THE CGBV PROJECT

The Combatting Gender-Based Violence in Bangladesh (CGBV) Project, funded by the Government of Canada, has one driving goal: for all women and girls to be free of violence at home, at work and in public spaces.

It goes without saying that 2020 was a year that bore unrivalled challenges. As the world receded into lockdown, sectoral shocks triggered ripple effects across the globe, countries scrambled to urgently provide essential services to the billions impacted, and frontline workers braved the trenches; we had been forgiven for thinking that this was all enough to bear for one year.

Yet amidst it all, we witnessed a ‘pandemic within a pandemic’ (the Shadow Pandemic) that for some time remained silent or not enough discussed. Rates of GBV, particularly domestic and intimate partner violence, skyrocketed around the world. In Bangladesh, we witnessed an alarming increase in domestic violence cases and reports of rape cases. These notably aligned with areas where services were disrupted or challenging to reach.

To respond to this emergency and the new needs that emerged from the health crisis, the CGBV Project has attempted to promptly assess the situation through its partnership with the women’s movement and Grass Roots Organizations and put in place some interventions to respond to the crisis, while continuing to ensure Project implementation, when possible.

Providing psychosocial counseling support for those suffering mental health challenges, exacerbated by the extended periods of lockdown; our team also rolled out GBV prevention and response services through hotlines and functional referral mechanisms, raised awareness on COVID-19 and its effect on gender and GBV and provided immediate relief to GBV survivors facing dire circumstances. Read on to learn exactly how we overcame this extraordinary year.
OUR ACHIEVEMENTS

180,052 people were reached through social media in 2020.

2,036 people were engaged through campaigns.

2,944 women and men from the community engaged in violence prevention interventions.

191 51 female and 140 male government officials engaged through capacity building workshops.

333 103 women and 230 men were trained on sexual harassment and GBV prevention.

IMMEDIATE COVID-19 RESPONSE

12,800 imams (faith leaders) engaged with messaging on respectful relationships and COVID-19

248 169 female and 39 male GBV survivors received immediate relief and legal and psychosocial counselling support.
Advocating for GBV-Related Laws: Expert Community Consultations

1,400 community activists reached with communication interventions on domestic violence and COVID-19 response.

15,000 people reached with communication materials to promote positive behavioral and attitude changes.

GBV services and information was delivered through social media, radio, TV, and SMS services. Messaging included hotline numbers for COVID-19 and psychosocial support, awareness raising and informative posters on COVID-19 and GBV and public service announcements on DV and legal aid available to GBV survivors.
Public service announcements reached between **400 thousand** and **2 million** listeners through community radio with messages challenging gender stereotypes and biases.
Other Information, Education and Communication (IEC) materials included targeted messages for men through mosque boyans (sermons) for Imams (faith leaders) on gender sensitive behavior, strategies for men to deal with anger, and tips on how men can become allies to prevent and respond to domestic violence.

A resource directory was disseminated with information on referral services, including psychosocial, legal and police support for GBV survivors.
Materials developed and disseminated among factories on COVID prevention and safety at work.
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Over 15,000 people reached on social media.

Awareness Raising Social Media Posts on Domestic Violence

Can you summarize the main points of the Shadow Pandemic campaign? The Shadow Pandemic campaign was launched in 2020 by UN Women to prevent violence against women and girls (VAWG) through targeted actions, innovations, and awareness raising. The campaign aimed to promote behavior change, transform social norms, and encourage more men to become active allies in preventing violence against women and girls.
A panel session organized on 15 December 2020, sought to delve into taboo territory: marital rape. Seeking to identify prevalent causes of marital rape and society's silence on the topic, the High Commissioner of Canada in Bangladesh and other panelists cited existing sociocultural factors, the misinterpretation of consent and marital power dynamics as key reasons. According to the panelists, the problematic portrayal of GBV survivors in the media, the lack of comprehensive sexuality education in the school curricula and most importantly, the discriminatory laws that fail to criminalize marital rape, all fuel this form of GBV.

Listen to what the High Commissioner had to say here: https://fb.watch/4nsRUG3J-z/

It’s Time to Talk about Marital Rape

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THE GRASSROOTS MOBILIZATION: COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

The CGBV Project engages with communities in Patuakhali, Cumilla and Bogura to mobilize women, men, girls and boys in order to promote respectful relationships, gender equality and safe public spaces to prevent violence against women.

Courtyard Meetings: Road to Respectful Relationships

Drawing on the family-based intervention Shomman O Shomotar Jeebon (SOSJ), that aims to build rapport amongst family members on respectful relationships, a series of courtyard meetings across 12 villages were held from October 2020. The participants learnt how to develop trust among their peer groups, begun to overcome fear and gender biases and learnt how to better communicate how family members should practice respectful behavior.

SASA! Together led rapport building discussions on VAW prevention, power relations between men and women and built a stronger understanding of how individuals and members of the community can work together to foster respectful relationships. Over the course of these community-based interventions, the community members committed to getting involved in the community-based activism that will be championed in SASA!’s upcoming sessions.
YOUTH ENGAGEMENT THROUGH KNOWLEDGE SHARING AND AWARENESS

Engaging with youth communities, we focus on how gender concepts are internalized. We promote alternative masculinities and seek to transform gender relations within universities and the surrounding community to prevent GBV.

International Women’s Day (IWD) Celebration 2020

We were so heartened to see students from Victoria College, Government Azizul Haque College and Bogura Polytechnic Institute, actively engage in discussions and quiz competitions to enhance their knowledge on SH and GBV issues. The students were also introduced to the High Court Directives (HCD) on SH and gained tools to become active bystanders against GBV.

The Road to Gender Friendly Educational Institutes

Students of Government Azizul Haque College and Patuakhali Science and Technology University took part in our ongoing research to analyze the SH scenario in educational institutes; a positive step towards creating gender-friendly institutes. The data gathered from their inputs and knowledge of VAW in and out-of-campus, of harmful social stigmas, HCD and existing referral mechanisms, informed our series of reports titled Research on Gender Friendly Educational Institutions in Bangladesh. Keep your eyes peeled as these will be published shortly!
INSTITUTIONAL PARTNERSHIPS AND CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT

Institutional change on multiple levels is an essential prerequisite for the sustainable prevention of sexual harassment. CGBV works with employers and educational institutions in project districts to assess the strengths and gaps in how institutions are implementing the legal requirements to prevent sexual harassment (SH).

**SH Monitoring Tool Revamp**

With technical support from UN Women, the University Grants Commission (UGC) developed a revised monitoring tool to assess the progress on HCD implementation across universities. These institutions can now better capture the reasons behind the underreporting of sexual harassment incidents occurring in universities across the country.

**Victoria College and Patuakhali Government College** successfully set up complaint boxes to receive anonymous complaints from those unwilling to make reports through formal or informal channels.

**Government Azizul Haque College** established the Sexual Harassment Prevention Committee while Patuakhali Science and technology University and Patuakhali Government College revamped theirs in 2020.

**WORKPLACES**

**Launch of the First SH Policy at DC Office**

On 1 December 2020, the Deputy Commissioner’s Office in Cumilla hosted the launch of their ‘Zero Tolerance to Sexual Harassment Policy’. The policy supports those who disclose, report, or witness sexual harassment by maintaining strict confidentiality and protection for staff that formally report cases of sexual harassment. Participants hailed from the DC office, local government institutions, local civil society organizations (CSO) and the media for the event. Follow the link to read more about the inaugural launch: [Launching of Zero Tolerance Policy Towards Sexual Harassment by Deputy Commissioner’s office, Cumilla](#)

Deputy Commissioner of Cumilla launching the ‘Zero Tolerance to Sexual Harassment Policy for DC Office, Cumilla. Photo credit: UN Women/Christian Aid
Women’s Safety Audits: Ensuring Women’s Right to Safe Workplaces and Campuses

Students, teachers and Multi-stakeholder Alliance members from Patuakhali Science and Technology University conducted a safety walk to assess risks of SH and VAW in and around campus. The findings will help create a gender friendly campus free of SH and VAW for all women.

Workers from Farid Fiber Weaving Ltd Factory in Cumilla and Bhandar Jute and Twine Mill in Bogura, identified risks for women’s safety within factory premises. The findings will help create a gender friendly workplace free of SH and VAW for all women.

The factory audit in Cumilla Farid Fiber and Weaving Factory in December 2020. Photo credit: UN Women/Christian Aid

The factory audit in Bhandar Jute and Twine Mill, Bogura in December 2020. Photo credit: UN Women/Christian Aid
CHAMPIONING ADVOCACY: AMPLIFYING THE VOICES OF STUDENTS AND SURVIVORS

The CGBV Project supports advocacy initiatives seeking to implement laws, policies and strategies that prevent and respond to GBV.

Students Say “NO” to Sexual Harassment

On 9 December 2020, more than 100 students, teachers, and administrative staff from Comilla University, said “NO” to SH through a policy validation workshop organized by our partner WE CAN. As a crucial step towards making the campus free from violence, the Zero Tolerance to Sexual Harassment policy will engage students to become change-makers who champion the identification and elimination of violence on campus. For more details about the workshop, click here: Comilla University’s Policy of Zero Tolerance Towards Sexual Harassment

![Students, teachers and university authorities at the workshop. Photo credit: UN Women](image)

Strengthened Referral Mechanisms

Three referral pathways were developed for Survivors of GBV at the local government level of each district. The referral pathways would ensure that GBV survivors receive adequate support and access to services by creating stronger partnerships between government service providers and CSOs.
16 DAYS OF ACTIVISM AGAINST GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

National Dialogue on Actions Against Sexual Violence

In recognition of the 16 Days of Activism against GBV, UN Women organized a series of successful in-person Experts Meetings focusing on the drivers of GBV, patriarchy, toxic masculinity, the need for comprehensive sexuality education and barriers for survivors to access justice. The outcome of these meetings were presented and discussed during the inaugural Virtual National Dialogue on 25 November 2020. Find the full report here: National Dialogue on Actions against Sexual Violence 2020

To learn more about our activities during the 16 Days campaign, click here: 16 Days Newsletter 2020

IEC materials on the steps to legal aid for domestic violence survivors developed by BLAST for the 16 Days campaign. View the post here: https://www.facebook.com/BLASTBangladesh/posts/3604025383016272
GENERATING EVIDENCE: FORGING A WAY FORWARD

The CGBV Project strengthens and expands the knowledge base and evidence on effective approaches to prevent GBV in Bangladesh through national and local level research and analyses.

RLRC and 10 Points Demand

The route to strengthen the advocacy for rape law reform gained momentum this year with increased coordination work around the Rape Law Reform Coalition (RLRC), informing the 10 points demands put forward by BLAST with support from UN Women (circulated by feminists across Generation and other CSOs). The demands advocate that the penal code be amended to ensure that the definition of rape is non-discriminatory and that a victim and witness protection act be formally adopted.

Compensation for Rape Survivors

Our advocacy partner BLAST published and disseminated the second part of the Rape Law Reform Research Report series: No Justice Without Reparation – Why Rape Survivors Must Have a Right to Compensation in December 2020. The report highlights the right to reparations for rape survivors and the need to ensure that there be a state compensation fund for the redressal of all GBV survivors. You can find the full report here: No Justice Without Reparation Report

1 coalitions of 17 organizations which advocate for legislative and institutional reform to end impunity for rape.

2 An intergenerational feminist alliance that brings in activists and other individuals under one platform to stand up against GBV and abuse against women.
Picture from Bhandar Jute and Twine Mill audit, Bogura in December 2020. Photo credit: UN Women/Christian Aid