

## Promoting Peace & Justice (PPJ) Cumilla, Kurigram, Feni & Lakshmipur

Funded by : Democracy International –USA (USAID' PPJ Activity) ;

Project Period: May 2019 to April 2023

Reporting Period: End of Project (Eop) as of April 2023

Geographical Location : Cumilla District (5 Upazila, 42 UP), Kurigram District (5 Upazila, 41 UP), Feni District (5 Upazila , 43 UP)  
Lakshmipur District (5 Upazila, 55 UP)

**Background and Justification :** Legal aid—a means to promote access to justice—still remains a far cry for the citizens of Bangladesh, especially for women. Bangladesh's formal justice system remains relatively inaccessible for the vast majority of the public. Vulnerable groups, including women and children, ethnic minorities, the poor, and people with disabilities face particular difficulty in accessing timely and affordable justice. The lack of access to justice and basic justice for all is a defining characteristic of human poverty. In Bangladesh, despite impressive achievements towards a number of Millennium Development Goals, it is widely acknowledged that many continue to suffer from challenges against the rule of law, limited justice options, as well as the lack of knowledge and protection of justice for all. Legal aid is the assistance given to people otherwise unable to afford legal representation or access to the court. It is neither charity nor mercy, it is a right of the poor and underprivileged section of the society. Article 27 of the Constitution of the People's Republic of Bangladesh guarantees that "all citizens are equal before law and are entitled to equal protection of law." Despite such provisions, many people are deprived of their constitutional rights to access justice due to poverty. The state legal Aid Program is administered within the legal framework of the Legal Aid Services Act, 2000 (LASA). In terms of LASA, National Legal Aid Services Organization (NLASO) has been established by the government. NLASO is a statutory body working under Ministry of Law, Justice & Parliamentary Affairs to adopt policies and principles for making legal services available under the Act. NLASO is responsible for implementing government legal aid across the country. Management authority of NLASO is vested in a National Board of Management chaired by the minister, Ministry of Law, Justice & Parliamentary Affairs.

Peace and Justice in Bangladesh is mediated by expensive, time consuming and complex procedures in the legal system. Most vulnerable groups in society are disadvantaged in using the formal justice system because of poverty and lack of knowledge. In other words, barriers to access to justice are both external in that they are located in the structure and culture of institutions and entities that are entrusted with the delivery of justice as well as intrinsic to the circumstances of individuals seeking justice.

Access to justice has been defined by UNDP as the "ability of people from disadvantaged groups to prevent and overcome human poverty by seeking and obtaining a remedy, through the justice system, for grievance in accordance with human rights principles and standards" UNDP promotes a two-fold mission in this area; (i) to secure that the law, irrespective of wealth, race or creed, treats all men and women equally, and (ii) to secure that all, including the poorest and those without skills, knowledge or resources of their own, have access to and trust in law and the legal system. People who are poor or belong to socially disadvantaged groups are particularly vulnerable to human rights violations and abuses by both state and non-state actors. The most important defence they can have against such abuses is the protection that the justice system can offer. Poor and socially disadvantaged people usually lack the capability to obtain court protection for a number of reasons, not least because of the high costs involved. Even when provision for free legal aid exists, they may lack the necessary information and self-confidence to seek redress through the courts. Thus, States have a positive obligation to facilitate the access of poor people to courts, tribunals and other dispute resolution mechanisms as a remedy against human rights violations.

According to High Court, there is more than 500,000 case for trial in their hands for judgment and it will take 30 years if they do not allow a single case further (Source: Daily Ittefaq, February 1, 2019 , front page news article). Weak court performance which derives from a poorly capacitated and outdated court case management system as well as poorly trained judges in lower courts and inadequate number of judicial staff. In general the system is characterised by weak court administration; including poor case management and a poor filing system. The judicial system is apparently insensitive to gender, poverty and human rights. There is weak oversight and guidance by higher judicial institutions. The system faces interference and manipulation aggravated by the judiciary being subject to executive control and administration. Public prosecution services suffer because of insufficient evidence and lack of independence. Disadvantaged groups, especially women, children and indigenous peoples, have limited access to government legal assistance funds. Procedures for obtaining these funds are cumbersome and the information about the existence of these funds is also not widely known. Moreover the government provision is limited and cannot possibly meet the needs of the poor and disadvantaged.

The mandate of NLASO is to provide legal aid services especially for the poor free of cost. Our experience shows that some of the UZLAC & UPLAC was not formed even the Union Parishad Chairman /Members are not well aware about the National Legal Aid Act-2000 and the role of UPLAC in Cumilla District. Main risk and challenges of the project is making active UZLAC and UPLAC. By providing training and awareness to the both committee is the way to mitigation of the risk and challenges.

### Results, outputs and outcomes, and Impact

**Results:**

- ✓ Justice for rural poor women, men, adolescents and children ensured ;
- ✓ People's confidence in government institutions of Bangladesh – especially on judicial institutions improved
- ✓ Access and Referral system and services for poor and marginalized people especially for women and children improved
- ✓ Government legal aid service delivery efficiency, visibility and use at local level improved to ensure justice for citizens living in the project area
- ✓ Collaboration and networks of government judicial departments with different organization, institutions and other stakeholders enhanced and gender friendly laws improved.

**Outputs and Outcomes, and Impact:**

- ✓ Early marriage, dowry, trafficking and domestic violence reduced by 40%.
- ✓ Poor and marginalized people seeks justice from Legal Aid Committees at Union/Upazila /District levels without any fear by 50%
- ✓ Poor and marginalized people especially for women and children gained easy access to Union Legal Aid Committees and their unresolved cases are referred to District Legal Aid Committee (DALC) through UZLAC or directly by 30%
- ✓ Legal Aid Committees at Union/Upazila /District levels became pro-active and friendly to poor and marginalized people with successful mediation by 50%.
- ✓ Increased participation in local govt. power structure by 20% (Union Parishad, CSOs, CBOs, religious committee, legal aid committee)

**Anticipated Beneficiaries:** The primary target group includes both victims and violators of justice for all from among the marginalized and underprivileged people. However, the target group will also cover other stakeholders like officials of the District Legal Aid Committee, the District Judge, Judicial Officers, Lawyers of the district bar associations, NGOs working on Legal Aid in the area. Members of Upazila & Union level Legal Aid Committees, members of the Union Parishad with its Chairman, Upazila Chairman other members of UZLAC , civil society, local police stations, lawyers of the courts, Upazila Nirbahi Officers (head of sub-district), other government officials, students, parents, community policing.

**Activity performed during the EoP report as of April 2023 :**

SI #	Name of Activates	Kurigram		Lakshmipur		Cumilla		Feni	
		Target	Achievement	Target	Achievement	Target	Achievement	Target	Achievement
1	Festoon / Banner . will be hang in roadside as well as important place of the locality digital)	46	46	60	60	47	47		
2	Signboard (3ft x 2 ft) Digital Plastic on Legal Aid Service Center at 41 Union Parishad	41	41	55	55	42	42	43	43
3	Poster printing, 4 color, 80 gram offset paper	10,000	10,000	15,000	15,000	10,000	10,000	2000	2000
4	Printing of NLASO Law Book	2,000	2,000	1,500	1,500	2,000	2,000	1500	1500
5	Printing of Notebook for training	2,000	2,000	1,500	1,500	2,000	2,000	1500	1500
6	Printing of Folder	2,000	2,000	1,500	1,500	2,000	2,000	1500	1500
7	Leaflet printing 80-gram offset paper	10,000	10,000	25,000	25,000	10,000	10,000	20000	20000
8	Sticker printing 4 color	4,000	4,000	5,000	5,000	4,000	4,000		
9	Billboard fixation at Upazilz, 45 Upazil + 1at district.	06	06	06	06	06	06	07	07
10	Miking (2 UP at a time)	42	42	60	60	21	21	86	86
11	Issue Related Folk Song, Folk Drama in association with GoB, NGO	16	16	20	20	18	18	08	08
12	Rickshaw Plate Fixing about Legal Aid Service,	700	700	700	700	700	700		
13	Staff Training on the Issue for 10 person for 02 days (residential)	01	01	01	01	01	01	01	01
14	Half-yearly Coordination meeting in-between DLAC, UPLAC & UZLAC	04	04	04	04	04	04	02	02
15	Orientation meeting at Upazila level with UZLAC members-5 Upazil.	05	05	05	05	04	04	06	06
16	Orientation meeting at Union level with UPLAC members-41 UP.	41	41	55	55	42	42	43	43
17	Sensitizing session for UZLACs including issue areas such as TIP, GBV and VE etc	10	10	10	10	07	07	06	06
18	Sensitizing session for DLAC including issue areas such as TIP, GBV and VE etc-1 district.	02	02	02	02	01	01	01	01
19	Public hearing at UP level(including Conveyance of DLAO & Vehicle renting)per Upazila 2 event	18	18	15	15	08	08	06	06
20	School Debate with vedio projection on Legal Aid- per upazil 2 event.	14	14	18	18	13	13	06	06
21	Observation of National Legal Aid Day on April 28 at district and Upazila Level	02	02	02	02	02	02	02	02
22	Facilitation of Union Legal Aid Committee(bi-monthly) Meeting at Union Level for 24 months	656	656	850	850	567	567	301	301
23	Facilitation of Upazila Legal Aid Committee bi-monthly meeting at Upazila Level for 24 months	52	52	52	52	30	30	36	36
24	Courtyard meetings on Law and peace, 09 per union x 41 union.	606	606	799	799	542	542	258	258
25	Printing of Union level Legal Aid related form	77,900	77,900	104,500	104,500	79,800	79,800	21500	21500
26	Quarterly Plug money support to DLAC.	11	11	11	11	13	13	05	05
a	Quarterly meeting with Panel Lawyer	11	11	11	11	13	13	05	05
b	Quarterly meeting with Judge and Magistrates	11	11	11	11	13	13	05	05
c	Quarterly meeting with Court staff and others officials	11	11	11	11	13	13	05	05
d	Quarterly Client Consultation meeting	11	11	11	11	13	13	05	05
27	Pocket Message card	0	0	0	0	0	0	7500	7500
28	Arrow sign	0	0	0	0	0	0	15	15
29	TV Scroll on legal aid information at local TV Chanel	0	0	0	0	0	0	02	02
30	Mask	8000	8000	8000	8000	0	0	8000	8000
31	Hand wash	4100	4100	0	0	0	0	0	0
32	Face shield	20	20	20	20	0	0	0	0
30	Soap distributions	0	0	4100	4100	0	0	5000	5000

Half-yearly Coordination meeting in-between DLAC, UPLAC & UZLAC, Orientation meeting at Upazila level with UZLAC members, Orientation meeting at Union level with UPLAC members, Sensitizing session for UZLACs including issue areas such as TIP, GBV and VE etc, Sensitizing session for DLAC including issue areas such as TIP, GBV and VE etc, , Public hearing at UP level, School Debate with vedio projection on Legal Aid, Observation of National Legal Aid Day on April 28 at district and Upazila Level, Facilitation of Union Legal Aid Committee(bi-monthly) Meeting at Union Level, Facilitation of Upazila Legal Aid Committee bi-monthly meeting at Upazila Level, Courtyard meetings on Law and peace, Quarterly meeting with Panel Lawyer, Quarterly meeting with Judge and Magistrates, Quarterly meeting with Court staff and others officials, Quarterly Client Consultation meeting, IEC/BCC Materials production and distribution on project theme.