

**Empowerment and Inclusion of the Urdu Speaking Community in the main Stream
Society**

A Pilot Project by Council of Minorities

Submitted by
Council of Minorities
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Project Overview

The project will focus on effective citizenship within Bihari camp communities. Following a 2008 court decision, Biharis are recognized as citizens and most have obtained national ID cards, which provide the basic proof of citizenship. The project will focus on the empowerment of the community based organization and organized series of advocacy, community dialogue and round table on effective citizenship and inclusion in the main stream society of Bangladesh.

This proposal is a request for **US \$ 25000.00** in support for a one-year pilot project, under which 5 community based organizations will establish and empowerment training workshop, advocacy meeting, community dialogue and round table meeting will be organized in 5 working areas.

Background

Bangladesh emerged as an independent and sovereign country in South Asia after its war of liberation with Pakistan in 1971. With about 16 million people crowded into an area of 147,570sq.km, Bangladesh has the highest population density in the world. The percentage of urban population is 22 percent, while the rest of the population is concentrated in over 86,000 villages in the country. Bangladesh has 7 divisions, namely Dhaka, Barisal, Chittagong, Rangpur, Rajshahi, Khulna and Sylhet.

In 1947, India was partitioned into two country-India and Pakistan. That partition forced the religious minorities of both countries to leave their ancestors' homes and take shelter in Pakistan or India to protect and promote their religion, culture, language and economic interests. The Urdu speaking Muslim minority of the Indian provinces of Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, Orisha and West Bengal migrated to the then East Pakistan.

In 1971, East Pakistan revolted against the rule of West Pakistan and fought a 9-month war of liberation, which resulted in the emergence of Bangladesh in 16th December 1971. A section of the Urdu speaking community played an anti-liberation role by siding with the Pakistan army. Consequently, at the end of the war they became victims of the situation and were forced to abandon their homes, business, properties and employment. The International Committee of the Red Cross built large and small settlements mostly on public land and buildings to provide shelter, food and medical support to the displaced people. These settlements, approximately 116 in number, are commonly known as Bihari camps. Residents were in effect stateless, without identity documents to recognize citizenship in any country.

The community survived by struggling for 40 years without having access to state-guaranteed rights to basic services that include housing, water and sanitation, education, jobs and other livelihoods. After a long 37 years, the High Court of Bangladesh, however, recognized Biharis as citizens of the country in a May 2008 verdict; the Court gave instructions to the election commission to register Biharis in the voters list and issue them National Identity Cards. With this recognition of citizenship, a new challenge has been surfaced.

There is no change in the socio-economic status of Biharis, despite their receiving national ID cards and becoming voters. Camp dwellers face discrimination in every part of their life. The government is perpetually violating the fundamental right of the camp dwellers. It is very unfortunate for the community that they do not have any state recognition as a linguistic minority of Bangladesh, even they do not have access to get passports, public service employment, trade licenses and all the time they face the threat of camp eviction.

Project Approach: Community-based Paralegals

Community based organizations will be empower on advocacy, communication skill through 2 days training workshop and after that they will start advocacy with the camp dwellers and civil society on effective citizenship and inclusion in the main stream society. CBO will identify the camp existing issue using participatory action research PAR and will try to resolve their problems. CBO will also organize a series of advocacy meeting, community dialogue and round table meeting to high light their problem and recommendations to come out from the inhuman camp life. CBO can help the camp dwellers to understand the citizenships rights and how camp dwellers will be effective citizen of Bangladesh.

Project Goal and Major Objectives:

The project's goal is **to promote effective citizenship** for Urdu-Speaking Biharis in Bangladesh. The primary objectives of the project are to:

- To empower the community based organizations to realize their rights and responsibilities as active citizens of Bangladesh.
- To empower the community based organization to mobilize the camp dwellers to become active citizens of Bangladesh.

Areas of work:

- 1) **Training workshop:** Five Community based organizations will attend a 2 days training program on advocacy and communication skill.

The passport authority constantly denies providing passports to the Bihari camp dwellers. The authority said they have no instruction from the Home Ministry to provide passports to the Biharis in Bangladesh, despite passport applications being based on the applicant's possession of a national identity card. Paralegals will assist people with the application process, advocate for proper implementation of the law in the local registration office, and do follow-up with the client to encourage a positive result.

- 2) **Public Service Employment:** Bihari Camp dwellers have difficulty with obtaining public service employment, which is based on an application process and exam, even when Biharis fulfill the necessary criteria. Paralegals will assist Biharis with the application process and follow-up.

- 3) **Trade Licenses:** Bihari camp dwellers have no access to trade licenses to continue their petty business legally. Some people have tried to apply, but the government denies the requests when they see the applicant's Bihari camp address. Paralegals will assist Biharis with the application process and follow-up.

- 4) **Camp Eviction:** The threat of camp eviction is one of the most hazardous issues for the camp-dwelling Biharis. For example, there are 40 camps in Mirpur and the government is trying to evict the residents by force, without any alternative arrangement. A similar situation exists in the Mymensingh Pathgudam Camp, where the land has been allocated to the government bank, with an eviction looming. Paralegals will help to educate and mobilize Biharis to fight for their housing and land rights.

Project period:

One year from August 2014 to July 2015

Budget for the one year OBAT paralegal project

Budget Head	Line Item	Description	Taka	Dollar
1	Basic Paralegal Training one day	2 paralegals will received a day long training about the legal issues		
1.1	Transportation cost for the trainer	TK. 600X2X1	1200.00	15.00
1.2	Local Conveyance for the trainer	TK. 500.00	500.00	6.00
1.3	Refreshment	TK. 1000.00	1000.00	13.00
2	Honorarium for the paralegals			
2.1	Monthly Honorarium 2 paralegals	TK. 2500X2X12	60000.00	778.00
	Monthly Honorarium for the Chief executive(Part Time)	TK. 5000X12	60000.00	778.00
3	Logistic			
3.1	Paper and Photocopies	TK. 500X12	6000.00	78.00
4	Rent for Paralegal Center	TK. 600X12	7200.00	93.00
5	Evaluation & Monitoring visit			
5.1	Transport cost	TK. 600X2X3 Times	3600.00	47.00
5.2	Food	TK. 500X3 Times	1500.00	20.00
5.3	Boarding	TK. 600X3 Times	1800.00	23.00
Sub total			1,42,800.00	1851.00
overhead 10%			14,280.00	185.00
Grand Total			1,57,080.00	2036.00

Dollar Rate 1 = 77.15 Taka

Taka: One hundred fifty seven thousand and eighty

USD: Two thousand and thirty six