

8 MARCH 2018 International Women's Day

Time is Now: Rural and Urban Activists Transforming Women's Lives

On the occasion of International Women's Day (IWD) 2018, Activating Village Courts in Bangladesh Phase II Project **recognizes** the progress made so far in facilitating access to justice for women through village courts, **acknowledges** the contribution of the people (women and men) involved in making the progress and **expresses commitments** to strengthen its efforts in coming days to promote women's rights in context of village courts.

Project Focus

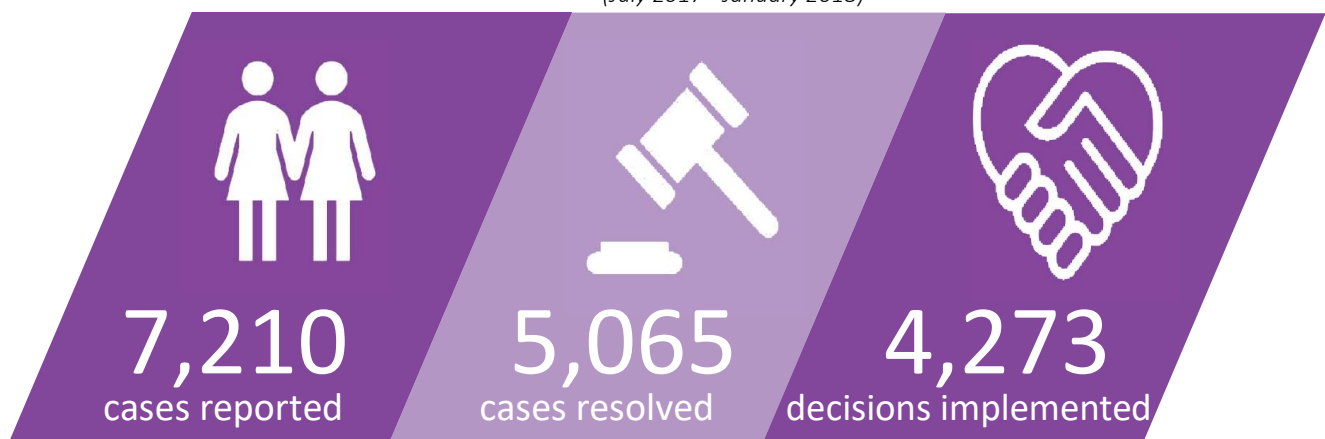
Activating Village Courts in Bangladesh Phase II Project has a specific focus on **increasing gender equality and women's participation in, and access to, Village Courts.**

Project Objective

One of the specific objectives of the project is to empower local people, **especially women, the poor and vulnerable groups** to seek remedies for injustices and to resolve their disputes at the local level in an expeditious, transparent and affordable manner.

Women's participation as justice seekers

(July 2017 - January 2018)



Total 7,210 women (28% of the total service seekers) sought remedies through Village Courts (VC)

Women's participation in VC Panel

(July 2017 - January 2018)

Total 3,137 women (11% of total panel members) involved in decision making process of village courts.



Latifa Begum, Mymensingh: Latifa begum filed a complaint to the police station against her son in law for damaging the outer gate of her house. After filing the complaint, she spent about one year in attending the court hearings.

As the court referred the case to try at the village courts, respective union parishad takes the initiative to resolve the dispute through village court. And, finally within 7 days, the dispute was resolved through village court and she received BDT 5,000 as compensation.

Latifa Begum said, *"I am very happy with the services of the village court, as it helped to resolve my dispute in its first hearing"*. She expressed her expectations, *"if the village court operates in this way, poor people like us do not need to go to Police Station or the Court"*.

Morjina Begum, Jamalpur:

With the intervention of village court, Morjina Begum got her money back that she lent to a neighbour. This is to mention that Morjina Begum lent BDT 1,500 to her neighbour, Fazlu for the treatment of his ailing daughter. They had a verbal agreement that Fazlu will pay the money back after 7 days. However, after 7 days, Fazlu paid back only BDT 200 and denied the whole transaction.

Getting to know from the court yard meeting, Morjina approached the village court assistant and filed a complaint to resolve her dispute through village court. After the first hearing of the village court, the dispute was resolved through village court and she got back the money.

Morjina says, *"poor woman like me got justice because of the village court. We do not need to go to town any more. I thank government, as it made this law for the poor people like us"*.

