



TAIWAN FOUNDATION
for DEMOCRACY

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Report of the Taiwan Foundation for Democracy Grant

Educating Rural Women and Young Girls on Democratic Rights in Bangladesh.

Grantee Organization: Prova Society

Project Coordinator: Md. Robiul Islam

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Executive Summary

Women's full and effective participation and decision-making in public life will lead to eliminate of violence, for achieving gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girl. The status of women in Bangladesh has been ranked the lowest in the world on the basis of twenty indicators related to health, marriage, children, education, employment and social equality. It is a well-established fact that in a patriarchal society like Bangladesh, women are in lower status as men who have the sovereign power to control households and society as a whole, while women are often isolated in their homes. Rural women and young girls remain one of the most marginalised groups in Bangladesh because of their low economic status, gender inequalities and patriarchal society. They are disproportionately subjected to violence and discrimination, and are deprived of access to public services such as education and health, as well as to other opportunities to improve their lives. Rural women are underrepresented in Bangladesh's national and local political bodies, and are excluded from the political process because of a lack of education, skills and low economic status. The aim of this project was to increase the skills of rural women and young girls to participate in the peace-building and political processes in Bangladesh. Young girls who will be mother next time have no choice to take decision. They are always deprived for their basic needs. On the other hand, young boys enjoy most of the opportunities in terms of food, play time, etc.

This project has implemented in Fifteen (15) villages of Jhenaidah Sadar Upazila under Jhenaidah district of Bangladesh. The objective of the project was to educate and develop consciousness and awareness among the rural women and young girls on democratic rights and women rights through education seminar and school meeting.

Through implementing the project 750 rural women have educated on democratic rights and women rights. As a result, women participation in the local government election and decision making process in the family as well as in the society have increased. Young girls are educated on democratic and women rights. They are now able to motivate their peer on women rights regarding early marriage, force marriage, benefit of education etc. Democratic culture increased and decreased discrimination between men and women. The women of the project villages got opportunity of placing their disputes and thus they will be getting just which did not exist in their family and their societies. Mass awareness created among administration and local government departments which will help women to participate in democratic system. Early marriage and divorce have reduced in the project area. Women and girls will practice democratic rights individually in family, in groups and in community. Social justice, gender relation, human rights and women's rights are duly honoured and followed, conflicts are reduced.

Chapter 1:

1. Title of the Project:

Educating Rural Women and Young Girls on Democratic Rights in Bangladesh.

2. Project Description:

2.1. Project Objectives:

The objectives of the project were to:

- Educate and develop consciousness and awareness among the rural women group members and young girls on democratic rights and women rights through educational seminar.
- Develop consciousness and awareness about democratic rights of rural women, violation and torture of women etc. among the village leaders, religious leaders and elected representative of local government through arranging meetings.

2.2. Location of the project:

The project has implemented in 15 villages of Jhenaidah Sadar Upazila under Jhenidah district of Bangladesh.

<i>District</i>	<i>Upazila</i>	<i>Union</i>	<i>Villages</i>
<i>Jhenaidah</i>	<i>Jhenaidah Sadar</i>	<i>Paglakana</i>	<i>Voruapara</i>
			<i>Korapar</i>
			<i>Baribathan</i>
			<i>Baniakandor</i>
		<i>Moharajpur</i>	<i>Kulbaira</i>
			<i>Bharatpur</i>
			<i>Horipur</i>
			<i>Poromanadopur</i>
		<i>Jhenaidah Paurashova</i>	<i>Vorotpur</i>
			<i>Khajura</i>
			<i>Muraridah</i>
		<i>Saganna</i>	<i>Narayonpur</i>
			<i>Sahebnagar</i>
			<i>Baidanga</i>
			<i>Saganna</i>

2.3. Project Activities:

The following activities have been successfully implemented by the grant:

2.3.1. Beneficiary Selection:

Initially before start of the project 750 women of the age 16-45 years were selected from 15 rural villages for this project.

2.3.2. Formation of Project Implementation Committee (PIC):

For better implementation of project and ensure community participation, 15 (Fifteen) Project Implementation Committee (PIC) formed among all group members of project area and Staff of Prova Society in each respective village. Total member of the committee was 15. They committee was one Chairman, one Secretary, and eight Executive Members. The PIC provided suggestions and took part to supervision and monitoring the project activities and provides feedback. Project Implementation Committee helped to resolve the women related dispute in the locality. The following activities were performed by the PIC throughout the project period:

- PIC provided suggestion and took part in the supervision and monitoring the project activities and provided feedback to project coordinator.
- Assisted women taking part decision-making process in the society.
- Assist to prevent early marriage and dowry.
- Cooperate women for taking litigation steps as and where required
- Involved creation of consciousness and awareness among the village peoples about the women and child trafficking and early marriage.

2.3.3 Arrange Women's Educational Seminar on Democratic Rights and Women Rights:

Rural women are underrepresented in Bangladesh's national and local political bodies, and are excluded from the political process because of a lack of education, skills and low economic status. They have lack of education on women rights especially on democratic rights. To educate the rural women on democratic rights and women rights, 15 seminars arranged where about 750 women (50 women per seminar) participated from the proposed project area. In the seminar, speakers discussed about the issues of democratic rights of women and its violation, what are the rights of women and how they can enjoy it? Through this seminar women got scopes of sharing of experience and refining their knowledge on women rights and their violation. They also learned about what government legal services are available for them and where and how to get it. They also learned how to participate in the development activities in the society and election of local government. They will be able to participate in the decision making process in their family as well as in their society.

2.4. Results:

- 750 Rural women of the aged 16-45 years became sufficiently educated, conscious and aware of various rights which have helped them to establish their rights considerably and a part of them entering into the mainstream of development.
- Increased women participation in the local government election and decision making process in the family as well as in the society
- As the women are conscious about their rights, their children are being conscious about their rights.
- Reduced the rate of early marriage and suicide in the project area.
- Increase democratic culture and decreased discrimination between men and women.
- The women of the project villages got opportunity of placing their disputes and thus they will be getting just which is presently does not exist.
- Women are practicing their rights individually in family, in groups and in the community level. Social justice, gender relation, women's rights are dully honored and followed. Conflict in the family and in the society is reduced.
- Increased knowledge among the rural women about the issues and practice in the daily lives and also disseminate the information among others.
- Mass awareness created among administration and government departments will help women to participate in democratic system.
- They will practice individually in family, in groups and in community. Social justice, gender relation, human rights and women's rights are duly honoured and followed, conflicts are reduced.
- Elected representative of local government (Chairman, member), village leaders and religious leaders are aware about women rights and they it will create positive environment for women to get proper justice.
- Rural women will become leaders of their own lives as well as in their community.

Chapter 2:

Conclusions and Recommendations:

Practice of democratic rights and human rights among rural women are increasing in Bangladesh. But the rate of democratic rights practice is increasing in our project areas considerably. Rural women are now participating local government election, local decision making process and can take part in family decision making process also. This project has helped rural women and young girls to educate them on democratic rights and women rights which helped them to increase their knowledge on democratic and women rights. Women have been providing information on their family member as well as in their society people about the democratic rights. Through seminar young girls came to know their basic rights in terms of their physical and family matters. Young women will be the future mother and they need to know their democratic and human rights. This project will need further replicate in other areas of Jhenidah district to raise awareness among more poor rural women and girls and other civil society members to established democratic process in the country.

Acknowledgement

This is a publication of the Prova Society. Prova Society is a non-profit voluntary organization working for the socioeconomic development of poor and disadvantaged people and promotion of democracy and human rights in Bangladesh in 1991. I would like express my gratitude to Taiwan Foundation for Democracy for continuous support to promote the democratic rights of rural women and young girls in Bangladesh. Through implemented this project rural women and young girls in our project area understood about their democratic rights and women rights and they will get opportunity to apply this knowledge in their family as well as their society's decision making process. We are grateful to the Project Implementation Committee (PIC) and Community Members for their kind cooperation to provide places and help for timely organized the seminars. I would also like to thank to my staffs and volunteers for timely completion of the project activities. I am especially like to give thanks to the beneficiaries for providing their valuable feedback and timely attend the seminar. I would also like to give thanks to our Executive Committee (EC) Members of Prova Society for their valuable suggestions and support to make this project success and prepare this report.