



# Committing to the Future of Bangladesh:

## Joint Programme to address Violence against Women

Key Achievements and Lessons Learned during the Intervention Period, 2010-2013

Yeseul Christeena Song



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June 2013

*"I have become my own version of an optimist. If I can't make it through one door, I'll go through another door-or I'll make a door. Something terrific will come no matter how dark the present."*

-Rabindranath Tagore

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## 1. Acknowledgement

The accomplishments made by the Joint Programme to address Violence against Women (JP VAW) in Bangladesh could not have been possible without the generous funding from the Government of Spain and its people, who have been dedicated to eradicating violence against women in Bangladesh. We are eternally grateful for their support, both in terms of funding and as a partner to JP VAW's successes and lessons learned.

Though many have doubted that such an enormous programme with so many Agencies and Ministries involved could adequately function, through our successes, we have proven that a programme as large as JP VAW can and will have a huge impact on ending violence against women in Bangladesh. JP VAW has overcome numerous barriers in accomplishing many of its goals and outcomes with the collaborative efforts of nine United Nations Agencies and eleven Ministries of the Government of Bangladesh,. For this, we must acknowledge the unfailing hard work and commitment of each United Nation Agency and Ministry of the Government of Bangladesh, which worked tirelessly and ceaselessly towards a better and safer Bangladesh.

It is our honour to graciously thank ILO, IOM, UNAIDS, UNDP, UNESCO, UNWOMEN, UNICEF, UNFPA, and WHO. We are also most fortunate to have had the Ministry of Bangladesh's ownership of each of JP VAW's programmes, especially the MoE, MoEWOE, MoHFW, MoI, MoLE, MoLGRDC, MoLJPA, MoRA, MoSW, MoWCA, and MoYS. JP VAW's astounding successes would not have been possible without the collaborative coordination and unity of both United Nations Agencies and the Government of Bangladesh's Ministries.

JP VAW owes much of its achievements to the Focal Points of each of the United Nations Agencies and the Project Directors and Officials of the Government of Bangladesh's Ministries. We are honoured to have worked with such diligent individuals who have dedicated themselves to protect and promote women's rights in Bangladesh. We are also extremely grateful to the various NGOs and civil society organizations which have been invaluable to JP VAW's programmes. We truly value and are grateful for your perseverance in working with JP VAW from the very beginning.

Lastly, we would like to speak from our hearts to the countless women and girls who have suffered deplorable violations of their fundamental human rights. JP VAW, as an interagency collaboration with the partnership of the government, civil societies, and NGOs, we are doing all that we can to end the violence your sisters, daughters, and mothers are facing. You are not alone.

**Md. Ashadul Islam**

Additional Secretary, ERD, MoF  
and Co-Chair of JP VAW

**Arthur Erken**

Representative, UNFPA Bangladesh  
and Co-Chair of JP VAW

## 2. Acronyms

ASK	Ain O Salish Kendra
BGMEA	Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association
BLAST	Bangladesh Legal Services Trust
BNHRC	Bangladesh National Human Rights Commission
BNWLA	Bangladesh National Women Lawyers Association
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women
CSOs	Civil Society Organizations
DGHS	Directorate General of Health services
DLAC	District Legal Aid Committee
DWA	Department of Women Affairs
DWGs	Disadvantaged Women and Girls
FDG	Focus Group Discussion
FS	Field Supervisors
GEP	Gender Equity Policy
GES	Gender Equity Strategy
GNSPU	Gender, NGO, and Stakeholder Participation Unit
GoB	Government of Bangladesh
HIV	Human Immuno-deficiency Virus
HSM	Hospital Services Management
ILO	International Labour Organization
IOM	International Organization for Migration
JATI	Judicial Administration Training Institute
JPMO	Joint Programme Management Office
JP VAW	Joint Programme to address Violence against Women
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MARPs	Most at Risk Populations
MDG-F	Millennium Development Goal-Fund
MoEWOE	Ministry of Expatriates' Welfare and Overseas Employment
MoI	Ministry of Information
MoLE	Ministry of Labour and Employment
MPs	Members of Parliament
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding

MoWCA Ministry of Women and Children Affairs  
NARI Network of Advocacy, Research, and Information for Women Migrant Workers  
NCCWE National Coordination Committee for Workers Education  
NCTB National Curriculum and Textbook Board  
NCWD National Council on Women and Development  
NGO Non-Government Organization  
OCC One Stop Crisis Centre  
PLHIV People Living with HIV  
PPP Public and Private Partnership  
REOPA Rural Employment Opportunity for Public Assets  
SOP Standard Operating Procedures  
ToTs Training of Trainers  
TPP Technical Project Proposal  
TTC Technical Training Centre  
UFT Union Facilitation Team  
UN United Nations  
UP Union Parishad  
UNAIDS United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS  
UNESCO United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization  
UNFPA United Nations Population Fund  
UNPO United Nations Participating Organizations  
UNWomen United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women  
UNYSAB United Nations Youth and Student Association of Bangladesh  
VAW Violence against Women  
WCG Women Crew Group  
WDF Women Development Forum  
WFH Women Friendly Hospitals  
WFHI Women Friendly Hospital Initiatives  
WHO World Health Organization





## 3. Overview

### 3.1 Introduction to the Joint Programme

MDG-F supported joint programmes are programmes that are nationally owned with the support of United Nations Participating Organizations and other partners, including civil society organizations and the private sector. The core endeavour of MDG-F is to improve the United Nation's ability to deliver results supporting national development outcomes in addition to enhancing government ownership.

JP VAW (Joint Programme to address Violence against Women) was approved in July 2008 with a total budget of US\$8 million for a three year implementation period starting in April 2009 and scheduled to finish by March 2013-now extended to June 2013-involves nine United Nations Agencies and eleven Ministries of the Government of Bangladesh. As the largest collaboration on violence against women in Bangladesh, JP VAW is focused on ending gender based violence and advancing women and girls' rights in the nation. JP VAW was envisaged within the spirit of 'One UN,' to harmonise instruments essential to the United Nations system and to enhance the cost-effectiveness of eradicating violence against women and girls by avoiding duplication of projects. JP VAW was designed to address identified root causes of this violence, namely: unfavourable policy and legal frameworks, and social and individual behaviors and attitudes promoting gender based violence, in addition to inadequate protection and support given to women and girls survivors of violence. JP VAW is a comprehensive batch of interventions contributing to the prevention of violence and addressing the treatment and rehabilitation needs of survivors. JP VAW was designed to channel all outputs through existing government structures using clear and consistent procedures, with a strong monitoring mechanism to ensure quality control.

***"One UN agency alone cannot end VAW; ending VAW will take the commitment of the entire UN system. As a UN system, we have an obligation to address this grave injustice to women's human rights, since we are part of this country. We are in this together."***

***- Arthur Erken  
Representative  
UNFPA Bangladesh  
and Co-Chair of JP VAW***

The purpose of bringing together such a large alliance of Agencies and Ministries is to strengthen the impact of each programme under JP VAW, and to globally establish that eradicating violence against women and girls will require the efforts of the entire nation, committed to working together holistically and ceaselessly. Co-Chair of JP VAW, Additionally Secretary Md. Ashadul Islam believes more Agencies should be involved in

future joint programmes in order to eliminate gender based violence in Bangladesh as rapidly as possible, and potentially, to utilise lessons learned established in Bangladesh in other countries. JP VAW's achievements exemplify that more Agencies and Ministries should become involved in future programmes, greatening the possibility that gender inequality issues will be brought up more frequently and in a wider amount of contexts, leading to the permanent eradication of violence against women through successful programmes.



The United Nation's role in Bangladesh in partnership with the Government is to increase ownership of JP VAW's programmes in terms of lessons learned in sustainably changing social behaviour. Sustainable programmes require constant focus, capacity development, monitoring, and funding; in terms of changing social behaviour, a few years is not enough for any programme to produce absolute results. Changing social behaviour is difficult and complex, requiring increased knowledge management and at times, taking generations to change. Before JP VAW, every Agency and Ministry understood their roles; however, they were not as aware as they are now on how to work together in terms of strategising, planning, and monitoring and evaluation (M&E). Therefore, Agencies and Ministries now have an increased amount of commitment and focus, requiring a constant watchdog to pressure every Agency and Ministry involved in order to increase ownership and continuation of programmes which have proven to be successful. The United Nations and the Government of Bangladesh are accountable for human rights concerns and in future, there will be other joint programmes addressing violence against women because of JP VAW's achievements.

### 3.2 Methodology

An aspect of JP VAW, as the initial step towards eradicating gender based violence in Bangladesh, focuses on knowledge management in which lessons learned from each programme were analysed and evaluated in order to be scaled up, enhanced, and replicated in future programmes. Future programmes should meet the following criteria:

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- Effective in terms of being able to deliver desired outcomes either within the allotted programme period or mainstreamed into malleable social behaviour.
- Sustainable is another criterion for a programme to be considered a good practice and though the demand for funding has been considerable, the Government of Bangladesh has ownership of each and every programme under JP VAW based on collectively supported core values. As a vital aspect of sustainable good practice programmes, the capacity of Bangladeshi government officials have been enhanced through training and awareness raising in favour of sustainability.
- Ultimately, good practice programmes must be replicable. Though innovation and new programming skills are to be included, the essential aspect of a good practice programme is the ability to replicate a programme through methodology gathered from lessons learned in order to holistically comprehend how a programme is delivering desired outcomes.

Accurately following a clear and concise methodology is imperative to knowledge management and good practice. Programmes cannot be considered good practices if the methodology becomes irrelevant, outdated, or placed out of context. The following methodology was utilised to produce this report:

- The Joint Programme Management Office (JPMO) disseminated fact sheets, good practice and case study forms to be filled out by all parties involved;
- The data was then analysed based on each programmes effectiveness, sustainability, and replicability.
- Key personnel, Agency Focal Points, and Government Project Directors were interviewed in order to concisely detail each programme.
- Once all data and documents were consolidated, drafts were sent to the same parties in order to receive input, comments, corrections, and recommendations.
- Fact checks and further case studies were performed by JPMO in order to further integrate inputs.

JP VAW has strengthened a series of lessons learned for future programmes by means of constant drafting and redrafting this report. Additionally, interagency collaboration has been an imperative factor for JP VAW, in not only working with, but also depending on partner Agencies, Ministries, civil society organizations, and NGOs which have been crucial to JP VAW's successes.

### **3.3 Key Emerging Lessons**

JP VAW's experiences, the evaluation team's reports, and international consultants' expertise for the next phase of ending violence against women and girls in Bangladesh lessons learned include:

- Under the institutionalisation of lessons learned and shared during each programme, a clear M&E framework should be built into the design of each of JP VAW's components. Additionally, JPMO's technical assistance should be strengthened.
- Both globally and regionally, there is a growing recognition that the violence linked to gender hierarchies and gender violence is preventable. The lessons emerging from JP VAW's achievements and the dynamics and trends of violence against women, make clear that an increased emphasis on gender violence prevention in Bangladesh is both warranted and opportune.
- An important lesson to be drawn from international experience is that violence prevention must be integrally linked with survivor-centred interventions. In order for both to be optimally effective, prevention and survivor-centred interventions should be mutually reinforcing.
- Sustainability is imperative to every programme. Many programmes discussed and thematically addressed keeping their programmes sustainable upon JP VAW's completion; it is essential that sustainability in terms of training, funding, and motivation is to be considered, planned, and negotiated during the development of Technical Project Proposals (TPPs) in order to enhance ownership of each programme.

***"I see an interdependent web of actors, spinning a continuous, stronger, and wider net to eliminate violence against women and girls in Bangladesh. While uniting, we are also learning on a huge scale. JP VAW's vision was to work as a team. We have indeed progressed as a team and can team up even stronger. We have learned that teamwork depends on a shared understanding that violence against women can only be eliminated through a multisectoral approach, and through realising the potential impact of a united force and the strength of that impact. We are part of a global effort and the teamwork accomplished in Bangladesh is not only the catalyst, but is the way forward."***

*- Marianne Berner*

*International Programme Manager  
JPMO, JP VAW*

JP VAW has found that capacity development through quality training and refresher trainings on women's rights, the negative impacts of gender based violence for both men and women, and the necessity of preventing violence against women and girls, is an effective method of ending gender violence. Additionally, raising awareness through innovative means such as slum and rural courtyard meetings, door to door campaigns and popular theatre dramas have been successful as many potential and current survivors of gender based violence have low levels of education and literacy. JP VAW's lessons learned continues to focus on the vitality of improving the protection of women and girl survivors of gender violence through medical and legal aid, psychosocial counselling, income

generating training, and providing accommodations in shelter homes and centres in order to reintegrate survivors into their communities as empowered and contributing members of their nation. Finally, JP VAW's interagency collaboration with partner Agencies, Ministries, civil society organizations, and NGOs can be strengthened and better coordinated. JP VAW, as the first large scale United Nations and Government multisectoral approach against gender inequality, interagency dependency should be increased so that where there are gaps in one Agency's programme, partner Ministries, civil society organizations, and NGOs can collaborate in closing the gap and provide greater services for survivors. These lessons learned through trial and error, improving methodology, and applying theoretical knowledge must be further enhanced in order to intensify the impact of programmes.

## **4. Preventing Violence against Women through Policies and the Legal Framework**

### **4.1 Training Judicial Officials to enhance their knowledge base in dispense justice for victims and perpetrators of VAW**

**IOM and MoLJPA enhanced the capacity of the Judicial Administration Training Institute:** IOM conducted orientation trainings for judicial officials, including 960 District Judges and 322 prosecutors at the Judicial Administration Training Institute (JATI) in order to enhance judges and prosecutors' understanding of issues related to violence against women and girls and therefore, build judges and prosecutors' capacity in dispensing proper and adequate justice for victims and perpetrators of gender based violence. IOM developed a manual which incorporated into JATI's main curricula and JATI has shown interest in increasing this integration in order to further amplify their capacity level in terms of gender violence and women's rights.

***Lessons Learned:** The Panel Lawyers of the District Legal Aid Committees also require sensitisation and technical training on violence against women by experts. District Judges must supervise the performance of panel lawyers. Additionally, elected representatives and journalists must coordinate among themselves in order to adequately, effectively, and widely disseminate information on VAW.*

***Steps Forward:** Build on JATI's interest in incorporating VAW into their main curricula in order to institutionalise capacity building on ending violence against women and girls in the judicial system.*

## 4.2 Committing to international standards by incorporating CEDAW into Bangladesh's Legal System

**UNWomen incorporated CEDAW into Bangladesh's legal system:** UNWomen produced a Bench Book for Bangladeshi Judges and Legislative Officers which incorporated aspects of CEDAW in a Bangladeshi context in order to integrate CEDAW into the laws of Bangladesh. UNWomen held discussions with Jurists about the usefulness and utilisation of the Bench Book, leading to positive responses, especially from younger jurists. The Bench Book was also made available online for easier access and Judicial Officers are now equipped with the basics of CEDAW in order to enhance their ability to follow international standards on women's rights. Legislative Officers have been trained to utilise the Bench Book through UNWomen's development of a training manual which also explains aspects of CEDAW. UNWomen organized training sessions for Legislative Officers in order to highlight necessary legal reforms necessary. Many Government Officials can now utilise the essence of CEDAW and employ CEDAW in their regular duties on a daily basis. A basic version of CEDAW was also translated into Bangla for wider circulation and easy access. Additionally, stakeholders recommended the ratification of an international convention as essential as CEDAW in its totality.

*Lessons Learned: The Bench Book should be translated into Bangla and circulated more widely in terms of availability for all Judicial Officials and interested parties.*

## 5. Changing Social Attitudes and Behaviours Effecting and Reducing VAW and Discriminatory Practices

### 5.1 Enhancing marginalised women's knowledge base, sensitisation, and capacity through effective training and aid awareness

**UNDP and BRAC aided disadvantaged women:** With UNDP's technical support and under BRAC's field implementation, members of the Rural Employment Opportunity for Public Assets (REOPA) are attaining medical aid, counselling, and rehabilitation, as the programme provides services necessary to members' needs. Marginalised REOPA women members are now aware of gender discrimination, domestic violence, and violence against women and girls through training sessions. Members' capacity has been developed and enhanced through trainings on concepts, categories, and causes of gender based violence, in addition to how to take measures to prevent and protect themselves and their rights.

REOPA Women Crew Group (WCG) members, Union Facilitation Team members (UFT), Women Development Forum (WDF) members, and Union Parishad (UP) members were given training on violence against women and girls in order to develop and strengthen their capacity and sensitise them to gender inequality, in addition to learning how to speak out against gender violence through systematic dialogue and negotiations with key partners. The programme also provided victim support to community members in economic, legal, social, and medical services. As an innovative practice, the programme created SMART Card facilities which provide information on which organization, including NGOs, the UP, and the District Legal Aid Committees (DLACs), to contact when in need of legal, medical, economic, or emergency services or counselling.

REOPA reactivated DLACs which were not in adequate working conditions and which community members were not aware of. They are key aspects of the programme, functioning on a supply and demand mechanism in terms of budget allocation from UNDP which contracts BRAC to implement them. They became providing services as per their mandate due to pressure from both the people and BRAC pressuring them into meeting the needs of the people. Survivors going to BRAC for aid were constantly referred to DLACs as BRAC developed their capacity through reforming their Committees, conducting orientations, providing legal training, and orienting Committee level women. They are now fully functional and show the people, local government, district administrations, the Judiciary, civil society, and NGOs that there is a collaborative effort to end violence against women and girls. DLACs are indicators and evidence that when people are aware of useful services, they will utilise such services.

**Facing Challenges:** There is room for improvement in the areas of coordination and interagency cooperation among service providers, including the GoB, NGOs, police,





hospitals, courts, administration, and local government institutions. Most importantly, there is an opportunity to improve accountability, especially from the District level support in which the Deputy Commissioner, Civil Surgeon, and Police Supers.

**Overcoming Challenges:** WCG and UFT members are increasingly acting as whistleblowers in communities in order to deliver adequate justice for disadvantaged and marginalised survivors of gender inequality. As whistleblowers, WCG and UFT members are aware of which actions must be taken in order to increase prevention and support survivors. Members are also now equipped with SMART Cards, enhancing access to pathways in order to attain support from organizations, such as BRAC which is the main implementer of REOPA's projects.

***Steps Forward:** Further spread success stories advocating ending child marriages, individuals stopping violence against women, and other success stories on women's rights in order to maximise impact.*

***Lessons Learned:** Establish stronger connections between women's groups, including elected local woman leaders, local Government bodies, and national Government services. Issues concerning violence against women and girls should also be included in the coordination meetings at Upazila and District levels.*

***Scale Up:** Popular theatre based dramas have been proven to be effective tools for information dissemination, awareness raising, and creating a more solid knowledge base in rural areas for various socioeconomic issues affecting potential and current survivors of gender violence.*

## 5.2 Raising awareness on VAW in rural areas

**UNDP reached out to rural areas:** The use of village level popular theatre dramas regarding violence against women and girls, human rights, and women's empowerment has proven to be an effective tool for information dissemination, advocacy, and awareness raising as popular theatres and dramas reflect realistic situations and are easily accessible. 89,763 community people from 263 villages attended UNDP's popular theatre dramas and learned about the consequences of gender violence. As most people are either visual or audio learners, popular theatre drama utilise both visual effects such as actors and props, in addition to verbally explaining situations accompanying the story line of the dramas. These

popular theatre dramas allow a greater number of people to attend these, learn about the negative effects of gender violence, retain the knowledge on a long term basis and therefore, raise awareness on violence against women girls in an innovative and easy to understand manner.

### **5.3 Training instructors for potential migrant women in order to enhance migrant women's capacity and awareness**

**IOM and BMET trained instructors for women migrant workers:** Under BMET, potential women migrants must undergo mandatory training if they wish to work abroad as housekeepers in order to gain permission from the Government of Bangladesh. IOM developed manuals for instructors of Technical Training Centres (TTCs) which provide Training of Trainers (ToTs) for all instructors training women migrants. In providing ToTs to the instructors of 14 TTCs, IOM ensured that women migrants must first undergo twenty-one days of training in order to build their capacity as future housekeepers in terms of how to use kitchen and household appliances provided by IOM to the TTCs. Instructors are trained to teach the potential migrant workers to utilise equipment in a practical, hands on manner in developing the capacity and training of potential migrants. Examples include how to use an iron, a microwave, a wheelchair, a juicing machine, and washing machines, among others. The quality of practical training is crucial to the capacity development of future migrant workers as a theoretical knowledge becomes irrelevant when women migrant workers are faced with real kitchen and household appliances; therefore, practice experience is a mandatory aspect of training potential migrant workers. Upon completion of the twenty-one days of training, woman migrants then undergo a three day pre-departure orientation during which they learn about their rights as migrant workers and how to protect and assert those rights.

***Successful Training of a Migrant Woman:** Monira from Khulna came to the Jessore TTC in order to receive training for her migration to Jordan. As a potential migrant worker, she has a widowed mother, a twelve year old son, and an eight year old daughter to support. Her husband abandoned them eight years ago to start a new family with another woman without a legal divorce and has not provided for Monira's family since he left. Monira went through the housekeeping training course and now feels confident about the migration process, ways to protect herself, how to use different kitchen and home appliances she has never seen before, and has even learned basic Arabic to express herself. Monira believes that the most important part of her training was that she now knows her rights and where to get help in order to protect her rights. "I want to provide education to my children and raise them to become good people," said Monira when asked why she attended the training programme and decided to go abroad.*



**IOM raised awareness for potential women migrants:** IOM conducted awareness raising campaigns in order to enhance awareness among potential women migrants and the general population by disseminating accurate and reliable information about the migration process, migrant women's rights, and working conditions, among others, in order to prevent potential migrant women from being exploited by agents, their future employers, and middlemen. IOM disseminated leaflets, posters, calendars, and developed a film on migration in addition to door to door campaigns conducted in women migrant prone areas of whom many are illiterate or have low rates of literacy.

Upon leaving Bangladesh, women migrants are vulnerable to various types of abuses, including psychological, mental, emotional, sexual, and economic abuse. Some migrant women may become traumatised and never want to return to Bangladesh due to the ill-treatment they endured during and after the migration process. Therefore, the importance of capacity development and level of awareness among women migrants cannot be stressed enough as women migrants must be as equipped with as much information and support as possible in order to assert their rights and create an enabling environment for themselves in their destination countries.

***Steps Forward:** Exposure visits for instructor of TTCs to destination countries can be conducted so that they can have a better idea of what destination countries are like and share their experiences with potential migrant workers during training sessions. Returnee women migrants should be socially and economically reintegrated into society so that they can utilise their new skills and invest their knowledge and resources in viable economic interventions.*

**Lessons Learned:** *An impact survey and study should be conducted after several months in order to learn which trainings were beneficial for migrants and instructors. Discussions should be held between instructors, potential migrants, and returnee migrants to identify which trainings were beneficial in order to meet migrants' needs. IOM should work with BMET and MoLJPA to create strict policies for brokers and broker agencies assisting migrant women going abroad to protect the migrant women against economic abuse. MoLJPA has yet to adopt such policies for brokers or broker agencies.*

**Scaling Up:** *The training of future migrant workers should be longer and include more details on the culture, common practices, and the living conditions of destination countries, including different types of food and drinks, as some migrant workers were shocked to find that their employers in destination countries drank alcohol and ate bread instead of rice.*

**Successful Intervention:** *JP VAW funded and coordinated an exposure visit for Government Officials of Bangladesh and Hong Kong to meet in Hong Kong in order to sign a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) specifying women migrant workers' rights and leading to increased employment opportunities for women migrant workers from Bangladesh.*

#### **5.4 Enhancing the capacity of Shelter Home staff and caregivers through psychosocial training and aiding survivors to rebuild their lives**

**IOM, MoWCA, and MoSW trained staff members and caregivers for survivors:** IOM provided psychosocial training for 283 caregivers of MoWCA and MoSW Shelter Homes and developed a training manual for the caregivers in order to enhance caregivers' capacity in coping with survivors of gender violence. The training was also provided for doctors and nurses of Women Friendly Hospitals (WFHs) working in violence against women and girls support centres to widen the range of support for better services for survivors. Psychosocial training is essential for caregivers of Shelter Homes to fully and holistically comprehend what survivors have been through and allow survivors to speak their minds freely and heal from the violence they have endured in order to rebuild their lives.

Training not only involved caregivers, but also cooks, guards, religious teachers, trade instructors, managers, and counsellors, among others, so that everyone working in the

Shelter Homes can collaborate on how to cope with survivors, feel their pain, and comprehend what they have been through. Trainings were largely activity and discussion based, including activities such as blindfolding and leading partners around to understand certain concepts. The capacity of every staff members' role in Shelter Homes was enhanced as staff members now know that survivors require specific and sensitive care. The training manual is easy to understand, allowing caregivers to connect and share their own experiences with one another and link their thoughts with what they have learned. Once caregivers are able to share their feelings and thoughts, they can holistically take care of survivors and protect their rights.

## **5.5 Ensuring the mainstreaming of gender sensitivity through GES training**

**WHO and GNSPU mainstreamed methods of caring for survivors of gender based violence:** The Gender Equity Strategy (GES) ensures gender issues are mainstreamed through holistic interventions by reviewing and updating the Gender, NGO, and Stakeholder Participation Unit (GNSPU)'s existing guidelines and tools, in addition to having developed a training manual reviewed by IOM for GNSPU doctors and nurses on how to cope with survivors. The IOM approved training manual are utilised to conduct training for GNSPU doctors and nurses and will continue as an operational plan. The training programmes are considered sustainable in aiding survivors of gender violence throughout Bangladesh.

Healthcare professionals provide medical treatment, psychosocial counselling, and advice on adequate legal procedures in order to benefit survivors. Trainings utilise best practices and success stories in order to better serve survivors. Health professionals now have access to guidelines and tools on how to deliver required and necessary care when handling survivors of violence.

**Facing Challenges:** The capacity of healthcare providers is limited in distributing quality care for survivors of gender based violence in Bangladesh.

**Overcoming Challenges:** WHO will continue to support the GNSPU in addressing gaps in trainings in order to ensure the delivery of essential quality services and to enhance help seeking behaviour of survivors of gender violence even after the completion of JP VAW; therefore, institutionalising the accountability of duty bearers providing services.

***Steps Forward:** Advocacy material for public dissemination on issues regarding violence against women and girls and medical care on gender violence should be prepared.*

## 5.6 Raising awareness on VAW through the implementation of gender equality in School curricula and textbooks

**UNESCO and MoE implemented gender equality in the education system:** The National Education Policy now includes gender equality which has been incorporated into revisions for lower secondary, secondary, and higher secondary school curricula and textbooks. After reviewing the curricula and textbooks, the National Curriculum and Textbook Board (NCTB) and UNESCO concluded that the curricula and textbooks are no longer gender biased. Implementing gender equality in the education system is a tactful way of allowing young adults to gradually learn about gender equality and with the prospect of end violence against women and girls for the future generations. Additionally, as textbooks inclusive of gender equality aspects are printed by the MoE's revenue on a yearly basis, the gender equal curricula will become mainstreamed and sustainable in the Bangladeshi education system. Seven textbooks have been developed and are being utilised following the new gender sensitive curricula in 2011, 2012, and is continuing in 2013 with 14,642,979 textbooks distributed throughout the nation yearly for secondary level students.



**UNESCO and NCTB conducted a workshop to gain recommendations on gender equality:** In order to gain additional input into future gender equal curricula, UNESCO and NCTB organized a 'Masculinity, Male Role and Violence against Women' workshop involving 52 experts from different organizations. The main focus of the workshop was to identify masculinity, male roles, and methods of addressing violence against women in order to make recommendations on how to better solve gender based violence issues. The workshop was a success and many recommendations were made, indicating that a wide variety of experts are interested in and supportive of ending gender violence in Bangladesh. Recommendations made to integrate gender equality into Bangladesh's education system included using gender equal teaching material, such as using female names and characters and to increase awareness through the curricula as a preventive instead of a protective measure so that the new generation of Bangladesh will grow up already aware of gender equality. Another important recommendation was to appoint a psychosocial counsellor in

schools in order to create an opportunity for self-expression and to break the culture of silence when a female student is sexually harassed, violated, or otherwise abused.

**Facing Challenges:** There is a possibility that the school management may not allow teachers extra time to discuss gender issues in and out of classroom settings. Additionally, the effectiveness of the gender sensitive textbooks and curricula is not yet clear as an M&E mechanism was not created due to the fact that the new curricula and textbooks are being utilised this year.

**Overcoming Challenges:** Requests were made to each school management in order to allow teachers to focus on gender sensitive issues in and out of classroom settings. The common curricula and textbooks are set by NCTB and therefore, school managements are bound to follow and utilise the revised curricula and textbooks. The MoE is pushing for the revised curricula and textbooks to be monitored in terms of success or failure; however, the MoE and UNESCO believe evaluation of the results of the monitoring will take a longer period of time to assess.

*Lessons Learned: The training of secondary teachers was not long enough and too few secondary teachers were trained; therefore, it should be extended and enhanced in order to maximise impact. Develop a monitoring tool and a feedback mechanism on the gender sensitive curricula and textbooks to be received from students and teachers in incremental months and years.*

## 5.7 Turning top Parliamentarians into advocates for sex workers<sup>1</sup> and PLHIV's rights

**UNAIDS conducted orientations that convinced Parliamentarians to become advocates:** UNAIDS conducted orientations for 50 Parliamentarians, resulting in four top Members of Parliament (MPs) becoming advocates for sex workers and People Living with HIV (PLHIV)'s human rights. These Parliamentarians now advocating for sex workers and PLHIV's rights by presenting on behalf of UNAIDS during legal consultations and policy building discussions. Well-known, front line MPs advocating for sex workers and PLHIV's rights allow for more Parliamentarians to listen during orientations held by UNAIDS as

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*1. The term 'sex worker' is utilised by UNAIDS and is intended to be non-judgmental and focuses on the working conditions under which sexual services are sold. Sex workers include consenting female, male, and transgender adults who receive money or goods in exchange for sexual services, either regularly or occasionally. Acceptable alternative formulations for the term 'sex worker' are 'women/men/people who sell sex.' The term 'commercial sex worker' is not used because the term implies the same inference twice in different words. Children in the sex industry are considered to be victims of sexual exploitation.*

famous MPs hold more authority and other Parliamentarians are more likely to comply with and listen to them.

Upon JP VAW's completion, UNAIDS will continue relying on Parliamentarians as advocates raising the issue of sex workers and PLHIV's rights in order for the programme to remain sustainable and mainstreamed. UNAIDS is also depending on civil society organizations and NGOs such as the Bangladesh Legal Aid and Services Trust (BLAST), among others, to continue advocating and aiding sex workers and PLHIV. UNAIDS continuously involves Parliamentarians, CSOs, and NGOs, in addition to providing technical and financial support in terms of raising the larger community's awareness level through advocacy so that locals do not mistreat sex workers or PLHIV by evicting brothels, setting brothels on fire, discriminating against PLHIV and sex workers, or spreading negative social stigma against sex workers and PLHIV.

***Scale up:** More or new Parliamentarians should be involved, as those currently involved are now raising issues on sex workers and PLHIV's rights in Bangladesh. As Bangladesh's elections are upcoming, new Parliamentarians should also advocate for the rights of sex workers and PLHIV.*

***Steps Forward:** Three Parliamentarians are expected to visit Sonagacchi, India, where the biggest brothel, called Mohila Samanwaya Committee which is the best example in the world for a sex workers' network in terms of health and legal aid. Parliamentarians must also advocate for the legal clarity of sex workers in Bangladesh's Constitution and policies in order to end the abuse sex workers face by the authority due to the vague nature of Bangladesh's laws on sex workers.*

## **5.8 Raising awareness among the men of Bangladesh to end VAW**

**UNFPA and MoWCA involved men in ending violence against women:** The Men Engagement Network under MoWCA, supported technically by UNFPA, advocates for the eradication of gender based violence in Universities and in the villages by involving young men and boys to self-reflect on gender violence and begin to change the social attitude of the next generation of men in Bangladesh. The Men Engagement Network utilises the Community Dialogue Facilitation Tool on Masculinities and issues related to violence against women and girls which was created in order to challenge traditional views on women's rights by focusing on self-reflection and teaching young men that gender violence



and inequality is hurtful to both men and women as sometimes, young men do not want to engage in supposed masculine activities such as fighting and taunting, but are forced to do so in order to be seen as masculine. The Men Engagement Network allows young men to be themselves without feeling pressured from society and to speak out against gender violence.

*Scale Up: Involving men in ending violence against women has proven to be successful when implemented by other men as Bangladesh is a patriarchal culture. This programme should be scaled up and implemented in more Universities and villages.*

## 5.9 Religious leaders spreading awareness on and eradicating VAW

**UNFPA and MoRA conducted training for religious leaders:** Under UNFPA, MoRA's training programmes focused on institutionalising behavioural change and targets powerful opinion makers which in Bangladesh, are often religious leaders. Under this programme, religious leaders from different parts of the country have been trained to provide an enabling society through interfaith dialogues and community meetings to address and prevent gender based violence.

The Hindu Religious Welfare Trust (1893) and the Buddhist Religious Welfare Trust (1984) were established for the wellbeing of the Hindu and Buddhist community in Bangladesh respectively, and operates under MoRA. In addition to Muslim religious leaders, MoRA conducted training programmes to develop and enhance the awareness of social and religious leaders of Hindu, Buddhist, and Muslim communities on reproductive health, motherhood, gender issues, dowry, HIV/AIDS, and other important women's rights issues.



During the training programme, 1,980 religious leaders, including 1,710 Imams were trained and their capacity developed in terms of addressing VAW. Nine interfaith dialogues

were organized in seven Divisions, Cox's Bazaar, and Bogra District with participants from different religious organizations to address the prevention of violence against women from a religious point of view. Discussing and understanding masculinity and engaging young adolescents and boys in the programme have been extremely successful and an effective tool and has been incorporated into nearly every programme.

MoRA expressed enthusiasm in having all Imams, especially in the field, trained on gender sensitivity and gender based violence. Findings from a field visit jointly conducted by MoRA and UNFPA indicated that the community at large are learning about the negative effects of gender violence from their religious leaders during religious gatherings. As well as being respected members of the community and having the capacity to deeply impact Bangladeshi society, religious leaders can continue to change the social behaviour of Bangladesh's citizens in terms of combating violence against women and girls.

## **6. Creating a Conducive Environment and Enhancing the Capacity for Providing Support and Care for Vulnerable Women and Girls**

### **6.1 Services integrated to aid victims of domestic violence in WSCs**

**UNFPA and MoWCA aided women survivors:** With UNFPA's support, MoWCA runs WSCs in which all staff members under MoWCA received basic and refresher training courses from the Department of Women's Affairs (DWA) in order to reach out to and better help women survivors in the WSCs. The trainings resulted in enhanced coordination and capacity development, inclusive of laws related to women's rights, in order to adequately run the WSCs, regardless of the role of each participant. The WSCs have established Standard Operating Procedure (SOP), along with security and protection for the survivors, focusing on a multisectoral collaboration so that the survivors have access to integrated services with a good reference mechanism, such as medical and legal aid, psychosocial counselling, economic empowerment, support for their future livelihood, and accommodations, all under one roof. Now that staff members' capacity has been enhanced and they are aware of women's rights, they can help women survivors learn about their own rights and connect with survivors on a personal basis.

*"This is the preliminary stage; an entry point and we can build on this programme. This programme is eye-opening for the government and for the people. JP VAW needs to be a comprehensive effort; though it was not perfect, we now know how to improve our programme for the next step."*

*-Shamima Pervin  
Senior Programme Officer  
Gender, UNFPA*

Jointly, UNFPA and MoWCA designed and printed 2,000 posters to be displayed on the WSCs' walls and visible places in the public community, so that staff members, women survivors, the larger community, and even perpetrators of gender based violence, can fully understand women's rights. Each WSC has two Community Mobilisers who conduct meetings and discussions to discuss women's rights with survivors in the WSCs. This is helpful in allowing survivors to comprehend their rights as women. During these discussions, survivors are able to express them, share how they feel about their rights, and to learn about the legal support they can access. These open discussions aid survivors to continue to protect and promote their rights once leaving the WSCs.

WSCs also establish connections and partnerships with various grassroots organizations, international organizations, and NGOs, among others, so that the WSCs can receive further legal and medical aid, in addition to administrative support in order to create an increasingly supportive and sustainable environment for the survivors living in the WSCs. Part of establishing a supportive atmosphere is to allow the survivors to know that once they leave the WSCs, they have the opportunity to attain employment and rejoin their community as the WSCs provide IGA training for survivors for a maximum of six months, with a possible four month extension. Providing IGA training aids in breaking the cycle of violence and economically empowers women in preventing gender based violence as a protective measure instead of merely protecting survivors. Additionally, other survivors hear about WSCs from word of mouth and come to these WSCs because they now have evidence that they are able to access services which are officially granted to survivors.

**Facing Challenges:** WSCs are facing challenges in financial sustainability as financial constraints limit the GoB's capacity to continue WSCs at District levels.

**Overcoming Challenges:** Partnerships, including Public and Private Partnerships (PPPs), and closer collaboration with existing programmes, such as MSP-VAW which utilises the One Stop Crisis Centre (OCCs), should be considered.

*Scale Up: Involve all members of staff including cooks, guards, and managers, among others during training so that each staff member understands their role in the WSCs.*

*Steps Forward: Enhance IGA training for women survivors so that they have an increased opportunity to become economically self-sufficient once leaving the WSCs by diversifying the IGA training and focusing on women's rights.*

## **6.2 IGA trainings leading to capacity development for DWGs in Rehabilitation Centres**

**UNFPA and MoSW aided women and girls affected by sexual exploitation and abuse:** UNFPA and MoSW are running six Rehabilitation Centres, mostly for disadvantaged women and girls (DWGs), including under-aged sex workers and survivors of sexual

exploitation, who have been abandoned by their communities and families in Bogra, Faridpur, Kushtia, Borisal, Sylhet, and B. Baria Districts, with a total of 183 DWGs in all six centres in order to rehabilitate and reintegrate DWGs into society.

DWGs receive IGA training in entrepreneurial areas such as beautification training for beauty parlours, bakery training, gardening, poultry, agriculture, electrical training, and stitching and sewing for tailoring shops. IGA training is essential to the needs of and is beneficial for the DWGs as the training allows them to become economically self-sufficient once they leave the Rehabilitation Centre and reintegrate into society.



Legal and medical aid is provided by facilitators who locally recruit the necessary legal and medical aid from organizations willing to aid DWGs. UNFPA provides MoSW with financial aid, equipment, and technical personnel in order to maintain the quality of training for MoSW's facilitators. The Rehabilitation Centres are built by MoSW's revenue and are then provided with facilitators jointly trained by UNFPA and MoSW in order to enhance the capacity of trainers, specifically for IGA trainers, as DWGs are to receive quality IGA training in order to enhance their opportunities to gain employment upon social reintegration.

***"These DWGs are survivors and are not outsiders of our society. They are our daughters and our sisters; we should protect them and reintegrate them into society. In order to keep our country healthy, it is necessary to provide every citizen with every type of support from the entire country."***

***-Mohammad Nazmul Ahsan  
Project Director  
MoSW***

Some Rehabilitation Centres also have fulltime psychosocial counsellors trained by IOM, providing group and one on one counselling. This psychotherapy has proven to be effective as DWGs' cases, especially those who have been sexual abused and exploited, come from different situations and environments. The unique nature of each case makes one on one therapy an effective method in the process of rehabilitation. During these counselling sessions, DWGs can

speaking freely and begin the process of healing by rebuilding their lives through IGA training while having a professional guide them in psychosocial and economic imperatives.

UNFPA also provides two-day long refresher trainings once every six months for facilitators. In terms of sustainability, upon the completion of JP VAW, refresher trainings will be conducted once a year and MoSW will continue to provide equipment, food, toiletries, and utensils, among others, though the quality will be reduced due to restraints on funding.

**Facing Challenges:** Medical treatment for DWGs, especially those that have been sexually exploited or abused, is a challenge as DWGs often present with different STDs and skin diseases, among others, which are expensive to treat and require specialised attention. Such treatment is often more than what the Rehabilitation Centres can provide.

**Overcoming Challenges:** An interagency collaborative approach is required in order to fulfil the needs of DWGs. NGOs, international organizations, and grassroots organizations should aid DWGs by pooling together their resources such as financial, medical, and legal aid in order for DWGs to holistically rebuild their lives.

***Lessons Learned:** Awareness programmes for communities, especially for families and husbands of DWGs must be conducted due to the fact that DWGs sometimes attempt to reintegrate themselves into their previous communities and are rejected.*

***Steps Forward:** Rehabilitation Centres should focus on interagency collaborative efforts, such as reaching out to local NGOs and international organizations, among others, in order to create strong partnerships and receive further aid.*

### **6.3 Gaining adequate aid for victims of VAW in WFHs**

**UNICEF and MoHFW aided women gain better access to healthcare:** MoHFW runs Women Friendly Hospitals (WFHs) with the collaborative efforts of grassroots networks providing greater social initiatives as all women need special healthcare, including privacy and dignity in WFHs, especially if they are survivors of gender based violence. WFHs are now sustainable as certain WFHs' components are now permanent aspects of MoHFS's Hospital Services Management (HSM) Operational Plan, 2011-2016 of the Health, Population, and Nutrition Sector Development Programme (Health SWAP). The Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS) Hospitals and Clinics are also running as

WFHs under a MoH&FW implemented programmes, increasing the amount of specialised care survivors can receive. Survivors of gender violence require and deserve specific and sensitive care which WFHs are providing.

Representatives of the Stakeholder Committee under WFH initiatives motivate, convince, and advise families on filing complaints against perpetrators of violence against women to the authorities under the Suppression of Violence against Women Act, 2000 (amended, 2003). UNICEF partnered with Naripokkho (Women Activist Organization) in order to build the capacity of the Stakeholder Committee which is made up of members of the local community, especially female lawyers, journalists, and NGOs, in order to pressuring the GoB to continue advancing on treating survivors through WFHs.

**Challenges Faced:** There is a lack of funding from the MoH&FW's Operational Plan to support all activities under the local level plan under selected Women Friendly Hospital Initiatives (WFHI) and not enough facilities to treat survivors around the country. Skilled staff members are attempting to provide quality counselling for survivors in order to adequately treat them; however, there are not enough skilled members able to provide treatment and referrals for social and legal services. There is also a potential for a method of documenting violence against women injuries into a database for both survivors and perpetrators.

**Challenges Overcome:** Currently, there are thirteen WFHs under JP VAW, and another twelve hospitals already under this initiative through UNCIEF and MoH&FW's core support. MoH&FW plans to scale up the number of WFHs whenever funding and capacity building becomes possible. The amount and capacity of WFHs around the country will most likely be scaled up as more resources are allocated under MoH&FW's Operational Plan of the Line Director-HSM, DGHS. There is also a greater potential for increasing ownership of the programme by health managers.

***Lessons Learned:** When a patient is admitted, better communications between the hospitals and law enforcement agencies is required so that legal actions can be taken in bring perpetrators to justice. Contact must be initiated between the social and legal framework in all WFHs. MoWCA should integrate the Women Friendly Hospital Initiatives (WFHI) with the One Stop Crisis Centre (OCC) Programme for greater collaboration and harmonisation.*

## **6.4 Creating a platform and raising awareness for women migrant workers through NARI**

**UNWomen and BMET created a platform to help women migrant workers:** With UNWomen's technical support, BMET created and supported the Network of Advocacy,

Research, and Information for Women Migrant Workers (NARI) which is a platform and support system for women returning from migrant work who are dealing with violations they have faced during the migration process. NARI serves as a base for all aspiring and returning women migrant workers to communicate with one another and learn from each other's experiences. NARI currently has 30 members, who are all returnee women migrant workers and now realise how dangerous the entire migration process can be.

NARI members were selected based on basic literacy levels through aptitude tests at various Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) and slum and rural courtyard meetings which identified leadership qualities and their ability to voice opinions, among other qualifications. The current 30 members have gone through two extensive training sessions for three-days, during which they underwent education and workshop activities, including training in counselling, office administration, and communication which greatly enhanced their capacity to help other returnee migrant women who have been abused during and after the migration process.

The first training session focused on discourses on migration, gender, women's rights and introduced the concept of NARI and how NARI will help other women migrant workers. The second session focused on the basics of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, CEDAW, GR 26, Migrating Workers Convention, government regulations on migration, regulations and policies on women migration, in addition to leadership and women's empowerment. This allowed NARI members to raise awareness on the legal aspects of migration and women's rights for other women migrant workers.

All available services for potential migrant women can be linked through NARI to assist women in making more informed choices regarding migration through raising awareness. NARI will continue after the end of JP VAW as BMET has provided office space for NARI on BMET premises. UNWOMEN and BMET are also jointly considering providing further technical support to NARI. Many CSOs, especially those working with migration, have been part of the formation of NARI throughout the entire process, aiding in strengthening interagency collaborative efforts.

***Steps Forward:** CSOs' linkage and partnerships with NARI should be strengthened and enhanced in order to holistically aid migrant women workers. NARI will meet with policy makers to help create a more enabling environment for women migrant workers to go overseas for work. All returnee migrants in NARI have been abused, usually economically, either by brokers or former employees. Economic abuse by brokers is frequent as there are no legal repercussions for brokers or broker agencies.*

## 6.5 Asserting migrant women's rights abroad through a Help Desk in the destination country

### **IOM and BMET continue to support women migrants abroad:**

With IOM's support, BMET expanded their existing Help Desks in three international airports of Dhaka, Chittagong, and Sylhet. Bangladesh's Embassy in Amman, Jordan, the main destination country, provides support to women migrant workers. The Help Desk was set up by the Embassy of Bangladesh with IOM providing financial support in order for it to continue to provide temporary shelter support by allocating and funding safe accommodations and food. By setting up a Help Desk, migrant women can now seek shelter and legal aid if their rights are violated physically, sexually, or economically. Additionally, once employers are aware that migrant women can gain help from the Help Desks in their Embassy, employers will be less likely to abuse migrant women.



**Facing Challenges:** Some migrant women are abused in ways that do not allow them to leave the house or office they are working in; therefore, it would be difficult for these migrant women to contact the Help Desk as they would have to gain access to a phone or messenger in order to contact the Embassy in which the Help Desk is located.

**Overcoming Challenges:** Migrant women must be assertive of their rights and fully retain those rights basing their knowledge on the mandatory training sessions they took before migrating; it is anticipated that migrant women will be empowered by the training sessions as a protective measure in order to adequately defend their rights. Migrant women must remain strong and let their employers know that they, as migrant women, know their rights and how to seek help if their rights are violated in any way.

## 6.6 Building the Sex Workers Network's capacity in recognising their rights

**UNAIDS supported sex workers in accessing their rights:** With UNAIDS' support, the Sex Workers Network trains their members on sex workers' rights, VAW, and HIV/AIDS. UNAIDS provides technical support in terms of connecting sex workers organizations with each other through coordinating meetings in order for the Sex Workers Network to function as a full-fledged organization. There are a total of 29 organizations in the Sex Workers Network. UNAIDS helped the Sex Workers Network attain social welfare registration,



allowing the Sex Workers Network to now be recognised as a legitimate organization and be able to work with other organizations in terms of meeting on legal grounds in different forums and make allies with influential people. As a result, they are already working in partnership with two other organizations.

UNAIDS also supported organizational development activities of the Sex Workers Network. With UNAIDS' support, the Sex Workers Network developed different organizational operational manuals and conducted need based advocacy with relevant stakeholders at various capacities and provided emergency rescue and legal support for sex workers.

**Facing Challenges:** Sex workers still cannot trust the conventional legal system due to high levels of fear as the legislation on sex work is unclear. Social stigma against sex workers also hinders sex workers' daily lives as locals often attempt to evict brothels or set brothels on fire.

**Successful Sex Worker Network Intervention:** In early May, 2013, the residents of the brothel in Madaripur were nearly evicted by the local community. The brothel contacted the Sex Workers Network and the Sex Workers Network contacted the local administration to stop the locals from evicting the residents as the brothel was their place of livelihood. The Sex Workers Network also aided in filing a complaint against the perpetrators to the High Court with the legal aid of the NGO, Ain O Shalish Kendro. The Sex Workers Network believes that evicting brothels or setting brothels on fire will only empower 'goons' and increase negative social stigma against sex workers. The Sex Workers Network also contacted the Chairman of the Bangladesh National Human Rights Commission (BNHRC) in order to raise the issue of brothel evictions.

**Scaling Up:** An increased amount of grassroots and national organizations should be linked together and in a greater capacity to better support the Sex Workers Network in favour of interagency collaboration. Community advocacy should be increased in order to enhance the knowledge base of local communities on sex workers' rights to eradicate negative social stigma. It is important to clarify laws related to sex work. If an individual wishes to become involved in the sex industry, their rights should be legally protected like any other citizen. If the legality of sex work remains constitutionally unclear, sex workers will continuously be abused.

***"The Sex Workers Network's role is not to bring more people into the sex industry, but to support and protect ourselves. Sex work is neither legal nor illegal so we are here to protect our rights."***

*-Joya Sikder*

*President*

*Sex Workers Network*

*The Facts: The Network is made up of 29 member organizations with an estimated (documented) 116,000 members, but probably involves roughly 250,000 members, many of which are undocumented for various reasons. There are 12 brothel based organizations with 7,000 members; 13 floating organizations with 100,000 members; and 4 transgender organizations with 9,000. The Sex Workers Network provides emergency support.*

**Overcoming Challenges:** Sex workers trust private institutes which facilitate legal services for sex workers such as BLAST which is the largest legal supporter of sex workers. The Sex Workers Network has taken initiatives to stop negative social stigma against them and have several examples of overcoming this stigma in order to save their livelihoods and to protect their rights.

## **6.7 Building the capacity of PLHIV in order to attain positive economic growth**

**UNAIDS conducted interventions for People Living with HIV (PLHIV):** Gender based violence, negative social stigma, and discrimination due to lack of community knowledge on HIV are often at the root of extreme poverty for PLHIV. Previous research by UNAIDS indicates that economic dependency on women living with HIV infected husbands at times hinders their livelihoods and makes survivors even more vulnerable to violence. A stigma index report by UNAIDS completed in 2009 indicated that violence, stigma, and discrimination are at extremely high levels against PLHIV and Most at Risk Populations (MARPs).

Support included the development of a training manual, a questionnaire, providing facilitators, and funding. The Network of PLHIV organized six IGA trainings on livestock and provided grants of 10,000 taka for each entrepreneurship initiative. UNAIDS identified 250 women members infected and affected of the Network of PLHIV and those living in extreme poverty who needed aid through an economic research questionnaire by inviting all women and partners of male members to assess their economic and social status. UNAIDS then provided technical support for IGA training including creating a manual and grant support dependent on responses to the questionnaire. Among other questions, the questionnaire asked what business the infected or affected individual would want to be involved in and the most common answer was poultry and livestock, allowing UNAIDS to pinpoint which entrepreneurship to focus on for PLHIV.

UNAIDS found that 146 women were empowered through the IGA training and now play a larger part in decision making in the family from which they were previously shunned, stigmatized, or discriminated against due to their low economic status. These women are now better accepted by their families due to their income generating abilities and therefore,

better accepted by their communities. UNAIDS conducts follow-ups on IGA trainings once per quarter which indicated an increase in economic income and a decrease in negative social stigma. Upon conducting follow-ups, UNAIDS estimates a 75% success rate both economically and socially.

***Steps Forward:** In future, the IGA training manual will include a wider diversity of entrepreneurs, such as training on becoming a hairdresser or beautician as many members wish to be involved in other businesses. Orientations and advocacy with the media, judges, and the police, among other will be conducted in order to sensitise these groups. HIV issues will be incorporated into journalist departments in Universities as journalism impacts how communities view PLHIV. A programme for the children of members of the Network of PLHIV should be conducted as the children are most likely infected as well.*

## 7. Case Studies

The importance of being practical in terms of lessons learned should not be forgotten. The world is not in black and white and neither is ending violence against women. Some programmes can be enhanced and continued depending on various and multiple factors, but must first be thoroughly analysed in order to deliver outputs towards ending gender based violence. For the purposes of this report, programmes which are heavily reliant on factors such as the motivation and intentions of those in positions of authority, continuous and accurate application of human rights, and quality training, will be used as case studies for future programmes.

### a. SASH

SASH is a student organization fighting against sexual harassment in several University campuses. Student members feel that they have a form of representation and responsibilities against gender based violence of their own. UNWomen conducted a recent study indicating that 76% of female students experience at least one form of sexual harassment while in or out of University campuses by their peers or other campus related personnel. UNWomen, in association with the Bangladesh National Women Lawyers Association (BNWLA), started a campaign in various University campuses in order to raise awareness on the negative consequences of sexual harassment, including the prevention of gender inequality on campuses and actions to be taken when it occurs. SASH has now been active for six months.

Representatives were selected through United Nations Youth and Student Association of Bangladesh (UNYSAB) by circulating a ToR which gauged how involved applicants were in campus societies. SASH reported that many students appear to support SASH, even those that are not members. Public University faculty are mostly neutral towards SASH, though private University faculty are responding more positively.



SASH members stated that Facebook was a major tool utilised to spread awareness on and advocate for SASH to the public. SASH's activities include poster exhibitions displayed throughout the campuses, debates, workshops, and human chains. When sexual harassment complaints are made, SASH refers the cases to BNWLA which then investigates and attempts to resolve the case and if necessary, takes the case to court.

**Scaling Up:** *SASH should be implemented in more Universities with more support from faculty and staff members.*

**SASH Case Study:** *North South University is a Private University in Bashundhara in which SASH members of North South University held a poster exhibition against sexual harassment on 4 June 2013.*

*Nahrin Rahman Swarna, President of North South University's SASH believes that now even the faculty are becoming involved and are encouraging students to become aware of SASH's activities. Interviews conducted on site indicated that out of 80 students, only four were aware of SASH's existence. SASH and BNWLA members believed that this is because students may fail to remember SASH's training sessions. BNWLA Junior Expert, Adiba Nasser stated that public University students were far more engaged and aware of SASH as they come from various backgrounds and often live in dormitories.*

*Swarna believes that SASH plays an important role in terms of students now knowing that they can depend on SASH for legal and emotional counselling. North South*

*University SASH member, Saquib-e-Azam believes that SASH is an excellent initiative as sexual harassment has become a focus in Bangladeshi society. "SASH allows students to understand sexual harassment and how to fight against it for a free and secure Bangladesh," said Saquib. Saquib joined SASH because he wants the younger generations to know about sexual harassment. "I want victims to know what they can do it," said Saquib when asked what motivated him to join SASH.*

*Adiba Nasser stated that she receives many calls from Universities in and outside of Dhaka for prospects of their Universities and students to join SASH as students have seen that other students are coming forward and are publicly announcing their issues. This has proven to impact other students and break the culture of silence. Adiba hopes that SASH will spread throughout the country and believes that younger students should join as they have been sexually harassed before entering University and are still suffering from its negative effects.*

*In public Universities such as Dhaka University, cases have been filed in which faculty members were accused of sexual harassment; however, North South University faculty members also refer cases to SASH and BNWLA. North South University Professor, Faisal Wali is aware of SASH's activities and has students who are active in SASH. He understands that SASH is a preventive attempt to promote a better environment in society. "Sexual harassment in educational institutions must be implemented first. If educated people cannot stop sexual harassment, we cannot expect others to stop as well," said Professor Faisal Wali.*

## **b. Trade unions**

ILO conducted group discussions entitled, "Gender Equality and Prevention of Violence at the Workplace," which focused on sexual harassment, included types of harassment, causes of harassment, and came up with presentations aiming at self-reflection. Most men initially insisted that the way women dress is the main cause of sexual harassment, but upon self-reflection at the end of the training sessions, realised that this was not true of the women in their workplace. Such self-reflection activities were considered successful as the men came up with their own explanations which made sense to themselves on ending sexual harassment in the workplace.

The conclusion from the men helped challenge traditional ways of thinking about women and sexual harassment. ILO conducted training sessions with various sectors which resulted in general greater compliance with sexual harassment laws as many private companies now feel responsible and accountable for the women in their workplace. The private sector responded positively and reviewed their human resource policies to become gender sensitive. ILO indicated that some private sectors implemented High Court directives to address sexual harassment in the workplace. ILO completed 40 training

sessions in the garment industry with the Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BGMEA) and 49 training sessions in the private sector with BEF. 18 training sessions were completed in government Ministries and were also considered successful as MoLE now plans to include 37 TTCs on VAW created by STEPS with ILO facilitators, indicating that MoLE now recognises that gender sensitive training aids productivity in the workplace.

**Facing Challenges:** ILO organized capacity development and sensitisation trainings with private sector employers and trade union leaders of the National Coordination Committee for Workers Education (NCCWE) in order to promote gender equality and prevent gender violence in the work place. Few female members of the NCCWE are in high, decision making positions. NCCWE should follow examples of many individual grassroots trade unions which are self-required to have women as heads of trade unions. Case studies indicate that more and more women are beginning to raise their voices and bargain with their managers on fair and equal wages, among other topics. Women continuing to assert their rights will lead to a higher possibility of more women becoming leading members of trade unions of the NCCWE in the future.

***ACI Complaint Box Case Study:** ACI employees have undergone ILO's orientation on sexual harassment in the workplace and ACI has registered a complaint box. The company plans to form a Committee in order to eradicate sexual harassment in the workplace in terms of registering sexual harassment complaints.*

*ACI also plans to register complaint boxes in private places such as women's toilets in favour of discretion and security; currently, the complaint box is displayed in public and is empty. Of the three women and two men interviewed, only two were aware of the existence of the complaint box.*

*The women are encouraged not to mention their name in the complaints, but to instead write down the circumstances and the name of the perpetrator for the sake of security.*

*The company plans to increase the number of complaint boxes and create a Committee involving administration officers, Workers' Participation Committee members, and security officials as soon as possible; however, this is highly dependent on the management team's initiatives, intentions, and willingness. Not all factory management teams will be willing to form such Committees or commit to sexual harassment orientations and requirements.*

*ACI's management wishes to form the Committee as soon as possible in order to run a successful, systematic, strictly managed, and continuous system fighting against sexual harassment.*

*In terms of sexual harassment, ACI wishes to cultivate a family culture in which, if the management considers a situation suspicious, they investigate the circumstances though the Committee has not yet been formed and the Complaint Box remains empty.*

*The company conducts Safety Days, during which art competitions and demonstrations*

*are conducted by the factory workers only; no management is allowed to speak during these days and workers are encouraged to openly discuss their thoughts and feelings.*

**Results:** *ACI is largely dependent on seasonal workers which make up 60% of their workforce. The continuous return of their seasonal workers though there are many other factories they could turn to proves that sexual harassment is not as large of an issue as it is in other factories.*

*The Complaint Box as a physical box will most likely be a failure due to the low literacy rate among many women working in factories. Alternatively, discreet personnel whom only the women know about can be utilised to register sexual harassment complaints in order to overcome low literacy rates, management harassment, and other various security issues, acting as a symbolic Complaint Box.*

*The Complaint Box could instead be personnel working in the factory whose identities are extremely discreet. Therefore, women working in factories have the opportunity to speak with such personnel about sexual harassment in order to break the culture of silence, overcome sexual harassment by the management team, and not face the issue of low literacy rates. Such discreet personnel can then register complaints to the Committee for investigation.*

**Lessons Learned:** *The NCCWE should have similar requirements as grassroots unions to make female members' participation at higher, decision making levels mandatory.*

**New Programmes:** *New initiatives addressing interventions on internal migration from rural to urban settings will begin. Research has been conducted on internal migration and advocated by ILO and implemented by BRAC.*

## **8. The Way Forward**

### **● Adopting the ILO Code of Practices**

**ILO, MoLE, BEF, and NCCWE are attempting to adopt the ILO Code of Practice:** The ILO Code of Practice is to be utilised to address violence in the workplace as a guiding document for reviewing the Labour Act, 2006 and other relevant policies and laws through the Bangladeshi context. It is an international guiding document for any type of workplace violence and therefore, has been submitted to the MoLE, BEF, and NCCWE for adoption. It will assist in enhancing a conducive work environment and provide support and care for vulnerable women and girls in the work place once adopted. A tripartite meeting held

jointly between all interested parties was held to influence the MoLE on adopting the ILO Code of Practice. This holistic meeting is a positive movement towards the adoption of the international document, as it proves that more than one sector is interested in its adoption and implementation in Bangladesh.



The ILO Code of Practice is yet to be accepted by MoLE, BEF, and NCCWE. The NCCWE has little female participation at higher, decision making and influential levels which may slow down the process of adopting the ILO Code of Practice.

***Steps Forward:** In order to solidify the adoption of the ILO Code of Practices, all interested parties, including ILO, MoLE, BEF, and NCCWE must consistently hold meetings to discuss concrete methods to push for its adoption. Interested parties must be aware that adopting an international document will benefit Bangladesh in following international standards.*

### ● **The Future Adoption of the GEP**

**ILO and BEF is drafting the Gender Equality Policy (GEP):** With ILO's technical and financial support including providing consultants and facilitators, BEF completed a draft of the GEP which will be made mandatory for all businesses, enterprises, and employers in Bangladesh once approved. The GEP will be a guiding policy, making gender equality in terms of workers' rights and fair wages mandatory. The GEP is currently in circulation and ILO and BEF has high hopes that the GEP will soon be approved and adopted.

***Scale up:** Increase the amount of slum and urban courtyard meetings in order for more women to understand their rights in the workplace. Increase and intensify group discussions on violence against women and sexual harassment in the workplace for all sectors in order to enhance the internalisation of eradicating gender based violence. Additionally, increase pressure on BEF to approve the Gender Equity Policy*

### ● **Developing a National VAW Database**

**UNDP is developing and implementing a national database on violence against women:** Discussions were held at different district levels with district Upazila women



officers and local media professionals regarding the development of violence against women database. UNDP undertook a scoping mission based on lessons learned, including a mapping exercise and drafted a proposed strategic document for a comprehensive national database to be utilised by different stakeholders whenever gender violence information is required. As part of this strategy development, a pilot initiative was undertaken by UNDP in order to establish the database as a tool to provide quantitative support to various anecdotes illustrating violence affecting women in 44 Unions under six Upazillas of six Districts.

Under UNDP, field data is being collected by UP elected female members of the WDF and local youths of the Union Facilitation Team. Data is being compiled by the BRAC District Officer and shared with the respective Upazilla Women Affairs Officers (UWAOs) and District Women Affairs Officers (DWAOs). Pilot tests were conducted in order to gauge how effective coordination can be undertaken between the demand side of the gender based violence database which includes disadvantaged community members, Union Information Service Centres, UP and Upazilla Standing Committees, Upazillas, and DWAOs and with the supply side including DLACs, the District Administration, the police, hospitals, shelter homes, BRAC, and other NGOs. The respective six Upazilla UWAOs and the corresponding six DWAOs are currently reporting on a monthly basis on VAW incidents to DWA and MoWCA.

UNDP and its partners are working to enhance the gender based violence database in becoming national. The vision of the creation of this database is so that the Judiciary, policy makers, and international organizations can access the database and attain credible, reliable, and statistical information on the situation of gender violence in Bangladesh and therefore, make more informed decisions on future programmes in the country.

***Steps Forward:*** Continue creation of a credible database on violence against women in Bangladesh, including completion of the Policy Dialogue on the National Database on Violence against Women in order to highlight key national achievements, challenges, and the way forward based on studies, findings, and field experience.

