

Annual Report

June 2020-May2021



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, Mymensingh, Rangpur, Bogura, Saidpur, Khulna, Ishwardi and Chittagong.

Project Justification:

However, in 2008, the High Court of Bangladesh confirmed that the Ur-du-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 Naorik Uddyog and Council of Minorities funded by NAMATI-US 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 Nagorik Uddyog partnered to establish a network of community-based paralegals in Urdu-speaking camps funded by NAMATI-US in Dhaka (Mirpur and Mohammadpur), Mymensingh, Khulna, Chittagong, and Saidpur 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

Challenge of Covid-19:

The COVID-19 pandemic in Bangladesh is a part of the worldwide pandemic of corona virus disease 2019. The virus was confirmed to have spread to Bangladesh in March 2020. The first three known cases were reported on 8 March 2020 by the country's epidemiology

institute, IEDCR. Since then, the pandemic has spread day by day over the whole nation and the number of affected people has been increasing.

In order to protect the population, the government declared "lockdown" throughout the nation from 23 March to 30 May and prepared some necessary steps to spread awareness to keep this syndrome away from them. Infections remained low until the end of March but saw a steep rise in April. On 13 June, the number of cases in Bangladesh exceeded the number of cases in China, the country where the outbreak began. First three months of country lockdown from March to May our paralegals activities were completely stop because our working areas the camps are densely populated urban spaces, in which social distancing was impossible.

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, Trade License, General Dairy, Opening Bank Account, Health Support, Education Support, Old Age Allowance, Disable Allowance, Ration Card & Waris Certificate.

Civil documents achieved in six centers from June 2020 to May 2021

Center	Birth Certificate	Councilor Certificate	NID Card		Passport		Trade License		General Dairy	Adult Allowance	Bank Account	Disable Allowance	Health Support	Death Certificate	Education Support	Waris Certificate	Ration Card	Total
			New	Re-New	New	Re-New	New	Re-new										
Mohammadpur	761	9	34	11	3	0	0	0	7	43	11	2	44	1	0	0	0	926
Mirpur	539	17	91	37	6	5	3	0	43	0	3	0	40	1	5	2	0	792
Saidpur	165	22	1	0	0	0	0	0	25	0	8	0	18	1	3	4	0	247
Chittagong	164	40	13	10	1	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	19	4	41	1	1	296
Mymensingh	40	22	0	0	0	0	4	4	4	0	0	0	0	0		3	10	87
Khulna	52	30	0	0	2	0	0	0	1	2	12	2	95	0	15	0	0	211
Total	1721	140	139	58	12	5	7	4	80	45	36	4	216	7	64	10	11	2559



Testimonial of civil documents

Name: Abul Hashem (63)

Address: 1 No. Camp, Khliashpur, Khulna

Cell: 01972232672

Paralegal: Naj Parvin



A story of passport client

Abul Hashem a resident of Camp No.1 in Khalishpur Khulna. He was suffering from a critical health issue. He did not get any health benefits after treatment with the several physicians. After that his doctor advised him to go India for better treatment. According to the doctor advice Mr. Hashem was agreed to go India however, he did not have passport to visit India.

Later on Mr. Hashem told to his son to prepare his passport, but his son said, he does not know how to get passport. One day Mr. Hashem come to know about community paralegal and their activities and then he visited Khalishpur paralegal center and met paralegal Naz parveen and he requested her to help him to get passport.

Paralegal Naz, welcomed him and briefly described him about the passport application and its process and set a date to fill up the passport application and visit passport office. At first Naz and Mr. Hashem went to a local bank to deposit passport fee and then they went to passport office along with passport application and all relevant documents. On the same day they successfully submitted the passport application.

20 days later, passport verification and investigation officer informed to Mr. Hashem that, he is Bihari and living in the camp so that he is not eligible to get passport and then Mr. Hashem immediately met paralegal Naz and informed about the passport status. Next day paralegal and Mr. Hashem met to investigation officer and then paralegal said to officer that Mr. Hashem is a Bangladeshi citizen and he has national identity card. She also said, according to the 2008 high court judgment Biharis are Bangladeshi citizens and even we have an order from home ministry regarding issuing the passport to the camp based Bihari. After getting all the information from paralegal investigation officer agreed to submit positive report against Mr. Hashem.

Finally, after one month he got the passport and visited in India and he received quality treatment from India and now he is much better, and said, thanks to paralegal Naz.

Name: Mst. Husne-Ara (40)
Address: Rasulpur Camp, Saidpur
Cell: 01715748989

Paralegal: Nagma Parveen



A story of a poor pregnant women.....

Husnara is a resident of Rasulpur camp Saidpur. Her husband is a poor day labor. After her pregnancy she was faced multi disease health problem but her husband was poor and not able to bear her treatment cost so that he sends her to her father's house. Her father was poor too and day by day she faces difficulty. In the meantime her neighbor informed her to meet community paralegal Nagma. On the next day she visited Rasulpur Paralegal center and met paralegal and described her problem in detail and requested her to help.

Paralegal Nagma, informed her about ISDCM a local NGO where she can get health card and she will get all health support without any cost. Paralegal invite her next day to register her name for health card of ISDCM.

Next day paralegal and client went to ISDCM and Husnara received her health card for daily health checkup and birth delivery. Now she has a baby boy and mother and child both are healthy and happy with the support of paralegal and ISDCM.

After the end of country lockdown in end of May 2020 our paralegals again started their daily door to door outreach inside the camps. Paralegals are building awareness on Covid-19 awareness, 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 in Covid-19 situation they are minting social distancing issue and wearing face mask and using hand sanitizer while in the field. Through the outreach they disseminate the message of Covid-19 protection and importance of Covid-19 vaccine, 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 **42,126** Camp dwellers and disseminated the message of 2008 high court judgment, uses and importance of the civil documentations in in their daily life.



Area	Beneficiaries(At the field level)			
	No. of Families	Female/Girls	Male/Boys	Total
Mohmmadpur	2502	5987	6896	12883
Mirpur	1283	3105	3017	6122
Chittagong	2143	5235	5002	10237
Saidpur	1530	3469	3580	7049
Mymensingh	875	1978	1889	3867
Khulna	463	1062	906	1968
Total	8796	20836	21290	42126

Community Group Meeting:

Paralegals organize community group meeting and they invite 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 June 2020 to May 2021, project period paralegals organized total **504** group meetings with the participants of **7,560** community members.



Community Group Meeting on Legal Identity & Legal Education June 2020 to May 2021						
Area	No. of GM	Beneficiaries				Total
		Male	Female	Boys	Girls	
Mohmmadpur	108	0	1175	40	405	1620
Mirpur	144	0	1711	49	400	2160
Chittagong	72	0	772	41	267	1080
Saidpur	108	0	1156	94	370	1620
Mymensingh	36	0	388	35	117	540
Khulna	36	0	392	25	123	540
Total	504	0	5594	284	1682	7560

Covid-19 Awareness Meeting and Assist for Vaccination

Paralegals organized awareness meeting on Covid-19 in the most risky and red zone areas in Mirpur, Mohammadpur & Mymensingh. Through this community meeting they discriminate the message of social distancing issue, hand wash, using face mask and avoid the public places. They also described the importance of covid-19 vaccine.



Covid-19 awareness meeting in the camps June 2020 to May 2021						
Area	No of Meeting	Beneficiaries				Total
		Male	Female	Boys	Girls	
<i>Mohmmadpur</i>	4	0	48	0	12	60
<i>Mirpur</i>	15	0	197	5	23	225
<i>Mymensingh</i>	2	0	20	2	18	40
Total	21	0	265	7	53	325

Pro-bono Workshop for capacity building of the community

In June 2020 to May 2021 we have organized 24 pro-bono workshop in 6 paralegal centers and invited 40 community members consist of 20 women and 20 boys & girls together in each center. We have educated them to learn the making of civil documentation themselves without anyone's help and inspired them to assist others to get these civil documentations. 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 2020 to May 2021					
Area	No. of WS	Beneficiaries (Pro bono)			Total
		Women Group	Youth Group		
		Female	Boys	Girls	
Mohmmadpur	4	40	9	31	80
Mirpur	4	40	9	31	80
Chittagong	4	40	13	27	80
Saidpur	4	40	13	27	80
Mymensingh	4	40	10	30	80
Khulna	4	40	11	29	80
Total	24	240	65	175	480

