

Annual Report

June 2021-May2022



Beneficiary Community:

Approximately 500,000 Bihari Urdu speaking camp dwellers have been living in 116 camps of 13 regions in urban settings across Bangladesh. Owing to misinformation and media bias, the community has been antagonised as being against the emancipation of Bangladesh. Almost for four decades they were identified as stateless. However, their statelessness ceased in 2008. A group of young generation from Geneva Camp filed a writ petition in High Court in 2003, claiming to be Bangladeshi citizens and after another writ petition in 2008, high court declared that the Biharis those are living in 116 Camps are Bangladeshi citizens and Urdu Speaking Bangladeshis. Albeit that preliminary success, the camps still remain delapidated, unfit for human habitation. All the Camps are based in urban environments such as Mohammadpur, Mirpur, Adamjee, Mymensingh, Rangpur, Bogura, Saidpur, Khulna, Ishwardi and Chittagong.

Project Justification:

The 2008 landmark verdict of the High Court ascertaining that the Bihari community is indeed a part of the national social fabric raised hope in thousands of youths, who conceived Bangladesh to be their home from birth. Due to lack of mass awareness on the High Court landmark verdict among the general people and government official, the camp dwellers have not only been deprived from their civil and political rights but also from their socioeconomic and cultural rights. The Urdu speaking camp dwellers are yet to enjoy the citizenship rights and have been facing difficulties to get their national identity card, enroll in voter list, passport and access to basic services provided by government and non-government service providers.

Considering their deprivation and sufferings to have full access to citizenship rights, since June 2013, in partnership with Nagorik Uddyog and Council of Minorities funded by NAMATI-US have been working to promote their citizenship rights considering the following objectives:

- To build an effective model for using legal empowerment approaches, specifically community-based paralegals, to facilitate the acquisition and use of identity documents to gain access to rights and opportunities part of the core content of citizenship;
- To develop robust evidence on the relationship between identity documentation and statelessness, including current government practice and discrimination that may

contribute to an ongoing lack of effective citizenship, despite the possession of identity documents;

- To encourage use of this evidence for national litigation and national or international advocacy efforts related to gaining access to effective citizenship rights, if necessary.

Project overview:

To respond to these justice challenges, in 2013 the Council of Minorities and Nagorik Uddyog partnered to establish a network of community-based paralegals in Urdu-speaking camps funded by NAMATI-US in Dhaka (Mirpur and Mohammadpur), Mymensingh, Khulna, Chittagong, and Saidpur under the project of **“Empowering Linguistic Minorities to Realize Rights in Bangladesh”**. Community-based paralegals can bridge the gap between law and real life. They use knowledge of law and government, and skills like negotiation, community education, organizing, and advocacy to seek concrete solutions to instances of injustice. In addition to serving as a dynamic “frontline” of justice service providers, paralegals focus on empowerment. They not only work alongside clients to resolve a legal issue, but also leave each client in a stronger position to deal with similar problems in the future – critical in the Urdu-speaking community, which has been marginalized through statelessness, discrimination, and poverty.

In total 14 paralegals are working in six paralegal centers in Dhaka- Mohammadpur, Mirpur, Saidpur, Mymensingh, Khulna and in Chittagong. Paralegals are working three ways that are

- i) Assist to the Camp dwellers to achieve civil documents
- ii) Awareness on legal education and access to justice
- iii) Capacity building of communit

Assist to the Camp dwellers to achieve civil documents

Paralegals are assisting the camp dwellers to achieve civil documents like Birth and Death Certificates, Councilor Certificate, National Identity Card, Passport, Tread License, General Dairy, Opening Bank Account, Health Support, Education Support, Old Age Allowance, Disable Allowance, Ration Card & Death Certificate (Warish).



Activities Summary table June, 2021 to May, 2022

Center	Birth Certificate	Councilor Certificate	NID Card		Passport		Trade License		General Dairy	Adult Allowance	Bank Account	Disable Allowance	Health Support	Death Certificate	Education Support	Waris Certificate	Affidavit	Covid Vaccine	TIN	Total
			New	Re-New	New	Re-New	New	Re-new												
Mohammadpur	1181	2	0	7	0	0	1	0	0	4	2	0	41	2	0	0	0	205	0	1445
Mirpur	1102	116	5	14	17	4	4	2	12	0	4	0	56	0	22	0	0	401	0	1759
Saidpur	113	19	0	0	0	0	0	0	18	0	4	0	5	3	8	2	1	378	0	551
Chittagong	238	14	2	36	1	0	2	0	0	0	3	0	4	0	14	0	0	714	1	1029
Mymensingh	288	128	2	7	0	0	2	1	1	0	1	0	7	0	0	0	0	153	0	590
Khulna	20	37	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	2	6	0	84	0	13	0	0	206	0	369
Total	2942	316	9	64	18	4	9	3	32	6	20	0	197	5	57	2	1	2057	1	5743

Testimonial of civil documents

Name: Dulari Aktar

Address: Roufabad Colony, Chittagong

Cell: 01980315635,

Paralegal: Sarfaraz Alam

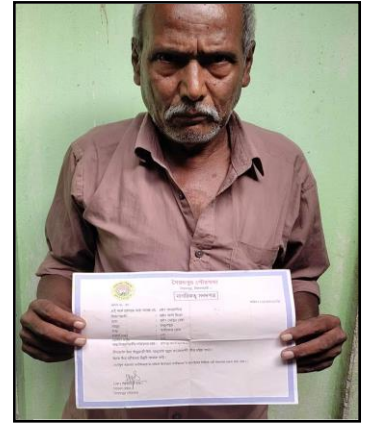


Saviour in beige jackets...

Dulari Aktar: The COVID-19 pandemic wrought havoc in the lives of many. Among the many affected was Mrs. Aktar. Owing to circumstances beyond control, she was unable to apply for Birth Certificates. However, to sit for her S.S.C examination, she required one. Her desire was to apply online, but without any idea of the procedures, she was a lost boat in a merciless ocean. Residing in Chittagong, at the Roufabad camp, information in such regions was also very difficult to come by. With no assistance in sight, it was feared that her dreams of attaining higher education would have to stay as a dream only. The withering hope, along with nestled depression all made it much more difficult for her to think clearly. Through this brain fog, a beacon of bleak possibility at redemption slowly alighted in her psyche, when she learned that paralegals provided such services without any cost. She contacted a paralegal of CoM, Sarfaraz Alam, and expressed her problems. Understanding the gravity of her situation, he hastily processed all the paperwork, produced the fees to the counsellor's office and therefore, the Birth Certificate was made. However, the paralegal understood that was not nearly enough. The increasing cases of COVID-19 put her and her family in a very insecure position. With rising deaths among the elderly population, and the youths being very prone to spreading the virus, it was critical for them to be enrolled into the vaccine program. Mrs. Aktar was enrolled using her Birth Certificate, and she was able to obtain her vaccination certificate. However, it would be unwise to think that the tempest cleared. There were inconsistencies between the information on her parents' identification documents and the vaccination documents. This also produced problems for her eligibility as a S.S.C candidate. Therefore, the paralegal informed the principal of the school who quickly produced an application required for the rectification process. The requisites were fulfilled, with the deposits made, and they received the rectified certificate within due time. She was able to sit for her S.S.C exams. Currently, she is awaiting her results. She dreams of becoming a doctor, holding a noble profession in society, helping thousands and putting on a smile on the faces of her parents. She has informed the paralegal of her satisfaction with the services, and recommends the service of paralegals to her friends with great enthusiasm.

Name: Md Kamruddin
Address: Rasulpur Camp, Saidpur
Cell: 01955754856

Paralegal: Nagma Parveen

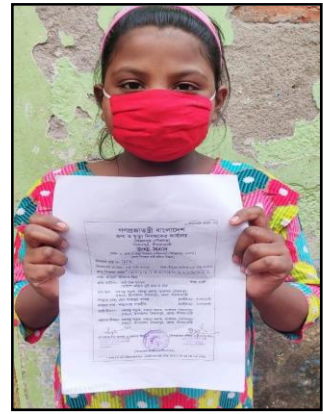


Daring to dream.....

Md Kamruddin: Mr. Kamruddin is a resident of the Rasulpur Camp in Saidpur. For a while he dreamt of travelling abroad as part of his personal aspirations. Along with travelling opportunities, he could get better health services in places such as India, and thus, it was a very important step for him. Therefore, he applied to have his passport made. However, in the application process, he saw that he needed a NID or a Citizen Certificate. Being very ignorant of both these documents, he wrote an application to the passport officials, which was never relied on. The lack of ways demoralised him, and he felt his aspirations wither. Since he was sealed as a Bihari, he was very much prone to discrimination, and he believed that he was being discriminated against unjustly- a false narrative produced through anxiety and panic. This elevated his despair. However, when he attended a meeting set up by paralegals he immediately gained hope when learning about the works that paralegals do. He contacted a paralegal of CoM, Nagma Parveen, who listened to his problems and understood the course of action necessary to be taken. She took Mr Kamruddin to the counsellor's office where she informed the counsellor, the client being a Bihari, he had no Holding number, they needed a written application from the counsellor himself. The counsellor finally understood the necessity and upon appreciating the gravity, promptly produced the application, and he used that to obtain the Citizenship Certificate. Using the latter, he was also able to obtain his passport. As of this moment, Mr. Kamruddin believes that his dream is still alive, and one day aspires to sail the seven seas. He has expressed his best wishes to all the paralegals of CoM, especially Nagma Parveen, and uses his experience and knowledge to let others become aware of such government processes.

Name: MST Masuda Aktar Mim
Address: Chamragudam Camp, Saidpur
Cell: 01717874456

Paralegal: Md Rubel



Second shot at life.....

MST Masuda Aktar Mim: Mrs. Mim resides at the Chamragudam Camp in Saidpur. Through years of strenuous efforts, development of a diligent character, and sustaining her resilient spirit, she was able to complete higher secondary education. However, with the absence of a birth certificate she was ineligible for admissions in any university. This undermined her self-esteem, and she started to dissociate from happiness. She lost all hope, not knowing how to wade through the red tape, unaware and ignorant of the processes of obtaining Birth Certificates. The assistance came in the form of a revelation, when she attended an Outreach meeting in the camp hosted by the paralegals of CoM. She was elated to learn that a team of expert legal personnel assisted, free of cost, in attaining such documents. Therefore, she immediately contacted paralegal Md Rubel, who informed her of the necessary government fees required to be deposited and the information they needed to produce the certificate. The paperwork was swiftly filled, and she received her certificate in due time. With the certificate she was able to apply to universities, getting admission in one of them. Owing to her merit, she was also offered a scholarship, which she was able to extract using her Birth Certificate. As of this moment, she is on the track of her dreams, learning about the world and utilizing her experience to make others aware of the necessities of such government documents. Hope has consolidated her knowledge, building confidence as she aspires to a brighter future.

Door to door outreach

Every day paralegals are conducting outreach meetings inside the Camp. During the outreach in Covid-19 situation they are minting social distancing issue and wearing face mask and using hand sanitizer while in the field. Through the outreach they disseminate the message of 2008 high court judgment, importance and uses of the civil documentation like birth certificate, national identity card, passport, trade license and other many services. Every day they are assigned to visit at list 5 houses in their rotational weekly plan. Through the daily outreach paralegals reached **42,079** Camp dwellers and disseminated the message of 2008 high court judgment, uses and importance of the civil documentations in their daily lives. The step towards eradicating ignorance regarding such critical matters is crucial to the sustainable development of camp dwellers.

Through the daily outreach paralegals reached 9,254 families and empowered 20,998 males and 21,081 females.



Area	Daily Outreach Beneficiaries (June 2021 to May 2022)			
	No. of Families	Male/Boys	Female/Girls	Total
<i>Mohammadpur</i>	1402	2590	2672	5262
<i>Mirpur</i>	2504	5697	6651	12348
<i>Chittagong</i>	2036	4681	4609	9290
<i>Saidpur</i>	1511	3624	3455	7079
<i>Mymensingh</i>	825	1756	1772	3528
<i>Khulna</i>	976	2650	1922	4572
Total	9254	20998	21081	42079

Community Group Meeting:

Paralegals organize community group meeting and they invite 15 women, men, boys and girls to attend the community group meeting. In the group meeting they disseminate the message of 2008 high court judgment and realize them how Biharis have ended their statelessness through the high court. In the group meeting they discuss about the importance and uses of the civil documentations in their daily life. In June 2021 to May 2022, project period paralegals organized total **504** group meetings with the participants of **7,560** community members.



Community Group Meeting on Legal Identity & Legal Education June 2021 to May 2022

Area	No. of GM	Beneficiaries				Total
		Male	Female	Boys	Girls	
Mohammadpur	108	0	1250	25	345	1620
Mirpur	144	0	1787	14	359	2160
Saidpur	72	15	696	68	301	1080
Chittagong	108	0	1207	106	307	1620
Mymensingh	36	0	408	15	122	545
Khulna	36	0	379	20	136	535
Total	504	15	5727	248	1570	7560

Pro-bono Workshop for capacity building of the community

In June 2021 to May 2022 we have organized 48 Pro-bono workshop in 6 paralegal centers and invited 40 community members consist of 20 women and 20 boys & girls together in each center. We have educated them to learn the making of civil documentation themselves without anyone's help and inspired them to assist others to get these civil documentations. Community people expressed their gratitude to Council of Minorities and NAMATI for their initiative and hard work for the camp dwellers. They also requested intensely to continue this project because civil documentations are one of the key element for the camp dwellers to claim them self as Bangladeshi Citizens. The paralegal services became the voice of their silence.



Workshop on Legal Identity & Legal Education June 2021 to May 2022					
Area	No. of WS	Beneficiaries (Probono)			Total
		Women Group	Youth Group		
		Female	Boys	Girls	
Mohammadpur	8	80	40	40	160
Mirpur	8	80	40	40	160
Chittagong	8	80	40	40	160
Saidpur	8	80	40	40	160
Mymensingh	8	80	40	40	160
Khulna	8	80	40	40	160
Total	48	480	240	240	960

Activities Picture's

