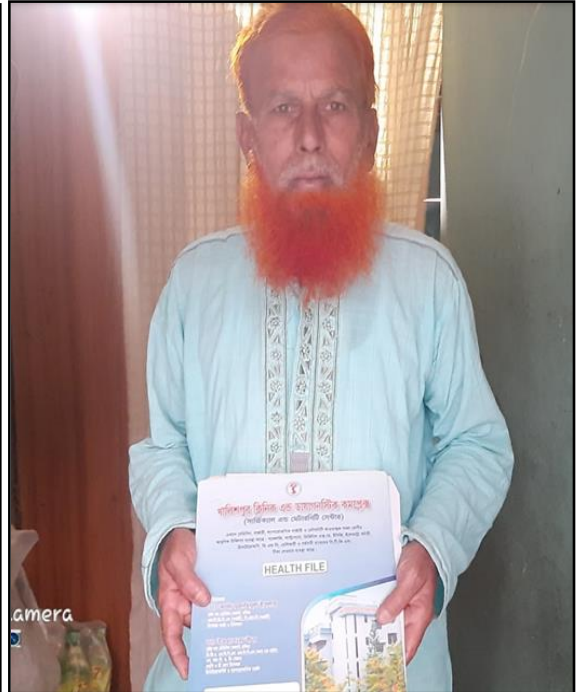


Annual report
June-2022 to May-2023



Partnership

Council of Minorities and Namati are supporting the community-based paralegals to work in Urdu-speaking camps across five cities in Bangladesh. The paralegals are empowering their fellow Urdu-speakers to understand their rights as citizens and to obtain and use legal identity documents. Paralegals also track each case to build an empirical understanding of how relevant laws are implemented.

Community history and context

Approximately 300,000 Bihari Urdu speaking camp dwellers have been living in 116 camps of 13 regions in urban settings across Bangladesh. In 1947, India was partitioned into two countries-India and Pakistan. That partition forced the religious minorities of both countries to leave their ancestors' homes and take shelter in Pakistan or India to protect and promote their religion, culture, language and economic interests. The Urdu speaking Muslim minority of the Indian provinces of Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, Orissa and West Bengal migrated to the then East Pakistan (now Bangladesh).

In 1971, East Pakistan revolted against the rule of West Pakistan and fought a 9-month war of liberation, which resulted in the emergence of Bangladesh in 16th December 1971. A small section of the Urdu speaking community played an anti-liberation role by siding with the Pakistan army and therefore, at the end of the war Biharis became victims of the situation and were forced to abandon their homes, business, properties and employment. The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) built large and small settlements Camps all over in Bangladesh and to provide shelter, food and medical support to the displaced Biharis. These settlements, approximately 116 in number, are commonly known as Bihari camps. Residents were in effect stateless, without identity documents to recognize citizenship in any country.

However, in 2008, the High Court of Bangladesh confirmed that the Urdu-speaking camp dwellers are Bangladeshi citizens, and this landmark verdict raises a hope among the young Urdu-speakers ending of decades-long struggle with statelessness. The landmark decision was the result of filing a writ petition by 11 camp residents on behalf of the whole community. After this 2008 verdict, the Election Commission complied with court orders to enroll camp residents in the national voter lists and issue national identity cards.

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 Namati Council of Minorities have been working to promote their citizenship rights.

Legal empowerment approach through community paralegal:

In order to bridge between law and real life of the Urdu speaking communities in the country, we have been providing paralegal legal support through six community based paralegal centers in Dhaka (Mirpur and Mohammadpur), Mymensingh, Khulna, Chittagong, and Saidpur. Camp dwellers and others who have questions or need on legal support come to our paralegal centers. 15 youths are assigned as community based paralegals to provide knowledge on law and government information to the community people and providing skills like negotiation, community education, approach of organizing and advocacy to seek concrete solutions to instances of injustice. In addition, they are serving as a dynamic “frontline” of justice service providers, paralegals focus on empowerment. They are not only working for resolving client’s legal issues but also building each client capacity that they can deal with problems related with access to justice in future.

Paralegals do outreach, every day door to door visit, organize community group meeting and community forum. At paralegal centers, paralegals provide information about the law, prepare application in the paralegal center, accompany the clients to government office to apply and they do follow up on delays and denials of the cases.

Paralegal Activities and assistance

Door to Door Outreach

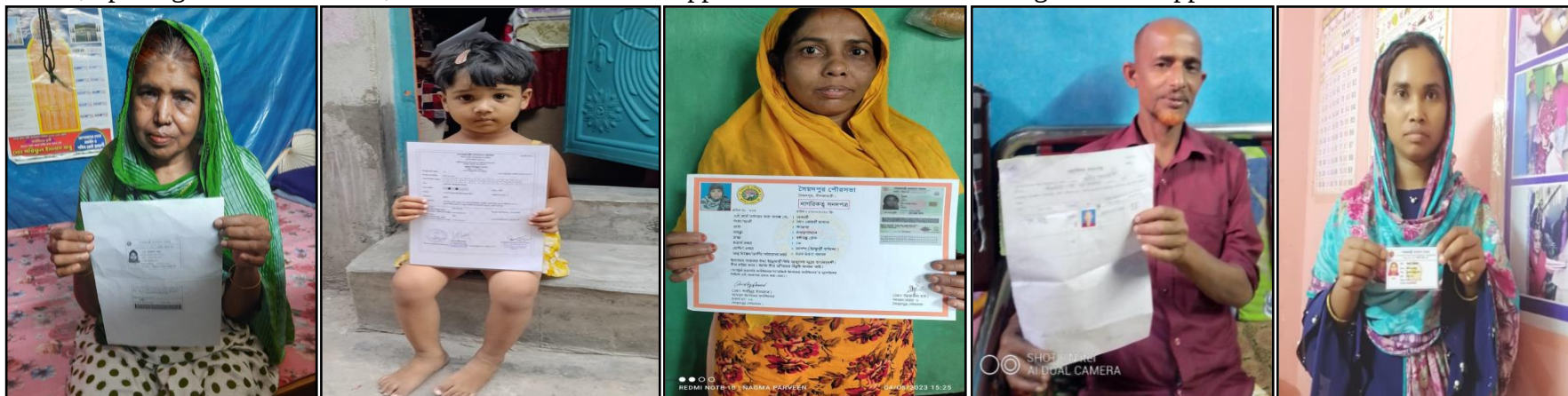
Every day paralegals are doing outreach inside the Camp. Every Paralegal are assign at list visit 5 families daily and disseminate the 2008 High Court Judgment, importance and uses of civil documentations. **Through the daily outreach paralegals reached 8,706 families and empowered 19,257 males and 20,412 females.**

June-2022 to May-2023 (outreach)				
Area	Families	Male	Female	Total
Mirpur	2189	4528	5452	9980
Mohammadpur	1068	2228	2398	4626
Chittagong	2298	5380	5489	10869
Saidpur	1235	2812	2864	5676
Mymensingh	880	2026	1882	3908
Khulna	1036	2283	2327	4610
Total	8706	19257	20412	39669



Assist to the Camp dwellers to achieved civil documentations:

Paralegals are assisting to the Camp dwellers to successfully achieved civil documentations including birth and death certificates, commissioner certificate, national identity card, passport, trade license, old age allowance, disable allowance, general dairy in police station, opening the bank account, educational and health support and Covid-19 vaccine registration support.



Activities Summary table June-2022 to May-2022

Working Area's	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-19 Vaccine	Pregnancy allowance	Total
			New	Re-New	New	Re-New	New	Re-new												
Mohammadpur	810	8	14	7	0	0	6	2	2	29	1	0	39	0	1	0	0	9	0	928
Mirpur	682	241	126	8	41	8	8	0	12	2	1	0	54	1	6	0	0	152	0	1342
Saidpur	332	27	15	1	2	0	0	0	6	0	7	0	13	1	9	1	0	27	3	444
Chittagong	255	80	72	26	2	0	1	0	0	0	3	0	22	0	59	2	0	198	0	720
Mymensingh	232	37	0	0	0	0	8	0	0	0	1	0	24	1	0	0	0	0	0	303
Khulna	39	46	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	10	0	133	0	16	0	0	13	0	257
Total	2350	439	227	42	45	8	23	2	20	31	23	0	285	3	91	3	0	399	3	3994

Testimonial of civil documents

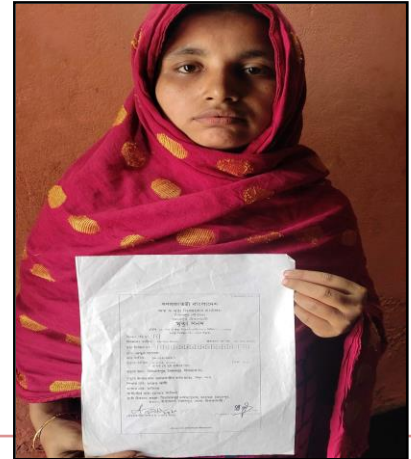
Name: Nasima

Occupation: Housewife

Address: Chamragudam Camp, Saidpur.

Cell: 01945868599

Paralegal: Md. Rubel



A story of Death Certificate client

Late Nasima Begum (20) was a resident of Chamragudam Camp, Saidpur. One-and-a-half-year ago she died due to illness. Once paralegal Md. Rubel outreach to the Late Nasima's house. Md. Rubel told Nasima's family how he provides paralegal assistance to those living in the camp. From paralegal Rubel they came to know that how camp living peoples should provide paralegal assistance from him. Nasima's family told paralegal Rubel that there was an insurance policy in Nasima's name. After Nasima's death, when the family claim the insurance money, the insurance company told them to submit required documents. But Nasima's family did not know how to get these documents. Insurance company not helping them in any way and also harassing them. They went there several times and seek their help but they disappointed again and again. Almost a year passed, but Nasima's family could not get the insurance money.

Paralegal Rubel along with Nasima's family to the insurance company and the office staff gave him a list of the required documents. The insurance company informed paralegal that the Warishnama and Death Certificate of Nasima was required to withdraw the insurance claim money. Paralegal Know that Birth certificate, Councilor certificate, Burial certificate, Hospital certificate was required to get Warishnama and Death Certificate. At first paralegal assist them to get the birth certificate of Nasima. After that he assist them to get councilor certificate, burial certificate, hospital certificate.

Paralegal Rubel collected Nasima's birth certificate, councilor's certificate, burial certificate, hospital certificate and applied for Warishnama and death certificate from the municipal office.

Finally, the received the death certificate and Warishnama. Paralegal Rubel along with Nasima's mother and brother to the insurance office and completed all the procedures and filed the insurance claim withdrawal application. After 1 week the insurance office called Nasima's family and handed over the insurance claim.

Nasima's family is very happy to receive the insurance money and says that this not be possible and they have not been able to collect the money if the paralegal had not approached them. They are very satisfied with the paralegal program and refer people to the paralegal center for such cases.

Testimonial of civil documents

Name: Ruma Akter

Occupation: Housewife

Address: Muslim Camp, Mirpur-10, Dhaka-1216

Paralegal: Punam Akter



A story of Birth Certificate, Councilor Certificate, Death Certificate, Burial Certificate, Hospital Certificate and Waris Certificate client

Ruma Akhtar (29), Chanda Begum (35) and Selina Akhtar (28) are 3 residents of Muslim Camp, Mirpur-10, Dhaka. They formed an Samiti for the purpose of saving and opened a joint account in the bank in the name of the Samiti with these 3 as signatories. A signatory of the Samati, Chanda Begum (35) was died. After the death of Chanda Begum, when they went to the bank to withdraw the society's money, the bank informed them that it was not possible for them to withdraw the money due to the death of Chanda Begum and told them to submit required documents. About two years passed, but they could not able to withdraw their Samiti money anyhow. On a group meeting conducted by Paralegal Punam, she learnt that the paralegal will help them to get all the documents needed to withdrew money from the Samiti bank account. Paralegal Punam along with Ruma Akhter and Selina Akhter went to the bank. The bank informed the paralegal that A nominee should be made instead of Chanda Begum and Birth certificate, Councilor certificate, Death certificate, Burial certificate, Hospital certificate and Warishnama are required of Chanda Begum.

At first paralegal assist them to get the birth certificate of Chanda Begum's 5 children. After that she assist them to get the birth certificate of Chanda Begum, councilor certificate, burial certificate, hospital certificate, Warishnama and death certificate of Chanda Begum.

After completing all the procedures, Paralegal took Ruma, Selina and Chanda's children to the bank. Bank informed them that a page was missing from the bank deposit check book and for that a general diary copy should be compulsory to submit the bank. Immediately, the paralegal took them to the police station and help them to get the general diary. By submitting the copy of the general diary to the bank, they apply for the signatory change in the bank. The bank authorities asked them to come to the bank after 5 working days. After 5 days' bank transferred the money from the joint account to Ruma Akter's account. Samiti's 96,000/- was withdrawn from Ruma Akter's account and everyone in the Samiti received the money according to their own amount and Chanda Begum's children also received their mother's money.

Paralegal Poonam Akhter helps them directly in all the process of withdrawing money from the bank and they are very satisfied with the help of paralegal.

Community Group Meeting:

Paralegals organize community group meeting and invite 10-15 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. They also discuss about the importance and uses of the civil documentations in their daily life.



**Community Group Meeting on Legal Identity & Legal Education
June-2022 to May-2023**

Area	No. of GM	Beneficiaries				Total
		Male	Female	Boys	Girls	
Mohmmadpur	113	0	1295	20	380	1695
Mirpur	154	0	1765	40	505	2310
Saidpur	72	20	570	75	175	840
Chittagong	108	15	905	125	335	1380
Mymensingh	36	10	370	35	125	540
Khulna	36	15	750	60	195	1020
Total	519	60	5655	355	1715	7785

Pro-bono Workshop for capacity building of the community

In June 2022 to May 2023 we have organized 24 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 civil documentation and its usage June-2022 to May-2023

Area	No. of WS	Beneficiaries (Probono)			Total
		Women Group	Youth Group		
		Female	Boys	Girls	
Mohammadpur	4	40	12	28	80
Mirpur	4	40	9	31	80
Chittagong	4	40	15	25	80
Saidpur	4	40	14	26	80
Mymensingh	4	40	11	29	80
Khulna	4	40	15	25	80
Total	24	240	76	164	480

Community Advocacy meeting on importance and usage of civil documentations

In June 2022 to May 2023 we have organized 24 advocacy meeting in 6 paralegal centers and invited 20 community members consist of male, female, boy's and girl's together in each center. We have enhanced their knowledge about 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.



Advocacy meeting June-2022 to May-2023

Area	No. of A.M.	Beneficiaries (Probono)				Total
		Male	Female	Boys	Girls	
Mohammadpur	4	10	50	8	12	80
Mirpur	4	6	57	7	10	80
Chittagong	4	17	41	12	10	80
Saidpur	4	21	30	14	15	80
Mymensingh	4	13	51	6	10	80
Khulna	4	4	50	1	25	80
Total	24	71	279	48	82	480

