



UNDP's unique flagship project Activating Village Courts in Bangladesh Phase III (AVCB Phase III) aims to further empower village courts across the nation as an effective local dispute resolution mechanism. With a total budget of \$50.01 million (Tk 426.35 crore), the project is a collaborative effort, with the Government of Bangladesh (GoB) contributing USD 18.64 million (Tk 157.51 crore), the European Union (EU) and United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Bangladesh contributing USD 28.37 million (Tk 243.14 crore) and \$3 million (Tk 25.70 crore) respectively. The Local Government Division (LGD) is implementing the project with the technical assistance of UNDP Bangladesh. The project is being implemented with the field assistance of three responsible partners, namely, Eco-Social Development Organization (ESDO) (Mymensingh, Rajshahi and Rangpur divisions including part of Dhaka division), WAVE Foundation (Barishal and Khulna divisions including part of Dhaka division) and Young Power in Social Action (YPSA) (Chattogram and Sylhet divisions including part of Dhaka division).

AVCB Phase III Project was built following the successful implementation of the Activating Village Courts in Bangladesh (AVCB) Pilot Phase (2009-2015) in 351 unions covering 14 districts and 2<sup>nd</sup> Phase (2016-2022) in 1,080 unions covering 27 Districts while the Phase III Project has been scaled up to nation-wide (except CHT Districts) covering 4,453 Unions.



The AVCB Phase III strategy consists of three components, reflecting the outline in the Strategy Paper:

- Activation of Village Courts (VCs) in all UPs (3,041 UPs) not yet reached by the previous phases of the project
- Maintenance of performance of the existing VCs activated in AVCB -I and AVCB-II
- Mainstreaming of all PMU responsibilities to GoB staff to ensure the project is sustainably taken over by the Government by 2028.

#### Overall Objectives:

The overarching objective of the project is to increase access to justice for people in rural areas of Bangladesh, especially women ethnic minorities and disadvantaged groups. The specific objectives of the project are:

- To improve the capacity of the local justice sector to meet the justice needs of the population and make local authorities more responsive to address local justice needs and offer appropriate legal services

in the form of well-functioning VCs

- To empower people living in rural areas, especially women, the poor and other disadvantaged groups, to access village courts to resolve minor disputes.

#### Key Results through Program Interventions:

The primary program interventions are designed to achieve the following results:

##### Result 1.1 Duty bearers at national and local levels have improved their capacity to ensure Village Courts function fairly and effectively.

One of the project's main outcomes is related to building the capacity of VC service providers and other relevant stakeholders in village courts. The National Institute of Local Government (NILG) will be involved in the capacity building of VC service providers of 3,041 UPs through the District Resource Team (DRT) and Upazila Resource Team (URT).

In this regard, the capacity of faculty members of NILG, URT and DRT on VCs will be developed so that they can continue VCs' training after the end of the project. Beyond the NILG, the project will also ensure other National Training Institutes (BPATC, BCSAA, JATI) have updated materials and training on VCs as part of their curricula. In addition, 3,041 UPs will be equipped with Ejlash (Court Bench), furniture, and required forms-registers.

The project will develop a capacity-building strategy with a specific gender component that builds on the lessons from the AVCB-II cascade approach. Service providers (UP Chairs, AACOs, Secretaries, and Panel members) of VC and other stakeholders (UNO, DDLG, District Judges, civil society, and others) will be sensitized on gender to enhance buy-in and awareness of the issues.

##### Result 1.2 Revise Legal and Policy Framework for village courts are reviewed and enhanced for effective village courts

AVCB Phase III Project engages in advocacy and sensitization activities with the Law and Justice Division, Bangladesh Supreme Court, and the Ministry of Home Affairs for increasing case referrals from district courts to VCs and regularize coordination between UP Chairs and District Judiciary to oversee the VCs' services. For these purposes, the project will lobby with:

- National Legal Aid Services Organization (NLASO) to engage the District Legal Aid office for case referral, create awareness, and monitor VC sessions and documentations at UP level for quality assurance
- Supreme Court of Bangladesh for regularizing yearly coordination conference between UP Chairs and District Judiciary
- Legislative bodies to amend the VC Act, 2006, the Local Government (Union Parishad) Act, 2009 and amend Village Court Rules, 2016.

The project will draft an amendment proposal of Village Courts Rules based on the consultation with relevant stakeholders.

#### Result 1.3 Duty bearers have the resources capacity and ownership to manage and administer Village Courts after the completion of project

The project will work with LGD to develop and revise the exit strategy and prepare an action plan. In this regard, VC Desk will be developed at LGD, District and Upazila levels with appropriate personnel. The LGD will issue the necessary Government Orders (GOs) assigning GoB officials for VC at the central, District and Upazila level in coordination with the relevant ministry. This desk will be created before halfway of the project so that the key personnel can be capacitated to provide administrative, and supervision support to the VCs including ensuring the continuation of VCs, quality assurance and oversight, data collection and analysis, policy-making and strategic development of the VCs.

##### Result 2.1 Enhanced awareness of rural people especially indigenous people and ethnic minorities, women, people living in poverty and other vulnerable groups about services of Village Courts

The Project's outreach strategy will combine traditional and contemporary (ICT based) mechanisms to reach different groups based on gender, age, education level, media choice, etc. This includes mass media: TV, SMS messages through mobile phones, etc. Village Courts Campaign (rally, discussion, video show, village court service, demo hearing session, promotional material etc.) and a campaign on social media to promote VC will be carried out. Under this, a set of activities will be designed and will be carried out over a period on social media to raise awareness of VC services or to increase women's participation in VC activities.



The project will work closely to maximize the use of government platforms such as Bangladesh Television, Bangladesh Betar, and the Department of Mass Communication under the Ministry of Information to disseminate VC messages. The project will collaborate national and local officials in the Ministry of Information, as well as the District Information Officers, and local NGOs to disseminate VC messages.

##### Result 2.2 Evidence and knowledge sharing on VC functioning enhanced

Developing an evidence base and enhancing knowledge sharing has been an integral part of the AVCB III methodology. Best practices and

lessons learned are being captured regularly for advocacy with the government and other relevant stakeholders. For these reasons, the project will carry out different studies e.g., baseline, mid-year review, final evaluation, study on VC and women's empowerment, lessons learned study in maintenance areas, Court user surveys, and study on institutionalization.

The project will work with GoB counterparts to undertake dissemination of the success of the VC through participation in relevant national and international conferences and meetings, as well as building stronger South-South cooperation with other countries in the region through information-sharing and study exchanges.

#### Innovation: The project will explore and pilot several innovative ways to streamline and enhance sustainability

##### Digitalization

**Online based VCMIS (Village Court Management Information System):** The Village Court Management Information System (VCMIS) that was piloted in 57 UPs during ACVB-II for VC case management, reporting, and remote monitoring of VC performance, will be scaled up in all UPs of activation areas of AVCB III project.



**VC Digital System:** The project will develop a VC Digital System that will facilitate Village Court services at the doorstep of the citizens by engaging beneficiaries, Union Parishad stakeholders (AACO, UP Chairman) and GoB officials to increase accountability and improve justice administration. An interactive mobile and web-based application will be developed whereby a user will be able to submit their case application through online and track his/her cases status, including receiving status updates through SMS.

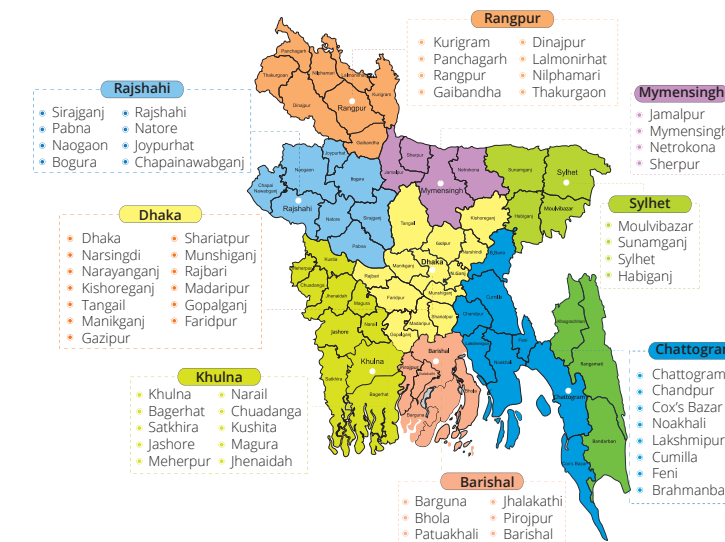
**Digital Training Materials:** E-learning manual and online-based training facilities will be adopted. The project will also create a mobile app on the village court for people's easy understanding.

**GEMS (GPS-based E-monitoring System):** An interactive mobile and web-based application will be developed to track the field visit footprint of field staff, monitor the program/activities and its quality remotely, enhance the performance of the VC and ensure the accountability of the stakeholders within the project.

#### Working Areas of Activating Village Courts in Bangladesh Phase III Project

Project Areas	
Division : 08	District : 61 (except CHT)
Upazila : 468	Union : 4,453

Activation area: 3,041  
Maintenance area: 1,412



Scan for E-Brochure

For More Information:

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