

Baseline Survey of Joint Programme to address Violence Against Women (JP-VAW)

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Acknowledgements

Violence against women and girls (VAW/G) is a pervasive, worldwide problem that serves as a mechanism for maintaining male authority. VAW/G has an extensive and ruthless impact on the lives of the women. Government of Bangladesh has undertaken many initiatives to eradicate these problems with the help of local, national and international projects or programmes. In response to this situation, UNFPA has initiated the *Joint UN Programme to Address Violence against Women (JP-VAW)* in January 2010 with funding of Spain-MDG Achievement Fund in collaboration with the Government of Bangladesh (GoB), NGOs and Civil society organizations. Joint Programme not only supports the achievement of MDG-3: '*Promoting gender equality and the empowerment of women*', but will also have impact on achievement of other MDGs.

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We are indeed grateful to the technical and support staff of HDRC, and all the field staffs worked in data collection process for this study.

All our efforts with this study would really be fruitful on the day when VAW/G will be eradicated and VAW/G victims would be able to get required services at the earliest.

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Abbreviations

| | |
|---------|--|
| ASK | Ain O Salish Kendra |
| BAIRA | Bangladesh Association of International Recruiting Agencies |
| BGMEA | Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers & Exporters' Association |
| BJMA | Bangladesh Jute Mills Association |
| BKMEA | Bangladesh Knitwear Manufacturers & Exporters Association |
| BLGMA | Bangladesh Leather Goods Manufacturing Association |
| BNWLA | Bangladesh National Women Lawyers Association |
| BTA | Bangladesh Tanners Association |
| BTMOA | Bangladesh Textile Mill Owners' Association |
| CEDAW | Convention on Elimination of Discrimination Against Women |
| CSOs | Civil Society Organizations |
| CSR | Corporate Social Responsibility |
| DCI | Data Collection Instrument |
| DDFP | District Department of Family Practice |
| DDFP | Deputy Director Family Planning |
| DSWO | District Social Welfare Office |
| DWA | Department of Women Affairs |
| FBCCI | Federation of Bangladesh Chamber of Commerce and Industries |
| FE | Field Enumerators |
| FS | Field Supervisors |
| GDI | Gender Development Index |
| GoB | Government of Bangladesh |
| HDRC | Human Development Research Centre |
| HIV | Human Immunodeficiency Virus |
| ICDDR'B | International Center for Diarrhoeal Diseases and Research Bangladesh |
| ILO | International Labour Organization |
| IOM | International Organization for Migration |
| JPMO | Joint Programme Management Office |
| JP-VAW | Joint Programme to address Violence Against women |
| KII | Key Informant Interview |
| LGFMEAB | Leather Goods and Footwear manufacturers and Exporters Association of Bangladesh |
| MDG | Millennium Development Goal |
| MoEWOE | Ministry of Expatriates' Welfare and Overseas Employment |
| MOI | Ministry of Information: |
| MoLE | Ministry of Labour and Employment |
| MoWCA | Ministry of Women and Children Affairs |

Abbreviations

| | |
|----------|--|
| NCWD | National Council on Women and Development |
| NGOs | Non-Government Organization |
| OSCC | One-Stop Crisis Centers |
| PRSP | Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers |
| QCO | Quality Control Officers |
| SGBV | Sexual and Gender based Violence |
| TL | Team Leader |
| TQM | Total Quality Management |
| TOR | Terms of Reference |
| UNCT | United Nations Country Team |
| UNAIDS | United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS |
| UNDAF | United Nations Development Assistance Framework |
| UNESCO | United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization |
| UNFPA | United Nations Population Fund |
| UN Women | United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women |
| VAW/G | Violence against Women and Girls |
| VAW | Violence against Women |
| WEAB | Women Entrepreneur Association of Bangladesh |
| WHO | World Health Organization |
| WID | Women in Development |

Executive Summary

Violence against women and girls (VAW/G) or sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) is a form of discrimination and deeply rooted in power imbalances and structural relationships of inequality between women and men. Gender based violence manifests itself in multiple forms and involves a wide variety of perpetrators from intimate partners and family members, to strangers and/or institutional actors. The problem of VAW/G or SGBV has an extensive and ruthless impact on the lives of the women of Bangladesh.

In response to this situation, UN System in Bangladesh has initiated the *Joint UN Programme to Address Violence against Women (JP-VAW)*, a three-year programme funded by the Spain-MDG Achievement Fund, in collaboration with the Government of Bangladesh (GoB), NGOs and Civil society organizations. Nine UN Agencies and eleven 11 GoB Ministries are working together to achieve the JP outcomes outlined in the results framework. The study conducted by HDRC on 'Baseline survey of Joint Programme to address Violence against Women' is a part of that initiative.

Objectives of the study

The study aims a Background research for enhancing knowledge/learning on VAW in the context of Bangladesh for the purposes of the baseline and reporting, and a Primary research located towards gathering information and field-based exercises in targeted program working areas, and with JP-VAW partner organizations. The survey also brought out the linkages with current and ongoing research under JP-VAW by reviewing and/or integrating findings from other JP research projects when and where relevant to the assessment indicators and benchmarks established for the baseline survey.

Methodology and Implementation

Broadly, the total Baseline survey has been split into two broad segments namely, Background research and Primary Research. Background research has been through review of secondary literature to get an overview of JP-VAW program in Bangladesh, best practices under VAW/G targeted programs both home and abroad, and review of different background documents related to SGBV including international conventions, laws and policies related to women's legal rights, and relevant studies and information on it in Bangladesh. The primary research has been conducted following a methodology matrix and objectives of the study and indicators. It has followed separate methodology for quantitative mini surveys and qualitative study with program and policy level personnel, civil society and NGOs.

Quantitative study (Mini surveys)

Mini Surveys has been conducted with-

- Officials of partner ministries
- Police officials at national and district level
- Civil society and law makers, and
- Network and training participants

Qualitative Study

Following tools have been employed for the qualitative study:

- Key Informant (KII) with knowledgeable persons
- Observations at the shelter homes (to collect information of the environment)
- Exit Client Interviews at the district hospitals
- Expert Consultations with different human rights and laws and policies experts working on VAW/G and SGBV
- Focus Group Discussion with Women Development Forum (WDF) members

For the field data collection, a total of 60 personnel have been deployed, comprising of 36 Field Enumerators for women and girls, 6 KI Interviewers, 3 Note Takers, 12 Field Supervisors, and 6 Quality Control Officers. Data processing and analysis was done at HDRC. The results of the baseline draft report was then be presented for stakeholder review and comments from UNFPA/JPMO personnel, and finalized upon receipt of comments.

Findings

Knowledge of Revised Policies/Laws on Women’s Rights and VAW/G related issues among the 11 partner ministry officials: During the key interview sessions, al most all Project Directors (PDs) out of 11 JP-VAW intervention ministries have responded that they have heard about laws/Acts and policies regarding violence against women/girls. They have heard of CEDAW; Women and Children Repression Prevention Act, 2000 (amended in 2003); The *Child Marriage Restraint Act*, 1929; Dowry Prohibition Act, 1980; Women Development Policy, 2011 or National Women Advancement Policy. However, none of them except Ministry of Women and Children Affairs (MOWCA) and Ministry of Expatriate’ Welfare and Overseas Employment (MOEWOE) reported that there is no legal framework or policy in their offices regarding VAW/G. Representative of Ministry of Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs (MOLJPA) were more aware of the laws and policies and he expressed that there is a need for modification of some laws. In his opinion, other ministries should also be aware of different laws to address VAW/G cases.

Knowledge of Revised Policies/Laws on Women’s Rights and VAW/G related issues among the 9 UN partner agency officials: All the 9 UN partner agency officials stated that they know about the laws and policies on women’s rights and VAW/G related issues in Bangladesh approved to align and comply with the international framework. Most of them reported about 4-5 laws and policies directly related to women’s rights and addressing VAW/G. They were of opinion that, women in the Bangladeshi society can be more strong and free to live a violence-free life if they learn, follow, and disseminate all these laws and policies in a proper way.

Level of accountability, mechanisms, awareness and training interventions on VAW/G legal/policy outlines within government offices at national level: Only MOWCA expressed that they start case against perpetrators, publish it in the newspaper and expose it before the public. Any victim of early marriage, eve teasing and physical torture are referred to the *Upazila* committee of MOWCA. Ministry of Education (MOE) promotes awareness among students through the curriculum. Seven ministries opined that they do not have any separate gender policy paper in their office. Only MOWCA reported that they have separate gender policy. Ministry of Labour and Employment (MOLE) reported that they follow the policy of gender equality and good behavior with women. MOEWOE arranges training for

the immigrant labour, teacher trainer, officer and staff. Ministry of Religious Affairs (MORA) imparts training for religious leaders up to district level. Besides, they also arrange inter-religious dialogue. Ministry of Social Welfare (MOSW) imparts training to doctors, engineer, imam, journalist, teachers, police, etc. They also run shelter homes. Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development (MOLGRD) imparts training to Chairmen and Members of Union Parishad through BRAC through UNDP funding. BRAC also formed Women Development Former through organizing female UP members. MOLJPA arrange training for judges and magistrates. MOWCA, MOLJPA, and MOE organize training for civil society, police, members of *Union Parishad* and teachers respectively. Ministry of Health and Family Welfare (MOHFW) arrange training for doctors and nurses, health service provider, and *Upazila Nirbahi Officer* (UNO). MOLE arrange workshop for the workers. However, more intensive training on VAW/G is required.

Level of accountability, mechanisms, awareness and training interventions on VAW/G legal/policy outlines within government offices at district level: Concerned district level officials of 11 partner ministries at 11 programme districts reported that, they have heard about VAW/G, and most of them know about some policies/laws on women’s rights and VAW/G related issues of Bangladesh. Most of them mentioned 3 laws/acts. However, they are not sure about their office staffs’ knowledge about VAW/G. They usually bring VAW/G related cases that have been followed up by policies and laws at public level from individual levels through Information Office, journalists, civil society, human rights organizations, organizing debate at school, arranging *Shalish*, social awareness programs, public representatives, *Khutba*, etc. However, resolving through *Shalish* is more prevalent. Except District Women’s Affairs (DWA), none of them record the information of VAW/G cases. Most of them could not keep documents.

Level of awareness of government official and police on CEDAW/Gender/VAW policies and Laws: The government and police officials were interviewed from all the 11 partner ministries in both of their national and district level offices. More than two-thirds of them have heard of or knew about CEDAW. However, among those knowing of CEDAW only 23 percent reported of knowing the content of CEDAW completely. The larger portion (86.8%) has opined that, it is a convention/treaty or international bill of rights and a law itself. Major source of knowledge about CEDAW among the respondents is government seminar or workshop. Most of them do not have knowledge on content and aim of CEDAW. Almost all of them know about provision of some laws and policies that can support women in Bangladesh. About three-fourth of them mentioned ‘Prevention of violence against women and children Act, 2000 (amended in 2003)’. Around three-fourths view that one-stop crisis centre (OSCC) for VAW victims is a great initiative.

Status of gender sensitive budgeting in partner ministries: Most of the Project Directors of VAW/G on 11 partner ministries reported that gender sensitive budget, but in practice it is not being implemented. Only MOWCA and Ministry of Finance (MOF) are very serious about gender-sensitive budgeting. However, other ministries have gender sensitive budget as well. MOF is involved with development, integration and analysis of budget. During the year 2012-13 this analysis have been done for 25 major ministries with technical assistance of UN Women and the report has been given in MOF website.

Understanding of Women’s rights among Civil Society and Law makers (MPs): Almost all of them have positive attitude on equal rights of men and women. More than 80 percent of them have reported that equal right of men and women does not exist in their own area.

About 40 percent of them indicated the religious fanaticism about the rights of women as the main reason for which the women in Bangladesh are not getting equal rights with men.

Status of Coordinated Information System on VAW/G in Ministries at National Level:

Key Informant Interview in most of the ministries reveals that, they maintain some database with all information, not exclusively on VAW/G. A separate database on VAW/G issue has been found at MOWCA. The Database System is maintained there by “Cell for Prevention of Violence against Women”. The database is easily accessible to other government agencies. They share their VAW data with some other authorities outside their own ministry. Almost all the ministries do not have knowledge about National level database on VAW/G. Police Headquarters maintain database of VAW cases of police stations at headquarters level. There is no inter-agency work on the database involving all the relevant government agencies.

Availability of specific personnel to provide information related to the database on VAW/G:

Except DWAO, DSWO, CS office, DLEO, none have specific personnel to provide information related to the database on VAW/G at district level. Only DWAO, DSWO, CS, and part of DEWOE offices had specific personnel to update the data base on VAW/G, mostly in a hardcopy format. VAW Cell at MoWCA has some specific personnel to maintain the database.

Status of Coordinated Information System on VAW/G in NGOs working on Women’s Rights including VAW/G interventions:

An 11 (eleven) leading NGOs from 11 (eleven) different districts of Bangladesh working on human rights, women rights and legal rights were done KII to assess the current coordinated information system on VAW/G related issues. Majority of the NGOs maintain some database on VAW/G related issues. However, they have no specific guideline and training to do this work effectively. Although not complete, more than half of the NGOs were able to show the database instantly. Majority of the NGOs have reported that they arrange seminar/workshop on findings of database. They have no plan for inter-agency work on database. Around half of them do not have any idea about National level database on it.

Attitude, behavior, and awareness of the network and training participants:

Most of the training participants have reported that, both men and women should have equal rights. However, some of them also opined that, men should have more rights. All of the participants have reported of negative societal attitude towards VAW/G victims. However, a portion of participants think that women are mainly responsible for the VAW/G incidents. Most of the journalists are of concern that, VAW/G is a threat towards peace of the society and more emphasis is still required on highlighting news on VAW/G issues in journals/daily newspapers. During interview with UNDP-BRAC trained male UP Members, around one-third still reported that men should have more rights. As to them, about half of the people in society treat VAW victims negatively. Almost all of them take part in *Shalish and ‘Village Court’* to deal with a VAW/G cases. However, one in six of them give *Fatwa* following *Shariah* law to handle such cases. Focus Group Discussion was conducted with WDF members (Female UP Members) trained through UNDP-BRAC collaboration. Every WDF member has stated that, situation of VAW is better than before. The reasons behind this are mainly the various training programmes by renowned NGOs and the increasing rate of female education. They are called in the *Shalish and ‘Village Court’*. Regarding the Government agencies helping them, they mostly opined that, the MoWCA officials, MoSW office and TNO also help them. On the contrary, they opined that, the Police stations are less likely to help them.

Most of the members of men and boys club and teachers, students, have defined VAW only as whenever any woman become victim of rape or tortured for demanding dowry. Sexual harassment or physical or psychological tortures by male partner/husbands are not so much emphasized as VAW/G by them. It has been reported that there is ‘code of conduct’ on VAW/G in men and boys club. However, more than one-fourth of sampled men and boys have reported that, they do not feel themselves interested in such steps for awareness-raising on VAW/G from their clubs. Most of the teachers and students have pointed out specific ways of mitigating VAW/G. Nearly half of the respondents reported that, their education institute does not have any successful initiative on VAW/G. Most of the judiciary personnel opined that, they know legal instruments/policy those can support the VAW/G victims. More than half of the respondents have stressed on the requirement of awareness-raising among the judiciary about the legal system. Some of them have emphasized on eliminating loopholes regarding legal procedure as the key step to stop VAW/G. Among the trainers of migrant workers interviewed few of them reported that, making the women migrant workers aware of being able to resist the violent activities and increasing awareness of legal punishment among the workers will successfully stop violence against the women migrant workers. Some of the Shelter homes staff thinks that the VAW/G victims are not getting adequate support. Women Development Forum (WDF), a forum of trained female UP members a bit ahead in terms of motivation and practice to stop VAW/G. However, they are also dependent on support of respective UP Chairman, who in most of the cases are male and less supportive. Female UP members are generally called during *Shalish* for VAW and in village court in the VAW project areas of BRAC.

Capacity of the service/support providers: From the sample areas, it has been reported by service providers and managers that, most of the *district hospitals* are open round the clock for emergency services, services for including VAW/G victim. They have referral arrangement with other hospitals and legal service providers. However, psychological counseling, and referral for police services during their official time is mostly absent. All the *legal service providers* reported that they have specially trained service providers to support VAW/G victims. They have referral arrangement with hospitals and shelter homes. Providers of most of the *shelter homes* claimed that, they provide basic services to support VAW/G victims. *Referral service* providers claimed that, they are referring VAW/G cases to health and legal service providers. On *observation of sample shelter homes* it was found that attitude and behavior of support service providers for VAW/G victims is at satisfactory level. However, they are lagging behind in terms of maintaining a homely environment. The service providers reported of some social problems and weakness of VAW/G victims as obstacle towards delivering proper services to them.

Institutional capacity of hospital, legal, shelter homes and referral service providing organization: Most of the sample *hospitals* claimed that, they are active at indoor and outdoor services, and fulfilling other basic requirements of VAW victims. However, all hospitals are not maintaining MIS sheets for VAW victims. According to clients, although all hospitals are fulfilling emergency health and referral service demands of VAW/G victims, but most of the hospitals are lagging behind in terms of physical facilities, quality of services, psychological consulting, security, etc. *Legal services* providing organizations have insufficient numbers of trained legal service providers, lack of physical facilities and facilities for privacy maintenance for VAW/G services. Institutional heads/officials of most of the *shelter homes* claimed that they have basic service provisions to support VAW/G victims. On observation, most of the shelter homes found at dissatisfactory level in terms of- training and

space, educational support, supply of clothes, maintenance of cleanliness of clothes, and arrangement of skill based employment to VAW/G victims. Although, all the *referral service providers* claimed that, they have referral linkage with legal service providers, and shelter homes but their referral linkage are not at satisfactory level except in Dhaka.

Recommendations

The study team has made the following recommendations as to improve the overall VAW/G situation of the country.

1. General mass, especially rural women should be made aware of gender issues and VAW laws through courtyard meeting, *jatra*, movie, drama, documentary show, etc.
2. Government, civil society, UP Chairmen and Members, and NGOs should take more intensive steps for stopping religious misinterpretation and changing social mind-set
3. More powerful bondages between the partner ministries, judiciary and police is needed to address VAW/G and to take initiatives against the perpetrators
4. There is need of proper implementation of laws and policies on VAW/G in addition to modification of some of them.
5. 'Gender based violence' should be included in the educational curriculum to increase awareness among students and teachers
6. Gender and VAW committees from national to union level should be made functional. Feedback of those committees should also be counted important
7. There are Women in Development (WID) committees under MoWCA. Effectiveness of whole mechanism of WID should be assessed
8. Women Development Forum (WDF), a forum of trained female UP members created by UNDP-BRAC under VAW programme of MOLGRD should be strengthened
9. There should be a comparative study between the trained service providers and untrained ones to assess real achievement and gap
10. Government should take leadership role for training and awareness raising initiatives on VAW/G with all seriousness
11. Private sector trade bodies, e.g., Federation of Bangladesh Chamber of Commerce and Industries (FBCCI), Bangladesh Association of International Recruiting Agencies (BAIRA), Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers & Exporters' Association (BGMEA), Bangladesh Jute Mills Association (BJMA), Bangladesh Knitwear Manufacturers & Exporters Association (BKMEA), Bangladesh Leather Goods Manufacturing Association (BLGMA), Bangladesh Tanners Association (BTA), Bangladesh Textile Mill Owners' Association (BTMOA), Leather Goods and Footwear Manufacturers and Exporters Association of Bangladesh (LGFMEAB), and Women Entrepreneur Association of Bangladesh (WEAB); Professional bodies (Bangladesh Medical Association, and Supreme Court Lawyer's Association); Renowned retired justice; and Banks for funding from Corporate Social Responsibility should be connected to take part in different activities of JP.
12. VAW database should be updated on regular basis through a coordinated effort of all the ministries.
13. Some of the best practices from international level in terms of laws, service provision and prevention should be replicated in Bangladesh.