

Annual Report

June 2019-May2020



C O M
COUNCIL OF MINORITIES

নাগরিক উদ্যোগ
NAGORIK UDDYOG
CITIZEN'S INITIATIVE

NAMATI
INNOVATIONS IN LEGAL EMPOWERMENT

Beneficiary Community:

Approximately 300,000 Bihari Urdu speaking camp dwellers have been living in 116 camps of 13 regions in urban settings across Bangladesh. Bihari Urdu Speaking community is a political victim of 1971. Almost four decades they passed their life as stateless. However they have ended their statelessness in 2003 and 2008. A group of young generation from Geneva Camp first time filed a writ petition in High Court and claimed as Bangladeshi citizens and after a year high court declared that the Bihari those are living in 116 Camps all over in Bangladesh they are Bangladeshi citizens and Urdu Speaking Bangladeshi. Bihari Urdu Speaking Community living in 116 in inhuman refugee like camps situation without having basic facilities as human being. All the Camps are urban based in Dhaka-Mohammadpur, Mirpur, Adamjee Nagr, Mymensingh, Rangpur, Bogra, Saidpur, Khulna, Ishwardi and Chittagon.

Project Justification:

However, in 2008, the High Court of Bangladesh confirmed that the Urdu-speaking camp dwellers are Bangladeshi citizens, and this landmark verdict raises a hope among the young Urdu-speakers ending of decades-long struggle with statelessness. Due to lack of mass awareness on the High Court landmark verdict among the general people and government official, the camp dwellers have not only been deprived from their civil and political rights but also from their socioeconomic and cultural rights. The Urdu speaking camp dwellers are yet to enjoy the citizenship rights and have been facing difficulties to get their national identity card, enroll in voter list, passport and access to basic services provided by government and non-government service providers.

Considering their deprivation and sufferings to have full access to citizenship rights, since June 2013, in partnership with Namati and Council of Minorities have been working to promote their citizenship rights considering the following objectives:

- To build an effective model for using legal empowerment approaches, specifically community-based paralegals, to facilitate the acquisition and use of identity documents to gain access to rights and opportunities part of the core content of citizenship;
- To develop robust evidence on the relationship between identity documentation and statelessness, including current government practice and discrimination that may

contribute to an ongoing lack of effective citizenship, despite the possession of identity documents;

- To encourage use of this evidence for national litigation and national or international advocacy efforts related to gaining access to effective citizenship rights, if necessary.

Project overview:

To respond to these justice challenges, in 2013 the Council of Minorities and Namati partnered to establish a network of community-based paralegals in Urdu-speaking camps in Dhaka (Mirpur and Mohammadpur), Mymensingh, Khulna, Chittagong, and Syedpur under the project of **“Empowering Linguistic Minority to Realize Rights In Bangladesh”**. Community-based paralegals can bridge the gap between law and real life. They use knowledge of law and government, and skills like negotiation, community education, organizing, and advocacy to seek concrete solutions to instances of injustice. In addition to serving as a dynamic “frontline” of justice service providers, paralegals focus on empowerment. They not only work alongside clients to resolve a legal issue, but also leave each client in a stronger position to deal with similar problems in the future – critical in the Urdu-speaking community, which has been marginalized through statelessness, discrimination, and poverty.

In total 14 paralegals are working in six paralegal centers in Dhaka- Mohammadpur, Mirpur, Saidpur, Mymensingh, Khulna and in Chittagong. Paralegals are working three ways that are

- i) Assist to the Camp dwellers to achieve civil documents
- ii) Awareness on legal education and access to justice
- iii) Capacity building of community

Assist to the Camp dwellers to achieve civil documents

Paralegals are assisting the camp dwellers to achieve civil documents like Birth and Death Certificates, Councilor certificate, National Identity Card, Passport, Tread License, General Dairy, Opening Bank Account, Health Support, Education Support, Old Age Allowance, Disable Allowance, TIN Certificate and Affidavit.

Civil documents achieved in six centers from June 2019 to May 2020

Center	Birth Certificate	Councilor Certificate	NID Card		Passport		Trade License		Health Support	Education Support	General Dairy	Bank Account	Death Certificate	Old age allowance	Disable Allowance	TIN Certificate	Affidavit	Total
			New	Re-New	New	Re-New	New	Re-new										
Ctg	405	128	16	17	0	0	3	0	30	25	1	0	1	0	0	2	-	628
Khulna	58	36	0	0	6	0	0	0	100	0	0	22	0	0	0	-	-	222
Mdpur	624	4	70	4	0	0	2	0	47	3	1	6	0	22	2	-	-	785
Mirpur	603	26	172	10	34	6	0	0	48	17	24	2	0	0	0	-	-	942
Mym	85	62	0	0	0	0	2	1	2	1	2	0	2	0	0	-	3	160
Saidpur	212	9	10	0	4	0	0	0	4	8	15	5	4	0	0	-	-	271
Total	1987	265	268	31	44	6	7	1	231	54	43	35	7	22	2	2	3	3008



Testimonial of civil documents

A story of achieved lost Birth Certificate.....

Mrs. Guriya a 35 years old resident of camp Number 3, Golarhat in Saidpur. She lost her birth certificate but she needs a birth certificate to open a bank account. She did not know how to get lost birth certificate. One day she attended a community group meeting organized by Rubel a community paralegal of Saidpur. In the group meeting Guria learned about the paralegal activities and support and enlightened about the legal education. Next day Guria visited Rasulpur Paralegal center and asked the paralegal to recover her lost birth certificate. Paralegal Rubel described her process of how to get lost certificate and then after paralegal Rubel started the process and first step was to file a general dairy to police station regarding the lost of Birth Certificate. After successfully filed the GD application paralegal Rubel accompanied Mrs. Guria went to the municipality office to apply a lost birth certificate of Guria and just after a week she received a new birth certificate. Here Guria have learned all the process about the General dairy and birth certificate. At the end she was satisfied with help and support of paralegal and later on she has helped her sister to apply for a new birth certificate.



A story of withdrawn father's pension money

Mr. Manik a 47 years old resident of Patgudam Camp, Mymensingh. His father was a government employee and died May 2019 due to physical illness. After the death of his (Manik) father, Mr. Manik went to government office to claim his father's pension money and then he came to know that without death and inheritance certificate it is impossible to claim the pension money.

Mr. Manik did not know what these documents were, and how to get it. One of his friend informed him about paralegal Nesar Ahmed and he also said that paralegal can help him to prepare these documents. Later on he visited Pathgudam paralegal center and discussed with paralegal. Mr. Nesar community paralegal Mymensingh described him all the process for the death and inheritance certificate and then from next day they have started process and within 10 days Mr. Manik received both certificates.

After getting all the certificates he has withdrawn his father's pension money and very satisfied for the assistance of paralegal. Now he knows how to get death and inheritance certificates. If someone needs these certificates in the future, Manik will be able to help the person to get the death and inheritance certificates as he promised.



A story of passport client

Md. Rahat 25 a years old resident of Kurmitola Camp in Mirpur Section-12 Dhaka. Rahat got an offer a job in a garment factory in Jordan and for that he needs a passport. Rahat knew that camp based Biharis are not getting passport and for that he was so worried. One day he discussed the matter with one of his friends and his friends suggested him to contact a passport broker and he will charge extra money and you will get passport in time. According to his friend suggestion Rahat went for the passport and found a broker. Officially passport application fee is BDT 3450/- USD 40 but broker charged him BDT 6,000/- USD 70. However he paid the amount and wait for his passport. But two months have been passed he did not get his passport and even broker did not contacted him anymore. Then he visited Mirpur-11 paralegal center and met community paralegal Shabbir Ahmed.

Paralegal Shabbir enlightened his about the 2008 high court judgment and home ministry order regarding the passport issuing of the camp based Biharis. Next day paralegal and client visited passport office and investigated the process and found his passport file is in the process of special branch verification. Later on paralegal contacted to Speacial Branch investigation official and asked him the progress of Rahat Passport, the officer replied to paralegal that applicant is Bihari and living in Camp so that he is not eligible to get passport.

Paralegal Shabbir requested SB officer to meet and discuss about the matter then SB officer gave him appointment. Next day paralegal visited SB office and shown the judgment copy of 2008 and hme ministry order regarding the issuing passport to the Biharis. After seen all documents SB officer said “I don’t know about this judgment and home ministry order” I am going to submit my verification report to the passport office as soon as and your client will get passport after that. Finally Rahat got his passport and submitted it to the Jordan embassy for visa process.

Md. Rahat was very happy to get his passport with the help of Paralegal. He said that “if he had known about paralegals before, he would not have to pay the broker and would have got his passport without any bribe”.

Awareness on legal education and access to justice

Paralegals are building awareness on legal education and access to justice within the camp community through door to door outreach, organizing community group meeting and screening legal awareness documentary film in the camps. These three ways they are disseminating the message of legal education and access to justice.

Daily Outreach:

Every day paralegals are doing outreach inside the Camp. During the outreach they disseminate the message of 2008 high court judgment, importance and uses of the civil documentation like birth certificate, national identity card, passport, trade license and other many services. Every day they are assigned to visit at list 5 houses in their rotational weekly plan. Through the daily outreach paralegals reached **39,079** Camp dwellers and disseminated the message of 2008 high court judgment, uses and importance of the civil documentations in their daily life.



Area	Beneficiaries(At the field level)			
	No. of Families	Female/Girls	Male/Boys	Total
Mohmmadpur	1320	2794	3147	5941
Mirpur	2116	4186	4875	9061
Mymensigh	1000	2362	2295	4657
Saidpur	1493	3589	3585	7174
Khulna	990	2463	1909	4372
Chittagong	1828	3869	4005	7874
Total	8747	19263	19816	39079

Community Group Meeting:

Paralegals organize community group meeting and they invite 10-15 women, men, boys and girls to attend the community group meeting. In the group meeting they disseminate the message of 2008 high court judgment and realize them how Biharis have ended their statelessness through the high court. In the group meeting they discuss about the importance and uses of the civil documentations in their daily life. In every center every month they organize one community forum and invite 50 community members including men, women, boys and girls.

Community Group Meeting on Legal Identity & Legal Education June 2019 to May 2020						
Area	No. of GM	Beneficiaries				Total
		Female	Male	Boys	Girls	
Mohmmadpur	78	765	20	42	343	1170
Mirpur	104	1020	23	49	468	1560
Mymensigh	25	225	7	26	117	375
Saidpur	50	485	22	47	196	750
Khulna	25	260	12	22	81	375
Chittagong	78	735	15	61	359	1170
Total	360	3490	99	247	1564	5400



Screening legal awareness documentary film in the camps:

Paralegals organized screening of the documentary films in the camps. This is the first time paralegals screened the audio visual film based on civil documentation process, impertinence and uses of civil documents in their daily life. After the screening paralegals raised some questions related to the films and recap the audience knowledge and even audience also raise some important questions related to the film.



Screening legal awareness documentary film in the camps June 2019 to May 2020

Area	No of Screening	Beneficiaries				Total
		Male	Female	Boys	Girls	
Mohammadpur	7	17	85	16	43	161
Mirpur	6	25	69	22	24	140
Chittagong	8	31	59	20	25	135
Mymensingh	2	17	27	51	54	149
Khulna	2	5	17	9	15	46
Saidpur	7	21	65	16	17	119
Total	32	84	235	108	148	575

Capacity building of the community

In June 2019 to May 2020 we have organized 6 community advocacy meeting in 6 paralegal centers and invited 40 community members in each center. We have shared our project activities and good practices. Beneficiaries were also shared their experiences within the meeting. Community people expressed their gratitude to Council of Minorities and NAMATI for their initiative and hard work for the camp dwellers. They also demand to continue this project because civil documentations are one of the key element for the camp dwellers to claim them self as Bangladeshi Citizens.

Workshop on Legal Identity & Legal Education					
June 2019 to May 2020					
Area	No. of GM	Beneficiaries (Pro bono)			Total
		Women Group	Youth Group		
		Female	Boys	Girls	
Mohmmadpur	4	40	7	33	80
Mirpur	4	40	10	30	80
Mymensigh	4	40	9	31	80
Saidpur	4	40	11	29	80
Khulna	4	40	11	29	80
Chittagong	4	40	14	26	80
Total	24	240	62	178	480

