is smiling at the camera. She is standing outdoors in a rural setting with lush green trees and foliage in the background. A thin wire is visible in the upper left corner of the frame.

NILUFA GOT JUSTICE THROUGH VILLAGE COURT

Success Story

Nilufa Yesmin (41 years old) -a homemaker and wife of Nasir Fakir from Choto Bahirdia at Bahirdia Mansa UP of Fakirhat in Bagerhat lives with her five (5) family members. Md. Anik Mollah (28 years old) -a day labor son of Razzak Mollah from the same village had a confrontation with Nilufa. This story is all about them and how they get justice through Village Court after passing many days at District Court.

On 28 May 2018, the applicant came to know from the people that the defender is catching fish from their pond without their consent. Md. Nasir Fakir, husband of applicant went to the pond and found it true. When the applicant's husband asked him, the defender assaulted him and threaten to death. When the applicant's husband raised his voice and asked to leave, the defender hit him hard with the fishing rod and the applicant's husband screamed and fainted. The defendant took 4,500 BDT from Nasir's pocket and ran away. Then, the witnesses gathered and the applicant Nilufa also came to the place of occurrence. The applicant took him to the hospital for the treatment. Following this incident, the applicant filed a case to the Fakirhat Model Thana, Bagerhata on 12 June 2018. The police station forwarded this case to the learned senior judicial magistrate-court where the case was registered as GR/85/18.

On 5 November 2018, after almost six months and end of 10th hearing sessions, the magistrate court forwarded the said case to the village court because the allegations mentioned were under the jurisdiction of VC. Meanwhile, Nilufa spent more than 10,000 BDT (118 US\$) as transport and food cost. The Union Parishad Chairman accepted the case on 6 December 2018. Afterward, the applicant was notified and the defendant

was summoned and they were before the Chairman. The defendant declined the claim against him. The chairman ordered to nominate members by the seven days and following the procedure the first hearing session was conducted on 17 December 2018. The village court took initiative for an amicable settlement and both parties were asked to mitigate and thus hearing was adjourned till 6 January 2019. However, failing to settle by both parties, the village court started its hearing again on 13 January 2019 and decided to give the verdict on 20 January 2019. On that day, the defendant was being asked to pay BDT 9,000 by 28 February 2019 to the applicant through the union parishad by the decision of panel as 5:0. Later, the defendant deposited that amount of money to the union parishad on 3 March 2019. The case was settled in 45 days and implemented in the next 41 days.

Nilufa is very happy after getting justice through VC within 45 days spending small amount of money whereas she spent more than 180 days at higher court without any results. Now, she is spending the compensated money on her children's education and living a happy life. She said *"In the village courts we do not need lawyers and police that bring extra costs and pressures. As a community, we can solve our own disputes through village courts"*.



**VILLAGE COURT PROVIDED
DECISION WITHIN 1 MONTH
AFTER PASSING MORE THAN
A YEAR IN DISTRICT COURT**

Success Story

Sattrish Das (38 years old) son of Brihospoti Das lives in Andurakandi of South Ranikhai UP at Companyganj in Sylhet district with a joint family of seven members. As a security guard of Akhaikuri jolmohal- a renowned lake/mere of his area, he earns 10,000 BDT (118 US\$) per month and passes his life with hardship.

In November 2018, Abdul Ahad of Kumarpar village of the same UP and his gang went to the lake where Sattrish works. They asked some money as a donation for getting the lease of the lake. Contractor of the lease Mr. Fajaruddin denied paying the money and made confrontation. Sattrish das supported his employer and protected him which was his duty as a security guard. After a couple of days of the altercations on 23 November 2018, Sattrish was going to his employer's house with 50,000 BDT (592 US\$) collected from fish selling. Ahad with some other miscreants attacked and beat him up mercilessly. He suffered injuries in his leg. Ahad and his accomplices tried to snatch the money from him but failed.

Jagdish Das (49 years old) -brother of Sattrish Das treated him first and asked for justice from local elites. Local elites could not give justice which reinforced him to file a case against Ahad and his accomplices at the police station. Companyganj Police Station received the case on 27 November 2018 and sent it to Chief Judicial Magistrate (CJM) court. This case continued for 14 months at the CJM court. Jagdish and his family spent near about 35,000 BDT (414 US\$) during this time as a lawyer's fee, transport, food, and other costs. Moreover, they could not earn money during those trial days.

At last, the CJM court sent the case to the South Ranikhai UP on 17 December 2019 after reviewing its merit. The VC received the case on 9 January 2020 as a criminal case. After following the whole process, the VC was formed both parties were heard on 9 February 2020. On the due date of the first hearing, the VC panel asked both parties to make a settlement following pre-trial. They agreed to settle the issue without further hearing and defendants paid 7,000 BDT (83 US\$) as compensation against expenses incurred for treatment before the court and reconciled without other conditions.

Both parties were pleased to get justice on the first hearing date as they passed long 14 months in district court earlier. Jagdish said "I lost huge money and time to get justice at the district court. It was quite a hardship for me to go there several times as I couldn't work on those days and needed to pay money for different reasons like fees, snacks, etc. Now, I am happy. Village Court helped a lot to re-establish our relationship".

Abdul Ahad said with joy " I am feeling relieved. I had to travel several times to the district for the case. But Village Court helped to solve the issue within a short time. When the panel asked me to resolve the issue through mutual understanding, I couldn't resist myself. Afterall, Sattrish is my neighbor. How can I continue this fight for long?"

Statement of Expenditure and Delivery in 2019

SECTION 4

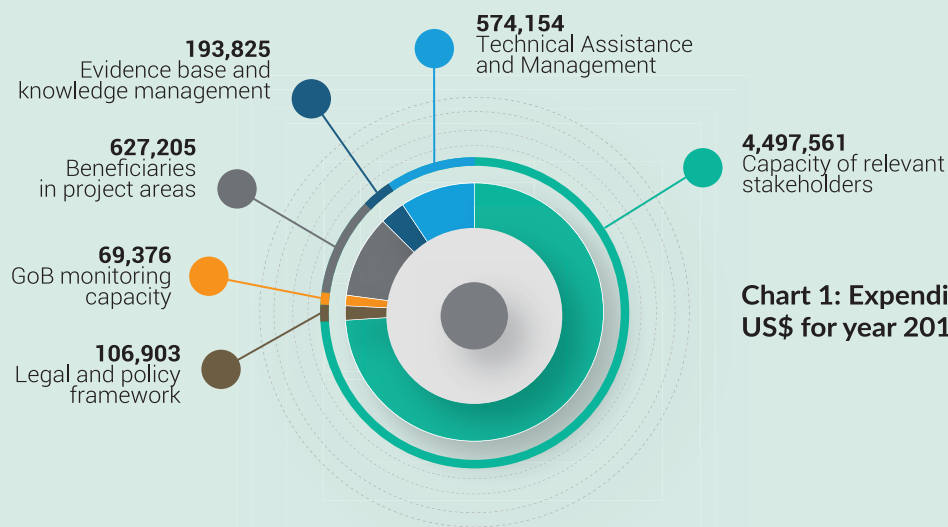


Chart 1: Expenditure breakdown in US\$ for year 2019

Chart 02 Capacity of relevant stakeholders output delivery US\$

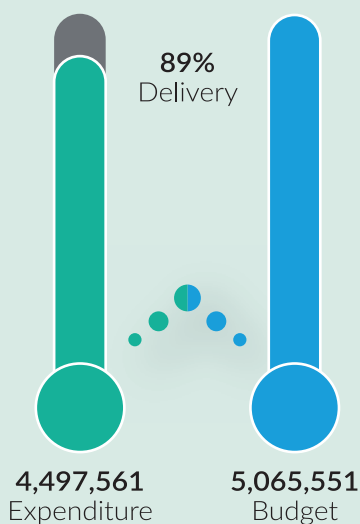


Chart 3: Legal and policy framework output delivery US\$

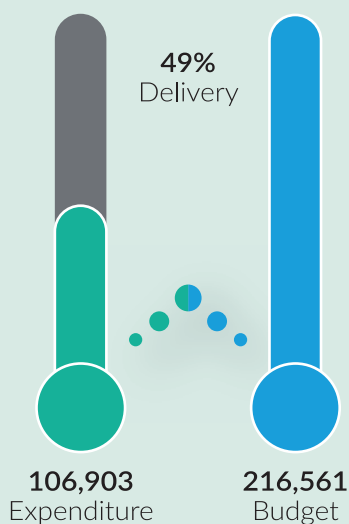
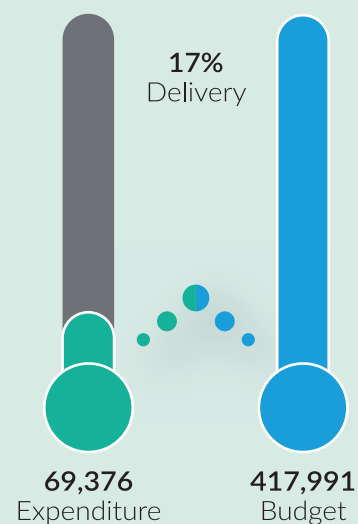
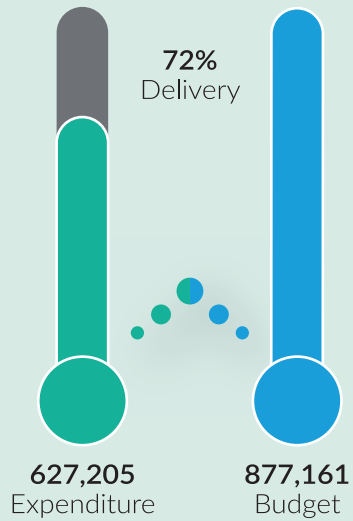


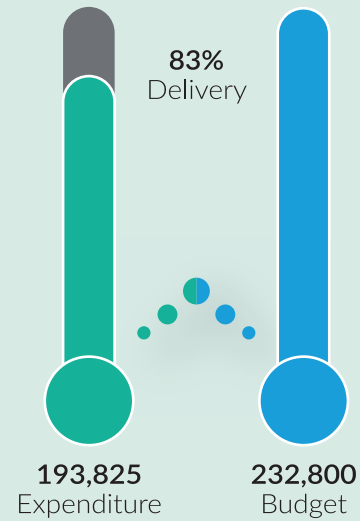
Chart 4: GoB monitoring capacity output delivery US\$



**Chart 5: Beneficiaries in project areas
output delivery US\$**



**Chart 6: Evidence-base and knowledge-
management output delivery US\$**



**Chart 7: Technical assistance and management
output delivery US\$**

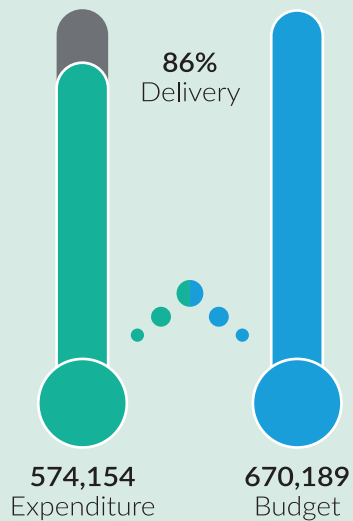


Chart 8: Combined outputs delivery US\$

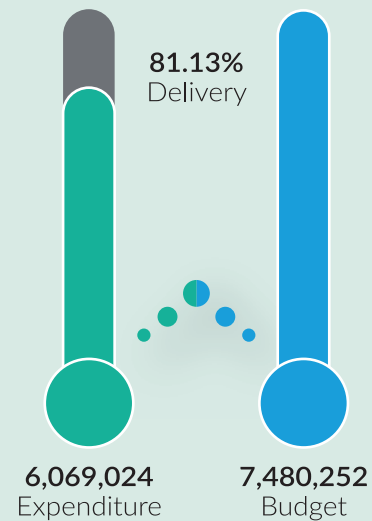
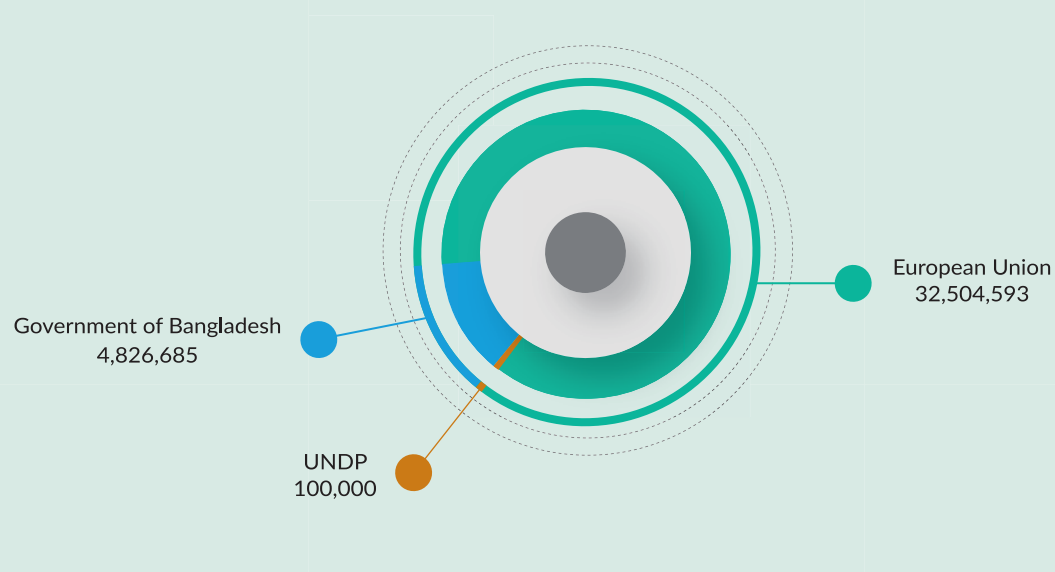


Chart 9: Major financial contributions in US\$ to the Activating Village Court Project from 2016 to 2020



SUMMARY OF BUDGET AND EXPENDITURE: JAN-DEC 2019 (IN US\$)

OUTPUT	BUDGET			EXPENSESS			% of Delivery
	Donor	GoB	Total	Donor	GoB	Total	
Activity Result 1.1: Capacity of relevant stakeholders	3,895,008	1,170,543	5,065,551	3,881,825	615,736	4,497,561	89%
Activity Result 1.2: Legal and policy framework	117,801	98,759	216,561	86,323	20,580	106,903	49%
Activity Result 1.3: GoB monitoring capacity	85,976	332,015	417,991	44,892	24,485	69,376	17%
Activity Result 2.1 : Beneficiaries in project areas	612,018	265,143	877,161	590,828	36,377	627,205	72%
Activity Result 2.2: Evidence-base and knowledge-management	221,941	10,859	232,800	192,732	1,093	193,825	83%
Activity Result 3.1 Technical Assistance and Management	667,546	2,643	670,189	573,380	774	574,154	86%
TOTAL	5,600,291	1,879,962	7,480,252	5,369,979	699,046	6,069,024	81%

৬ নং আশিদ্রোন ইউনিয়ন পরিষদ কমপ্লেক্স



EU AND UNDP BUDGET AND EXPENDITURE OF 2019

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%

ACTIVATING VILLAGE COURTS IN BANGLADESH PHASE II

Country	Bangladesh
No. and title of the project	00091274- Activating Village Courts in Bangladesh Phase II
Implementing agency	Local Government Division (LGD)
Implementing partner	Local Government Division, Ministry of Local Government, Rural Development and Cooperatives
Development partners	European Union, Government of Bangladesh and United Nations Development Programme
Other key partners	Ministry of Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs; Ministry of Home Affairs; Ministry of Public Administration; Ministry of Finance; Ministry of Planning; Ministry of Women and Children Affairs; Cabinet Division; Economic Relations Division; Ministry of Chittagong Hill Tracts Affairs (MoCHTA); Non-Government Organization; Community Based Organizations; and Civil Society Organizations.
Project duration	January 2016 – December 2020
Reporting period	January – December 2019
Report prepared by	Activating Village Courts in Bangladesh Phase II Project
Project's objective	To contribute to improving access to justice for disadvantaged and marginalized groups in Bangladesh
Contact person	Maran Kumar Chakraborty National Project Director, AVCB Phase II Project, and Additional Secretary, Local Government Division, Ministry of Local Government, Rural Development and Cooperatives.



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