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Activating Village Courts in Bangladesh Phase II Project

Annual Report 2017

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বাংলাদেশে গ্রাম আদালত সক্রিয়করণ (২য় পর্যায়)
স্থানীয় সরকার বিভাগ, সিলেট।

Activating Village Courts in Bangladesh Phase II Project

Annual Report 2017

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Message

EU Delegation

The project “Activating Village Courts in Bangladesh” is part of EU’s endeavor to help the poorest people of Bangladesh and to provide support to the Government in the area of good governance. Funded by the EU and implemented by UNDP since 2011, it empowers and enables the poor, women and vulnerable groups to access an effective, transparent and affordable dispute resolution system at the local government level.

I am very glad we could hereby expand this project in its second phase to more than 1000 Union Parishad in all districts of Bangladesh and secure its funding of more than 30 million Euro. The fundamental importance of access to justice as well as the successful Phase I was at the core of EU’s readiness to continue these efforts. Access to justice and other dispute resolution mechanism is one of the main links which hold societies together. It is one of the most basic human rights contributing to democratic governance and to the realization of a range of other fundamental rights.

In Bangladesh, Village Courts provide a simple institutional and legal framework people can understand as the first tier of quasi-formal dispute resolution. They are specifically intended to provide access to justice for the rural poor and other disadvantaged and marginalized groups, they are less intimidating, far more affordable, and geographically accessible than formal courts. The resolution of petty cases solved before Village Courts is comparatively fast and alleviates the burdensome backlog of cases in formal courts. Furthermore, Village Courts strengthen local authorities involved in Village Courts by making them more responsive

to local needs. Thus far, Village Courts are operating in 1078 Union Parishads covering almost one-fourth of the Bangladeshi population. Only in 2017, this project has reached 3.7 million additional people of which about 50% are women. Village Courts all over the country resolved 14,000 cases in 2017, thereby recovering 1.17 million EUR as compensation.

I wish the Village Court Project Phase II all the best to continue such great accomplishments to the benefit of the people and the Government of Bangladesh.



Rensje Teerink

Ambassador of the European Union to Bangladesh



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Message

UNDP

UNDP, in partnership with the Government of Bangladesh, development partners, and the people of Bangladesh, is helping the country to deliver on its seventh five-year plan (2016 - 2020) and to realize the Sustainable Development Goals by 2030. UNDP's work aims to improve the quality of governance and reduce poverty and inequality across the country through a number of carefully crafted projects. One such flagship initiative is the Activating Village Courts in Bangladesh Phase II (AVCB II) Project which has been improving access to justice for women, poor and the marginalized communities living in villages across Bangladesh.

It is widely acknowledged that accessing justice through the formal justice system in Bangladesh is cumbersome, fraught with inordinate delays and resultant hardships. The ACVB II Project has been developed based on the Village Courts Act, 2006 (Amended in 2013) and aims to provide quick and efficient justice services at the doorstep of the people. The Act empowers the Union Parishad (UP) - the lowest tier of Local Government to resolve disputes of petty nature quickly through community participation within a legal framework. This project has been providing support to the Local Government Division for building capacity of UPs to provide legal services and empowering local people to seek remedies for injustices. The people-friendly approach is helping to resolve disputes at the local level in an expeditious, transparent and affordable manner.

As you read the report, I hope you will gain insight into the breadth and depth of activities of the project. In 2017, a total of 21,000 cases were reported out of which 14,400 were

resolved. Of the resolved cases, 11,900 (83%) decisions have also been implemented. Through the process Village Courts (VCs) recovered BDT 113 million (USD 1.37 million) as compensation from respondents and provided to the applicants. Over 1,500 cases were also transferred from district courts to village courts, a strong signal of confidence and trust.

On behalf of UNDP, I gratefully acknowledge the on-going strong commitment and generous support of the European Union (EU) and Government of Bangladesh, without which the results presented in this report would not have been possible. I congratulate the ACVB II project team for their dedication and the progress made so far and look forward to another successful year.



A stylized, handwritten signature in black ink, which appears to read 'Sudipto Mukerjee'.

Sudipto Mukerjee

Country Director

United Nations Development Programme, Bangladesh



Acknowledgement

I am delighted to place the Annual Report 2017 of the Activating Village Courts in Bangladesh Phase II Project. This is the follow up phase of the pilot project implemented in 351 unions during 2009-2015. The success of the pilot project has led the Government of Bangladesh, EU and UNDP to scale up its activities to 1,080 unions of the country. and hence the four-year project 'Activating Village Courts in Bangladesh Phase II' started its journey from 2016 targeting to benefit 21 million rural peoples of the country. Although the project began in 2016 by documents, in fact, it started from January 2017 as Technical Project Proposal (TPP) was approved in December 2016. This report reflects the results and major tasks undertaken in the year of 2017.

Commitment of the government of Bangladesh towards this project is high as this project is fully aligned with the 7th five-year plan and highly relevant to the needs of marginalized and poor sectors of society to have access to affordable and quick justice on the local level. This project has been assisting the Local Government Division (LGD) in implementing Village Courts Act 2006, that is amended in 2013, through building capacity of union parishads and creating demand of village courts among community people. It is also providing supports to the LGD in reviewing legal and policy framework to enhance efficiency and effectiveness of village courts (VC).

Union Parishads in the project areas are now fully equipped with trained Village Courts Assistants (VCA), trained VC service providers (UP representatives and Secretaries), *ejlas* (court bench), furniture, VC forms and registers. Community peoples are also becoming aware about the VC's services through project community mobilization initiatives. As a result, in a total of 21,000 people sought justice services in 2017 in the project areas and 14,400 got remedies. Of the resolved cases, 11,900 (83%) decisions have been implemented. Through the process of Village Courts, it has recovered BDT 11.30 crore (1.37 million USD) as

compensation from respondents and provided to the petitioners.

I would like to express my appreciation to our valued partners both European Union and United Nations Development Programme for their continued support in aiding LGD in activating village courts. I would also like to express my gratitude and congratulation to the project staffs, UP representatives, PNGO staffs and ministry colleagues for successful performance of the project and their efforts in producing the results.



Iqramul Haque

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



Introduction

Extensive case backlogs in the lower (formal) courts and complex, long and cumbersome procedural requirements is excluding large proportions of the population of Bangladesh, particularly the citizens living in poverty and makes them vulnerable to access to justice. To address these issues the Government of Bangladesh passed Village Courts Act 2006 which amended in 2013. For some limitations, the Act was not functional and the local citizenry had limited enticements and/or confidence in taking disputes to the village courts.

To come over these, the Local Government Division (LGD) under the Ministry of Local Government, Rural Development and Cooperatives (MoLGRD&C) implemented a pilot project Activating Village Courts in Bangladesh (AVCB) Project (2009-2015) in 351 unions of Bangladesh with financial and technical supports of EU and UNDP. The aim of the pilot project was to improve access to justice by establishing village courts in 351 unions of Bangladesh. The piloted project provided supports for building the capacity of service providers, creating demand of village courts through its awareness raising initiatives, policy reform actions and strengthening institutional monitoring system.

The success of the piloted AVCB project has motivated the UNDP, EU and GOB to upscale the project in Bangladesh and launched the 2nd phase of AVCB project (2016 - 2019) in January 2016 targeting 21 million people of 1,080 unions of Bangladesh.

The overall objective of the project is to contribute to improving access to justice for disadvantaged and marginalized groups in Bangladesh through activating village courts in 1,080 unions of Bangladesh.

The specific objectives of the new phase are to make local authorities more responsive to local justice needs and offer appropriate legal services in the form of well-functioning village courts and to empower local people, especially



women, the poor and vulnerable groups to seek remedies for injustices and to resolve their disputes at the local level in an expeditious, transparent and affordable manner.

In 2017, Village courts have been scaled up to 24% of the total Union Parishads of Bangladesh, offering local level dispute resolution services to 21 million rural people. At the moment, 1,078 Union Parishads are equipped with forms and registers, trained village courts service providers and *ejlas* (court bench) to provide dispute resolution services. As a result, 21,000 rural people accessed the village courts in 2017, of which 28% were women.

Capacity development strategy developed by the project involved the local administration and judicial officers in capacity building of village courts service



গ্রাম আদালত
৭নং শাকুয়াই ইউনিয়ন পরিষদ
হালুয়াঘাট।

providers. They have provided capacity building training to the service providers of 1,078 Union Parishads to run village courts efficiently and effectively.

Government's role for activation of VCs outside the project areas and monitoring VCs are increasing. They disbursed BDT 72 million (USD 0.88 million) to activate VCs in 601 unions (beyond 1,080 unions) and issued Government Order (GO) to the local administration to activate, monitor and strengthen village courts in their respective areas.

Section 1

Key Results and Achievements



Access to justice

Village courts in 1,078 Union Parishads are now operating and reaching approximately 24% of the population that live in rural areas.

A cumulative total of 21,000 cases have been reported between July-December 2017 and 14,400 have been resolved. Of the resolved cases, 11,900 (83%) decisions have been implemented.

Number of reported case per month per UP has been increased from 1.37 (Baseline) to 3.00 (December 2017).

Number of reported case (per month per UP)



Increased recognition by district courts

A total of 1,600 cases are transferred from district courts to village courts in project areas between July to December 2017 and this number rose significantly on the baseline with 0.12 cases (per year per UP) referred from district courts.

Increased awareness of judges and the district court officials are gradually reflecting that village courts are closely embedded in the justice seeking behavior of Bangladeshi citizens. This is saving time and money for the parties (complainants and defendants) and referring cases to village courts indicates more cases are resolved efficiently at the local level.

Average number of casses reffered from District court (DC) to Village court (per year per UP)







Impact on Communities

Overall, BDT 113 million (USD 1.37 million) recovered as compensation from respondents between July – December 2017 and provided to the applicants.



Women's access to justice improved

Project activities have targeted women to encourage in seeking remedy through village courts. In total, 6,000 women sought remedies between July - December 2017 through village courts which is 28% of total justice seekers. Women justice seekers increased 40% from the baseline (Baseline=20%; 2017=28%).

The involvement of women in the village court's decision making process has also increased from 2% (Baseline) to 10% (2017).



Women's access to justice

Women Justice seeker



Women VC's panel member





Sustainability

The government has demonstrated its ownership towards village courts by disbursing BDT 72 million (USD 0.88 million) from their own resources for establishing *ejlas* (court bench) in 601 unions (beyond 1,080 project unions) in 2017 aiming to activate village courts.

Recently District Magistracy Monitoring Section of the Cabinet Division issued a Government Order (GO) instructing local administration (District Magistrates and Upazila Nirbahi Officers) to activate, strengthen and monitor village courts in their respective areas. According to the GO, village courts performance will be discussed in District and Upazila Law and Order Committee meetings and each district will send monthly village courts performance report to District Magistracy Monitoring Section of the Cabinet Division which will contribute increasing efficiency and effectiveness of village courts.



Established linkage with Judiciary

A total of 25 Judiciary Officers (District Legal Aid Officers) from 25 districts of project areas received ToT as DTP (District Training Pool) members and provided capacity building training to service providers on VCs and its function.

Success Story



Smile restoration through Village Court

Md Zahangir Alam, living at ward no. 2 of Norottompur union, Begumganj in Noakhali district. His father Delwar Hossain is owner of a small tea stall. He has been living from hand to mouth since young. Md Shajahan and other defendants living in same union and relatives of applicant Zahangir. They had been a conflict regarding a land for last couple of years.

Defendant Sahjahan and others attacked Delwar, father of applicant Zahangir on 23 June 2016. They beaten up Delwar by stick and iron rod, torn out his cloths and swelled his head when he was going to his shop and they took his 18000 BDT. Applicant's mother and sister heard his screaming and tried to save him from those peo applicant sister and

Smile restoration through Village Court

clutched the gold chain of his mother. Meanwhile, people came from adjacent houses, saved Delwar and brought him Upazila Health Complex for treatment. Due to this incident, Zahangir, son of Delwar discussed the issue with local elite and decided to file a case in nearest police station.

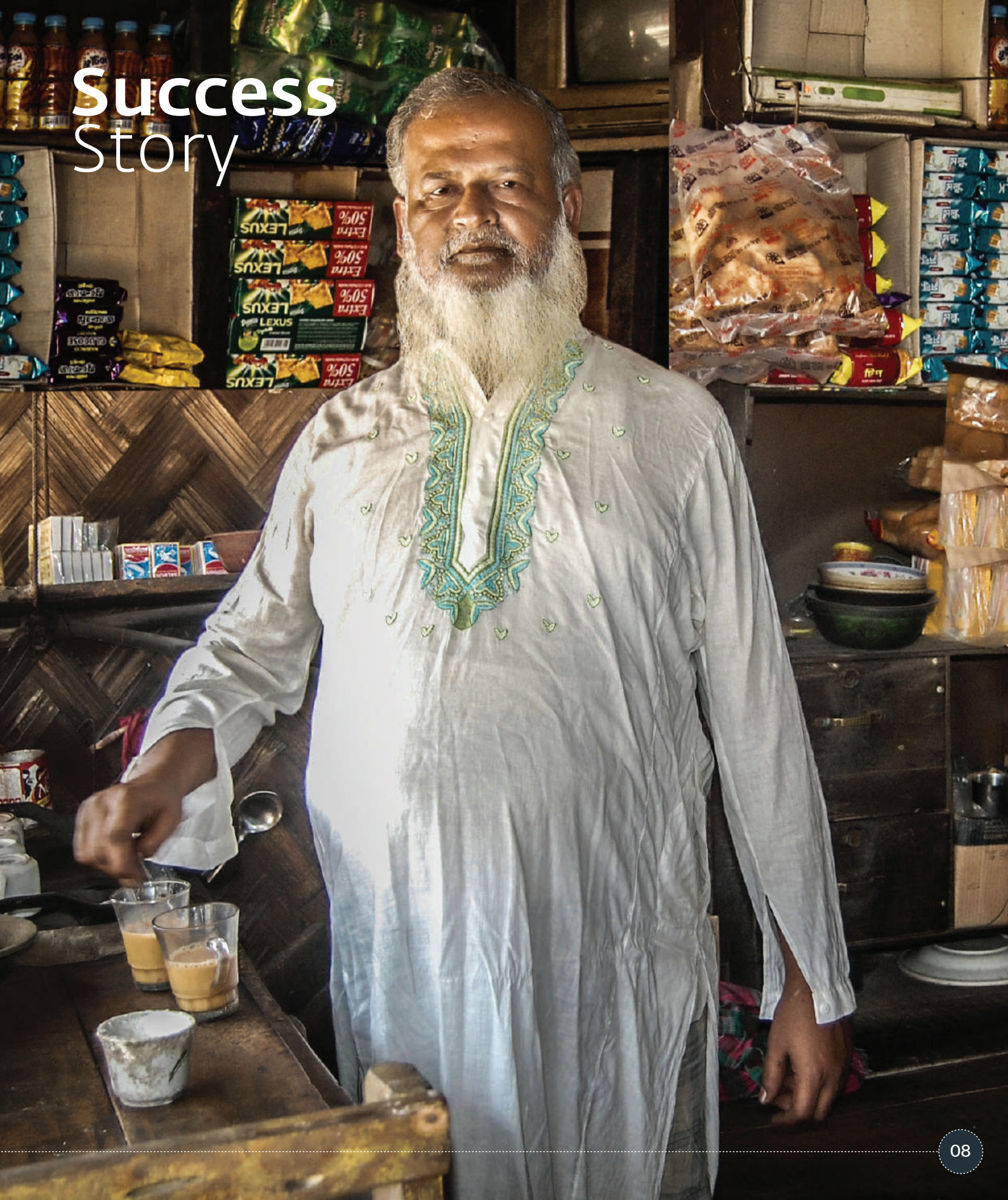
Applicant Zahangir filed the case against 4 persons including Shajahan on 25 June 2016. Police considered the matter and sent it to court of Chief Judicial Magistrate (CJM) with prescription of the doctor and witness list. Defendants got the bail and applicant spent more than 15,000 BDT in different stages for 1 year back and forth.

The case received by Norottompur union parishad on 9 August 2017 and UP informed the applicant. The UP chairman gave order to register the case and summoned defendants. Both parties came to UP and selected their panel members. The UP chairman formed the Village Court with 4 panel members from both side. The court made its decision on 6 September 2017 after hearing and reviewing of all documents. All jury (5:0) made consent to pay 8,000 BDT by defendant to applicant and both parties will establish a good relationship in next.

After decision both parties got emotional, embraced each other and defendants paid decided amount before court. Now-a-days they are living with a good relationship.

The applicant was happy after getting fair decision from VC though he had applied in district court. He expressed his gratitude to VC. He told ***"I was not informed VC system which provoked me to file a case in Police station. It's a great opportunity indeed to solve local dispute such a short period with less expenses. I will ask everyone in future to go to union parishad for justice."***

Success Story



Section 2

Progress Towards Outputs



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 to function effectively by the end of project implementation



Equip 1,078 UPs with all necessary forms, furniture, *ejlas* (court bench), and VCA:

Prescribed forms (22 types forms and registers) are required to document the village courts proceedings. Based on the case flows, working areas of AVCB II project, and lessons learnt of the pilot phase, the demand of each form at union level has been determined and distributed in 1,078 unions.

Ejlas (court bench) and furniture are needed to run village courts sessions. Out of 1078 UPs, the project has installed new *ejlas* in 760 UPs, and provided supports for repairing 268 *ejlas* in 268 UPs. Remaining UPs consisted of *ejlas* (court bench).

Village Courts Assistant (VCAs) are required to provide administrative support to running of the village courts and to create demand of the VCs through awareness raising initiatives. During reporting period, the project appointed 1,078 (Man: 539 and Woman: 539) VCA's in 1,078 unions to assist union Parishads to run VCs with proper documentation.





Formed and functional District Training Pool

27 District Training Pools (DTPs) were formed in 27 project working districts where each DTP is comprised of 12 members from the officials of National Legal Aid Services Organization (District Legal Aid Officer), Bangladesh Police (Additional/Assistant Superintendent of Police), Department of Social Services (Deputy Director), Department of Youth Development (Deputy Director), Department of Women Affairs (District Women Affairs Officer), Partner NGOs and AVCB II Project. Knowledge and skills of members of each DTP have been developed through eight days ToT (Training of Trainer) in partnership with National Institute of Local Government (NILG) so that they can provide training to the VCs service providers. In a total 315 DTP members received ToT through 15 batches of training. The Deputy Director, Local Government (DDLG) in coordination with respective Upazila Nirbahi Officers (UNO) is responsible for managing DTP with the assistance from the project staffs.



Build capacity of village courts service providers

The members of DTP who received ToT provided capacity building training to 12,491 VC's service providers. Among the service providers 1,028 (Women: 12) were UP Chair, 1,119 (Women: 93) Panel Chair, 1,035 (Women:37) UP Secretaries and 1088 (Women:544) Village Courts Assistants (VCAs) and 8,221 (Women: 2187) UP members.

The DDLG of the respective district was responsible for organizing the training as Course Coordinator, with the assistance of the District Facilitators (DFs), NGO's District Coordinators and Upazila Coordinators.

Training Provided in 2017



UP Chair
1,028



Panel Chair
1,119



UP Secretary
1,035



UP members
8,221



VCA
1,088



Establish clear and systematic coordination mechanisms

Provided orientation to Project Area's Upazila Nirbahi Officer (UNO) on AVCB Phase II.

Half Yearly Coordination meeting with Deputy Directors Local Government and District Facilitators (DFs) held in 2017.

27 day-long Half Yearly Coordination meeting with Union Parishad Chairmen held at the DC's conference room of respective district where near about 2,000 participants including all project area's DDLGs, DTP members, Superintendent of police (SP), District Legal Aid officers, District Facilitators (DFs), UP Chairmen & Panel Chairmen, Government officials, NGOs staff, representative from media and project team from AVCB Project II attended.







Output 1.2

Legal and policy framework revised to enhance efficiency and effectiveness of VCs

Engagement with the judiciary is critical to make VCs effective and functional. In 2017, the project involved judiciaries in following ways



Engagement of Judiciaries in capacity building of VC's service provider

Judicial officers got authorized to participate in village courts training and became part of DTP based on the GO (Government Order) issued by National Legal Aid Services Organization (NLASO) and Ministry of Law Justice & Parliamentary Affairs (MoLJ&PA) following the necessary guidance of the Honorable Supreme Court. A total of 25 Judiciary Officers (District Legal Aid Officers) from 25 project-district received ToT as DTP members and provided capacity building training to service providers on VCs and its function.



Consultation with Judiciary and Police at District Level

Six consultations held in six districts under the leadership of the district judges where around 180 number of Judges and police officers participated. To ensure participation of Judges in the consultation session, the project got approval from the Supreme Court in 2017 through the Ministry of Law, Justice and





Parliamentary Affairs (MoJ&PA). The Consultations were hosted at District Judge's Conference Room in project-districts.

Series of recommendations were generated through these consultations with judiciary and police which will assist to increase collaboration and cooperation with Judiciary and Police in making the VC better functional. In addition, it will also help to submit proposal for changing the relevant laws and policies to remove the practical barriers.



Output- 1.3

GoB monitoring capacity for evaluating Village Courts performance is strengthened and systematized

Local administration (most notably district and upazila administration) has become involved in monitoring the performance of village courts through the Village Courts Management Committee (VCMC). In total twenty-seven (27) District level VCMCs and one hundred twenty-eight (128) Upazila level VCMCs have been formed in 27 districts and 128 upazila respectively by the end of 2017. 50% District and 60% Upazila VCMCs in project areas which are meeting quarterly in accordance with the GO issued in 2012.



Output-2.1

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

According to the plan, awareness of community members, service providers and other relevant stakeholders about village courts and its function will be increased through community mobilization initiatives to be conducted both at national and local level and disseminating IEC/BCC materials.



A. Community mobilization initiatives

The project has drafted outreach strategy in such a way that community mobilization initiatives can continue in absence of the project. In this regard, linkage/network with the NGOs already active at the local level will be established which can maximize the available resources to the project. According to strategy, the UNO shall issue an Order asking social development/legal aid NGOs working under his/her jurisdiction to incorporate village courts agenda in their community mobilization interventions. Periodic follow up would be ensured in upazila and district level NGO's coordination meeting. The project will work with LGD to ensure all project area's UNOs issue an Order requiring social development NGOs working under his/her jurisdiction to incorporate village courts in their community mobilization interventions.



Organize outreach workshop with local GOB institutions and NGOs

The project has organized 128 workshops in 128 upazilas with local GOB institutions and NGOs for promoting village courts messages through their own outreach activities. The major objectives of the workshops were to identify relevant GoB institutions and NGOs having outreach activities at community level that would be able to encourage community people for receiving services from village courts. Approximately 6,500 participants from GoB-NGOs explored their own outreach activities and processes to promote VC messages.

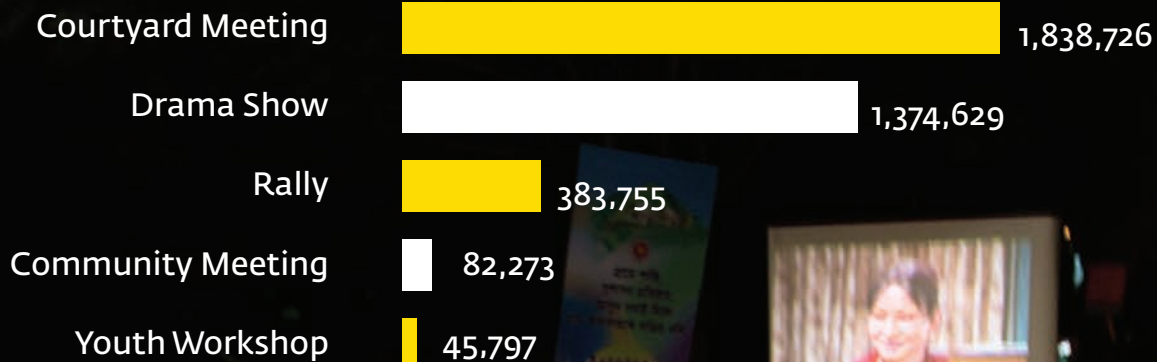


Community mobilisation initiatives for local citizens about VCs

In 2017, the project has delivered VC related message to approximately 3,700,000 community people (50% women) through Courtyard Meetings (CYMs), Community Meetings (CMs), video shows, youth workshops and rallies through its four partner NGOs.



People reached through awareness raising events



B. Develop and print IEC/BCC/ outreach materials:

- Placed VC signboard for 1,078 unions;
- TVC (57 seconds long) aired in 4 electronic media (Channel I, NTV, Somoy TV and RTV) in December 2017;
- The project has printed a total of 1,130 copies Court Yard Meeting (CYM) Flipcharts, an education and awareness raising material to be used by Village Court Assistants (VCA) during conducting CYM at village level and building awareness of community (women and men) about the village court services and its functions;
- Printed 109,000 copies poster, 30,000 copies of English and Bangla version of the brochure, 1,00,000 pocket cards, 3,00,000 leaflets, reprinted 20,000 note pads and 16,500 folders for using in different events, printed 5,000 polo shirts, 40,000 branded caps, and 30,000 pens with project's branding.



Gender Equality and Women's Participation

Project gender equality strategy that has been drafted in 2017 provides the framework for mainstreaming gender equality throughout the project interventions.

Accordingly, project interventions integrate gender aspects, such as targeting both women and men to reach through the planned activities, including specific content on gender equality and women's participation in training and awareness materials, using responsive language and images in awareness raising materials, maintaining gender disaggregated data and using gender disaggregated indicators to measure the progress.

Besides, project has developed/drafted a gender awareness strategy outlining targeted awareness interventions to increase women's access to village courts as justice seekers and to increase their representation as panel members.

To encourage women's participation in VC decision making process, in 2017, project has organized 128 workshops in project working areas with women UP members where 4,516 (Men: 727) peoples participated.

In 2017, the project reached to approximately 3,700,000 community people through community awareness activities where 50% participants were women. Meanwhile, as a practical guide to run the village courts in a gender responsive environment by addressing different practical needs of both women and men, project has drafted a gender guideline for village courts that comprise basic aspects of gender responsiveness of the village courts and specific roles and responsibilities of different actors involved in running village courts.





Output 2.2

Evidence-base and knowledge-management on Village Courts increased

Capacity building on M&E and capturing qualitative results

- The project has organized six batches two-day long residential trainings on M&E System for field level staffs including District Facilitators (DFs) aiming to make field staff familiar on M&E system and reporting mechanism so that they can monitor the village courts performance at field level perfectly and provide VC performance report as per project requirement.
- The project has organized three batches three-day long residential trainings on Capturing Qualitative Results & Monitoring Documentation of VC's for field level staff and relevant staff of PMU.



Field monitoring by EU

Mr. Eduard Pesendorfer, Attache and Programme Manager, Governance, Economic Cooperation Section, Delegation of the European Union to Bangladesh and Mr. Jose Rodrigo, Attache Finance Manager, Finance, Contact and Audit Section, Delegation of the European Union to Bangladesh have visited Sylhet from 17-19 November 2017 to monitor the activities of AVCB II project. During the visit, they attended a consultation session held in Sylhet with district judiciary. In addition, they observed a VC hearing

session held at Boaljur UP of Balagonj upazila, courtyard meeting held at Chanpur village of Balagonj Upazila and finally had a meeting with UP bodies, UNO, Balagonj upazila and DDLG, Sylhet district.



Impact Study of AVCB phase II project

UNDP Bangladesh has commissioned a high-quality impact evaluation of AVCB Phase II project in Dhaka and Chittagong divisions through Randomized Controlled Trial (RCT) method in coordination with Innovation for Poverty Action (IPA), Yale University, USA, and 3ie (International Initiative for Impact Evaluation). Baseline report of impact study is available now.



Baseline Study of AVCB II Project

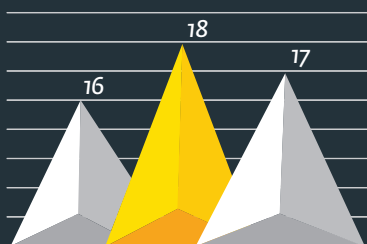
Baseline study of AVCB II project has been completed by Innovation for Poverty Action (IPA). According to the study, the VCs are not well functioning and rarely used at present as a Dispute Resolution Mechanism (DRM) mostly due to lack of awareness of the people, UP officials and representatives and lack of material support to manage VC activities. Wherever used, the VCs do not follow the law and administrative procedure. Increasing awareness of the people, improving expertise of UP officials and representatives to conduct VC and providing some critical material services are key to making VCs functional.



Baseline Status



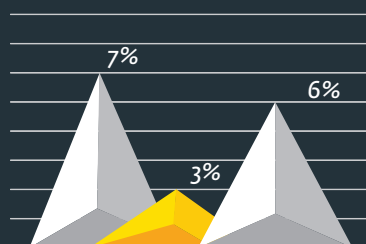
Average number of VC cases registered per year per UP
(Source: Administrative data)



Project areas Non-project areas Overall



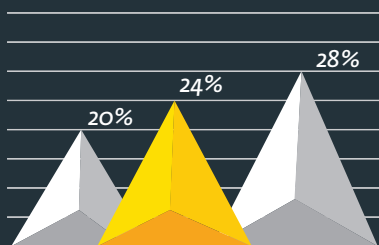
% of recorded resolved cases among the cases those fall under VC jurisdiction:



Project areas Non-project areas Overall



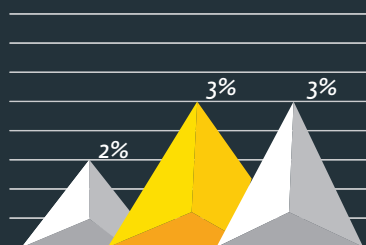
% of female complainants registered at VC



Project areas Non-project areas Overall



% of women involved as panelists in village courts' decision-making process.

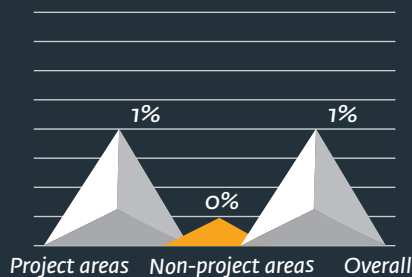


Project areas Non-project areas Overall

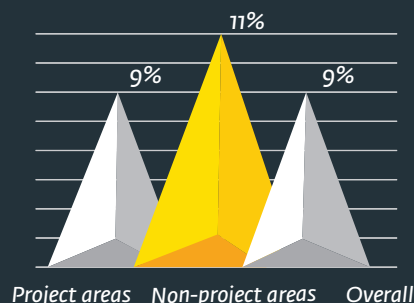




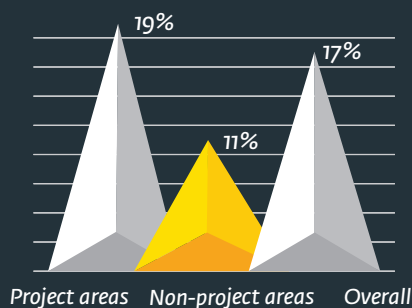
% of UPs which correctly maintain all VC forms and registers



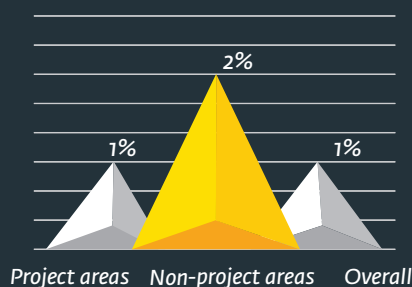
% of people in project UPs who say they are aware of VCs and its functions



% of people who say they would first approach the VC to resolve petty disputes



% of people in the project areas able to correctly answer that VC deals with minor conflicts and disputes



Recommendation:



Enhance awareness to increase demand for VC



Increase awareness about involving women panel members regardless a dispute involves a woman or a child



Incorporate family disputes within the VC jurisdiction (merging of VC and Shalishi Parishad's responsibilities)



Long-term funding for administrative support to VCs



Better linkage with the District Court



Optimize documentation (reduction in the number of forms UP officials have to fill out)

Success Story



Jharna Begum got justice through Village Courts

Jharna Begum (40), W/O Idris Mollah, a separated woman lives in Jugnipasha village at Fultala in Khulna district. She leads her life enduring hardship with a son as her husband has not been taking care for a long. She works in a jute mill as temporary worker based on daily wage. Her monthly income is BDT 4,000 in average.

Jharna rears 5 goats besides her job to fight with hardship. Usually, the goats move around the homestead. On 10th September 2017, one goat of Jharna Begaum entered the area of Alom Mollah's sawmill situated near Jharna's house and ate grass and leaves from

Jharna Begaum got justice through Village Courts

the trees of the mill. Enam Molla, son of Alom Mollah beaten up the goat. The legs of the goat were broken. Jharna went to the Enam's home and asked about the incident and why he did this. An altercation was happened there between Jharna and Enam Mollah. At one stage of the altercation, Enam slapped her. She felt humiliated and went to local elites as well as Alom Molla, father of Enam for justice of the incident. Alom Mollah didn't care her. As a rich and influential person of the society, he didn't care the local elite persons too regarding the dispute with Jharna. Consequently, Jharna became frustrated for getting justice against causing injured her goat as well as insulting her.

By this time, Jharna Begaum came to know about village courts and its services through attending a courtyard meeting held in the village. As per suggestion of Village Court Assistant, Jharna registered a case at Rajghat union on 13th September 2017 against Enam Mollah complaining Tk. 1,000 as compensation. Receiving summon from union parishad, Enam Mollah became anxious for his misdeed with Jharna. Lastly, he went to the union parishad on 19th September 2017 and confessed the claim of Jharna Begaum and paid Tk. 1,000 to Jharna as compensation for causing injury to the goat before UP Chairman. Then the UP Chairman reconciled both parties and requested them to lead good relationship in future.

Jharna expressed her gratitude to village court as well as UP Chairman and said "I am highly satisfied with village court's service. Receiving the summon, Enam Mollah became afraid about judgement of village court for his misdeed and paid me Tk. 1,000 before the UP Chairman earlier to form the Village Court. I have received justice through village court within only 9 days at cost of Tk. 10 only which is beyond of my expectation. Now I am asking the community people to approach to the village court for getting justice". Jharna further said that in absence of village court, she would not be able to realize the compensation as well as justice against Enam Mollah about the dispute happened.

Success Story



Section 3

Lessons Learnt/challenges and the Way Forward

In 2017 almost, all UPs of AVCB II project's operation areas are equipped with *ejlas* (court bench), VC's forms and registers, trained Village Courts Assistance (VCAs) and trained service providers. District Training Pools (DTP) established and capacitated by the project supports have provided capacity building supports to the service providers of 1,078 UPs. Four partner NGOs (Madaripur Legal Aid Association, Wave Foundation, Bangladesh Legal Aid and Services Trust, Eco Social Development Organization) hired by the project were involved in creating demand of VCs services through outreach activities. As a result, 21,000 (an average 3.3 cases reported in a UP in a month) cases have been reported between July - December 2017 and 14,000 have been resolved. Of the resolved cases, 11,900 (83%) decisions have been implemented.





Lessons learnt/challenges

- Involvement of local administration is crucial to implement massive residential training programme for the key VC's actors;
- Closer liaison and coordination with LGD and Finance Division produced a good result for disbursing the GOB fund as early as possible;
- Absent UP Chairs refuse/fail to delegate VC functions to the Panel Chair;
- Hampered field implementation including running of VCs due to flood during July - September 2017;
- Quality participation of panel members, particularly women members has been observed as a persistent challenge;
- Engagement with judiciary and police needs to be increased to ensure accountability;
- Lack of coordination with VC and Government Legal Aid services. Strong collaboration and linkage are required.



The way forward

The project will provide supports to the service providers of village courts of 1,078 UPs for continuing offering localized justice to approximately 21 million rural people of Bangladesh. It will increase capacity of GOB's national institutes for monitoring of Village Courts performance and to carry out capacity building initiatives on VCs. The project will review legal and policy framework to enhance efficiency and effectiveness of VCs. Project will carry out targeted awareness interventions to contribute to create gender responsive environment so that both women and men can equally access village courts services. Rolling out of AVCB phase II project in CHT region will be the top priority areas of 2018.

Section 4

Statement of Expenditure and Delivery in 2017



Chart 1: Expenditure breakdown in US\$ for year 2017 by output

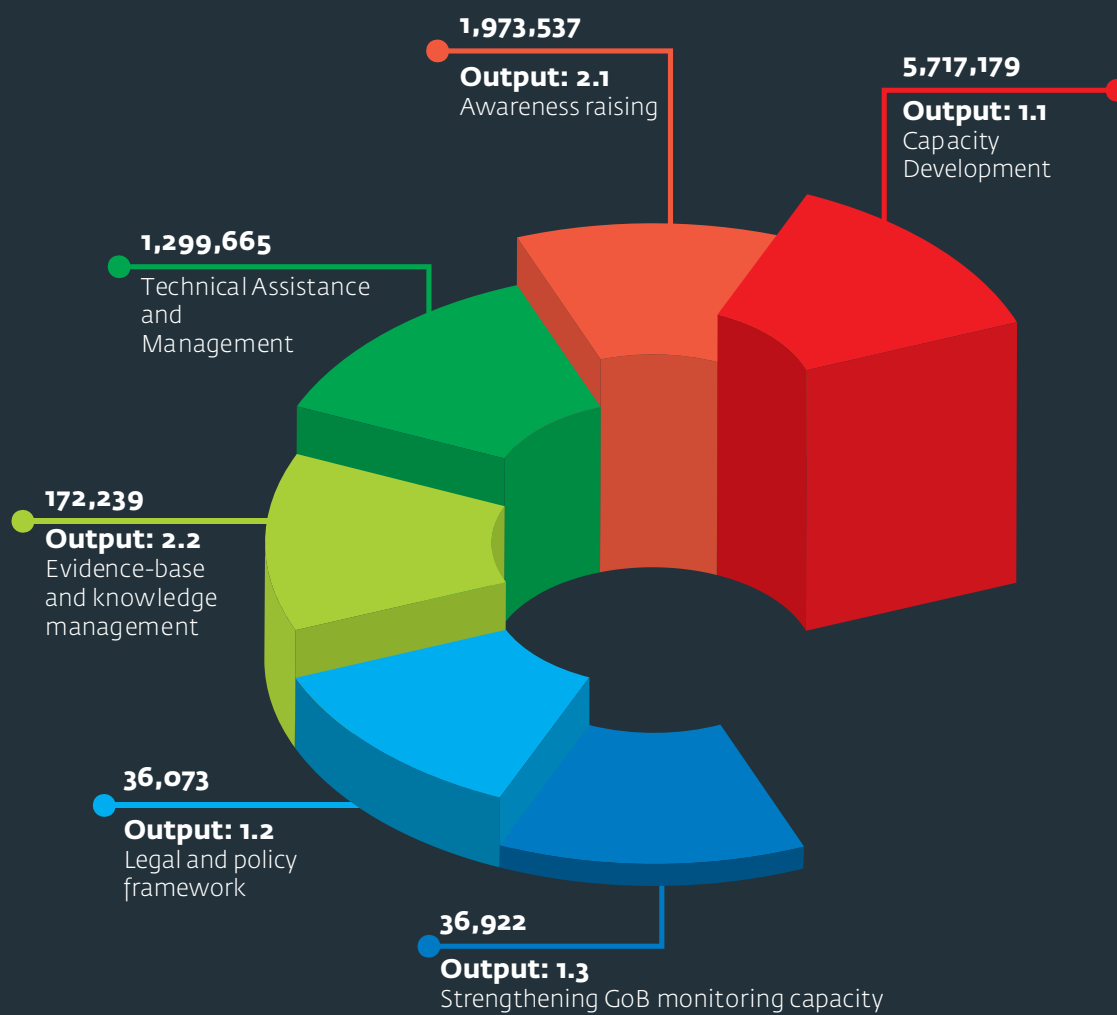


Chart 2: Capacity Development
output delivery US\$

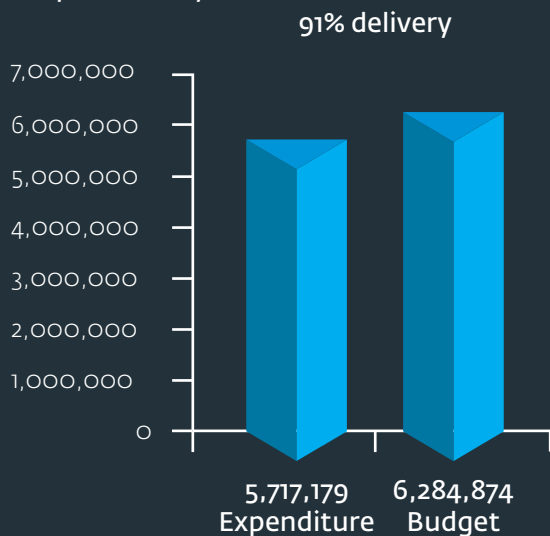


Chart-3 Legal and policy framework
output delivery US\$

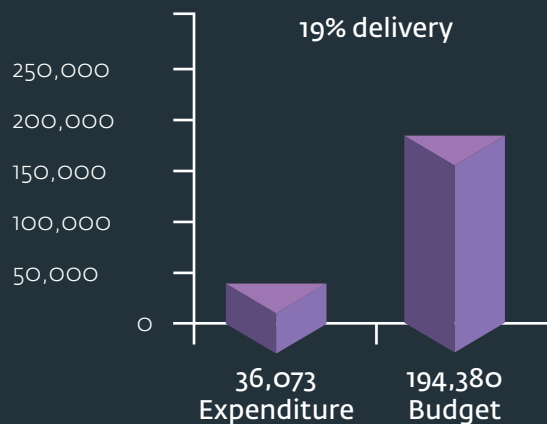


Chart 4: Strengthening GoB monitoring capacity
output delivery US\$

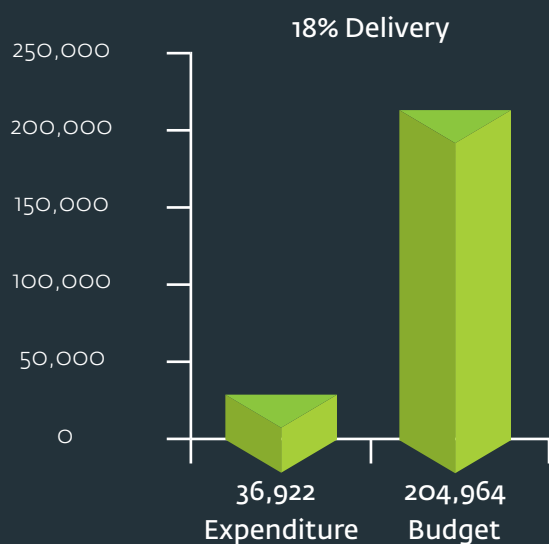


Chart 5: Awareness raising
output delivery US\$

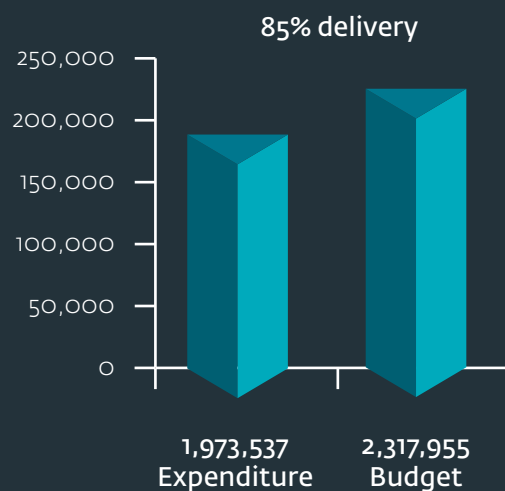


Chart-6: Evidence-base and knowledge-management output delivery US\$

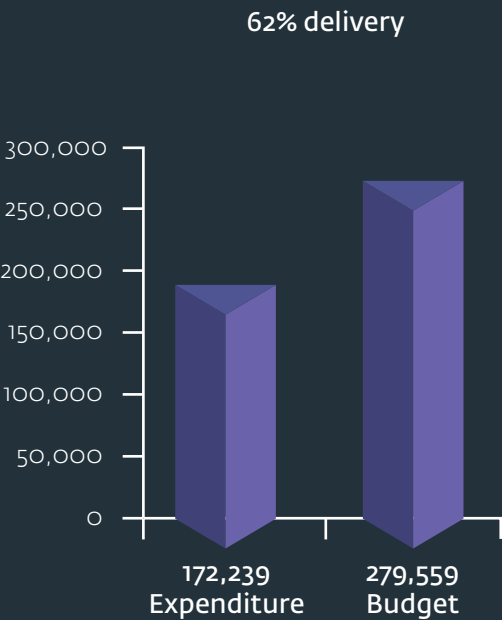


Chart 7: Technical Assistance and Management output delivery US\$

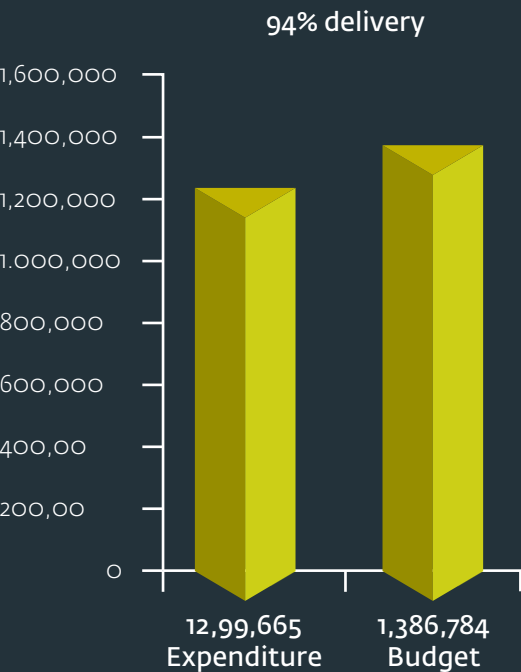


Chart 8: Combined output delivery US\$

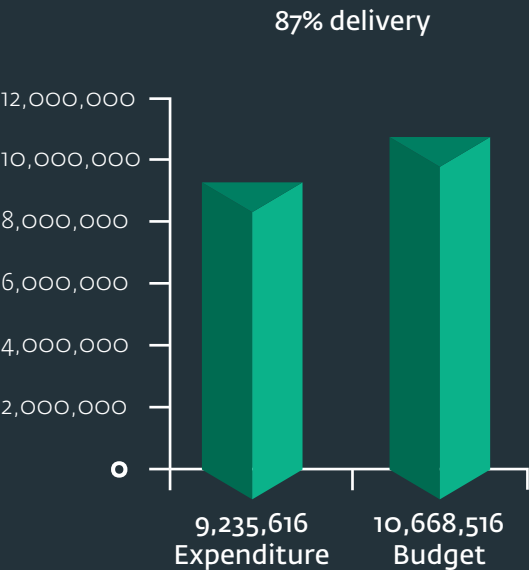
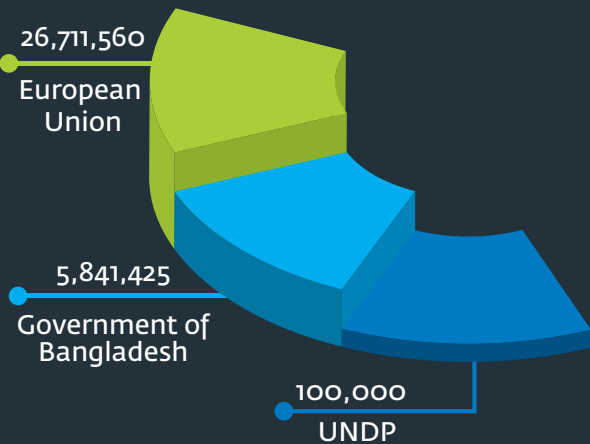


Chart 9: Sources of financial contribution of AVCBII Project (US\$)



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; Finance Division; Ministry of Planning; Ministry of Women and Children Affairs; Cabinet Division; Econoeconomic Relations Division: Various non-government organizations, community based organizations and organizations
Project duration	January 2016 – December 2019
Project budget	US \$32.65 million
Reporting period	January – December 2017
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	Iqramul Haque 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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