

COUNTRY **REPORT**



DALIT WOMEN

IN BANGLADESH

Access to Economic Rights

**Focus on Land, Higher Education and
Employable Skills for Livelihood**

Dalit Women in Bangladesh: Access to Economic Rights

**Focus on Land, Higher Education and Employable
Skills for Livelihood**

Bangladesh Country Report

Prepared by:

Afsana Binte Amin

Zakir Hossain

Md. Abdullah Al Istiaque Mahmud

Date:

December 2017

DALIT WOMEN IN BANGLADESH: ACCESS TO ECONOMIC RIGHTS

**Focus on Land, Higher Education and Employable
Skills for Livelihood**

Year of publication: **2017**

Copyright: **Nagorik Uddyog**

Prepared by

Afsana Binte Amin

Zakir Hossain

Md. Abdullah Al Istiaque Mahmud

Edited by

Eva Buzo

Published by

Nagorik Uddyog

8/14, Block-B, Lalmatia, Dhaka – 1207

Tel: +88 02 9143636, Fax: +88 02 9141511

E-mail: info@nuhr.org, Web: www.nuhr.org

Photo Credit

GMB Akash, A.B.M Anisuzzaman, Abir Abdullah

B. David Raju, Barek Hossain

Design and Layout

Barek Hossain Mithu



ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

In Bangladesh Dalits are mainly identified by their work and descent. Approximately 6.5 million of Dalit of more than 80 casts and sub-casts live in Bangladesh. Most of them engaged in manual labour such as cleaning, shoe making and repairing, fishing, extracting oil from seed, bamboo basket making, rearing pigs, drumming, hair dressing, cloth washing, etc. These occupations don't bring them much earning and they remain poor economically and socially due to their caste identity. The types of discrimination that Dalit community face are mainly denial of getting access to basic entitlements, educational, religious and other institutions due to untouchability practices. The situation of Dalit women is much vulnerable comparing to Dalit men due to its highly patriarchal mind-set within the Dalit community. They are positioned at the bottom of the society due to their gender and caste identity. Thus Dalit women face multiple discriminations firstly by the male members of their own community, secondly by the people of the wider society. This study was conducted by Nagorik Uddyog under the UN Women supported project 'Strengthened Economic Rights of Dalit Women in South Asia'. One of the major objectives of the study was to identify the reasons of Dalit women's backwardness in relation to socio-economic rights.

Through this study titled 'Dalit Women in Bangladesh-Access to Economic Rights: Focus on Land, Higher Education and Employable Skills for Livelihood', we have tried to show the status of Dalit women in relation to their land rights, education and access to employable skills. The recommendations set at end of this study report will hopefully help government and non-government actors, policy makers and

stakeholders realizing the needs of Dalit women and taking necessary actions accordingly.

This report is an outcome of contributions of many persons, without their support and hard work, it would have been really impossible to conduct the study and to produce such an informative report. First, I would like to thank the UN Women for providing financial support to conduct the study. I would like to personally thank Ms. Beena J Pallical, Regional Coordinator, SERDWSA project for her contribution and support to complete this work. Special gratitude goes to Mr. Paul Divakar, Chairperson of Asia Dalit Rights Forum (ADRF) for his contribution to conceptualize the study. We appreciate his continuous engagement during the study period. I would also like to thank Mr. Deepak Nikarhil, Coordinator, ADRF and Father Alloysius Irudayam SJ for their valuable suggestions and feedback on the draft report and study design. I'm grateful to Ms. Eva Buzo for editing the report. I acknowledge contribution of the government officials who gave their valuable time during interview and FGD participants. I also acknowledge support of Ms. Durga Sob, Founder President of FEDO, Nepal in the study. Finally, I would like to thank Afsana Binte Amin, Moni Rani Das, Istiaque Mahmud, Umme Fahmida Sultana, Tamanna Singh Baraik, Sodip Kumar Roy and many others for their tremendous efforts in data collection, data compilation and report preparation.

Zakir Hossain
Chief Executive, Nagorik Uddyog
and
Advisor, BDERM

GLOSSARY

AC Land	Assistant Commissioner of Land
ADRF	Asia Dalit Rights Forum
ARCO	Association for Rural Cooperation
BANBEIS	Bangladesh Bureau of Educational Information and Statistics
BDERM	Bangladesh Dalit and Excluded Rights Movement
BDWF	Bangladesh Dalit Women Federation
BGD	Bangladesh
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women
CRC	Convention on the Rights of the Child
CSOs	Civil Society Organizations
DW	Dalit Women
DYD	Department of Youth Development
FGDs	Focus Group Discussions
HR	Human Rights
ICCPR	International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights
ICERD	International Covenant on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination
ICESCR	International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights
KII	Key Informant's Interview
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
MoWCA	Ministry of Women and Children Affairs
MoYS	Ministry of Youth and Sports
NGOs	Non-Government Organizations
NSPS	National Social Protection Strategy
NWDP	National Women's Development Policy
OCC	One Stop Crisis Centre
UDHR	Universal Declaration of Human Rights
UGC	University Grant Commission
UN	The United Nations
UNESCO	United Nations Educational Social and Cultural Organization
UNO	Upazila Nirbahi Officer
VDP	Village Defense Party

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Executive Summary	7
Chapter 1	Introduction	14
Chapter 2	Rationale, Objectives and Methodology Background	18
	Background	
	Rationale of the Study	
	Objectives of the Study	
	Key Informant Interviews	
Chapter 3	International Legal Standards	24
	I. Access to Land Rights	
	II. Access To Higher Education	
	III. Access To Employable Skills For Livelihood	
Chapter 4	National Legal Standard	28
	I. Access To Land Rights	
	II. Access To Higher Education	
	III. Access To Employable Skills For Livelihood	
Chapter 5	Status Of Dalit Women's Access To Land Rights In Bangladesh	35
Chapter 6	Status Of Dalit Women's Access To Higher Education In Bangladesh	42
Chapter 7	Status Of Dalit Women's Access To Employable Skills For Livelihood In Bangladesh	49
Chapter 8	Conclusions And Recommendations	58
	Appendix A	61
	Reference List	62



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Dalits, in general, are one of the most marginalized groups in Bangladesh and are often subject to discriminatory treatment. They have been oppressed by the dominant groups historically. The majority of the Dalits is very poor, under privileged and has limited job opportunities. Moreover, they are politically under represented and many of them have to live in inhumane conditions. Socially excluded, they are stigmatized and isolated from mainstream society.

Among Dalits, women are the most marginalized social groups among the marginalized. They face double marginality first because of their caste and second because of their gender.

Unfortunately, Dalit women's issues hardly get national or international attention. Not only that there is hardly any empirical research been done on Dalit women's issues in Bangladesh. Considering this situation the research has been undertaken mainly to understand the nature and key factors of the cultural, social, economic and political vulnerability of Dalit women in Bangladesh as well as to provide a strategic direction for future development interventions towards empowerment of Dalit women.

Different studies says that Dalit women in Bangladesh, occupying the bottom of both the caste and gender hierarchies, face multiple forms of discrimination (as Dalits, as member of impoverished underclass and as women), and violence and are particularly vulnerable. The endemic gender and caste discrimination and violence Dalit women face is the outcome of severely imbalanced social, economic and political power equalities. Dalit communities are patriarchal with deeply conservative values about the role of women that leads to severe restriction on their rights, mobility and freedoms.

In contemporary market-based societies, three forms of capital such as economic, social and cultural are necessary for any individual to make a decent living. Dalit women lack all three forms of capital. Dalit women are in need of accumulating these capitals. Unfortunately, they have no guarantee to gain these capitals while dwelling in a bounded patriarchal Dalit community. They have limited access to land, credit and loans from formal institutions, and cannot access other economic resources. They have limited social capital through kinship networks within their community. They are not allowed to gain social capital through other cultural institutions such as schools, clubs, associations, alumni, etc.

UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women recalling its previous recommendation (CEDAW/C/BGD/CO/7, para.12) urged Bangladesh to expedite its efforts towards the withdrawal of its reservations to article 2 and 16, paragraph 1 (c) within a concrete timeframe¹.

Though Bangladesh has not yet withdrawn its restriction from article 2 and 16, paragraph 1 (c), it has undertaken number of measures to ensure that women in Bangladesh enjoy their rights equally as the men do. Bangladesh has a very strong constitutional provision of non-discrimination and equal rights of men and women under its article 27 and 28. The National Women Development Policy-2011 of Bangladesh has set a milestone in ensuring equal rights of women regarding their education, health, employment and political participation. The provision of quota for women at different government services not only ensured their rights but also worked as a key factor towards their empowerment. Special attention has been given to women from backward and

¹ UN CEDAW Committee Concluding Observations to Bangladesh, 2011. Also available at <http://undocs.org/CEDAW/C/BGD/CO/7>

marginalized community in developing their socio-economic status under the social safety net programme of Bangladesh government.

The committee also urged to the state to take necessary action to stop all stereotypes and harmful practices against women. Though Bangladesh government has taken few awareness initiatives to stop stereotypes and harmful practices against women, it especially persists among the families of Dalit community which are still patriarchal by nature. Many civil society organizations have been working for ensuring equal participation of Dalit women in the decision making process of the society through their inclusion in the local arbitrary system (known as panchayet) and helping them raising their voices.

i The Committee urges the State party to give priority attention to combating violence against women and girls and to adopt comprehensive measures such as a national action plan to address all forms of violence against women and girls, in accordance with its general recommendation No. 19 (1992). Different recommendations have been made under this section and it is very appropriate to say in this regard that Bangladesh has made a very mentionable progress in response to these recommendations. Some of the mentionable government initiatives are:

1. Setting up of a National Database Centre
2. Setting up of Victim Support Centre and One Stop Crisis Centre (OCC) for Women and Children
3. Setting up of National Trauma Centre
4. Setting up of a National Helpline Centre for Women and Children and introducing a national helpline (10921)

5. Setting up of Special Tribunal for Women and Children

The Committee recommends that Bangladesh should adopt laws and policies aimed at the promotion of women's full and equal participation in decision-making in all areas of public, political and professional life and fully utilize the Committee's general recommendation No 23 (1997) concerning women in political and public life.

Bangladesh government has taken different positive measures to ensure political participation of women. It is to be mentioned that women's participation is increased in the current parliament comparing to the previous. Furthermore, women's participation has been ensured at the local government by formalizing the provision of reserved seats for them. As a result, women's participation in the political and decision making process has been increasing day by day. Contrary to that political participation of women from disadvantaged and marginalized groups remain the same as before as we witnessed no participation of women from backward community in the national parliament as well as in the local government body.

In relation to land rights, the committee urged the state party to amend discriminatory laws limiting women's ownership, control and usage of land and identify and address obstacles to the development of women's entrepreneurship.

Though Bangladesh government is constructive towards bringing positive changes in the lives and ensuring equal rights of women in the state, however, women in Bangladesh are still far behind in enjoying equal rights regarding ownership of ancestral property. It has remained as a big challenge for Bangladesh government making any law or policy to address this issue especially where the majority is Muslim, with

Muslim law² is strictly followed particularly for land issue.

On the other hand, the situation is worsened when the land distribution issue comes under Hindu Law. According to the Hindu Law, the women and girls are not entitled to enjoy their right to their ancestral property. Since most of the Dalit women and girls belong to Hindu religion, they are structurally deprived of enjoying land rights. Bangladesh government has been unable to ensure equal access to land rights for Hindu women, let alone the land rights of Dalit women who live in a highly patriarchal society.

The UNESCO Convention against Discrimination in Education didn't have any specific recommendations regarding higher education of Dalit women. While, the Convention urged the member state to take proper action to reduce drop out of girls from education especially in the rural areas, ensure that girl children aren't harassed on their way to schools, ensure quality education materials and quality training for the teachers. At the same time, the member state was urged to strengthen awareness-raising and training of school officials, teachers and students; enforce a zero tolerance policy with respect to sexual abuse and harassment in schools; provide safe transportation to and from schools; safe educational environment free from discrimination and violence and ensure that perpetrators are punished appropriately.

Bangladesh has made a remarkable progress in achieving millennium development goal of enrolment of children at the primary schools. There are different education schemes like free education, food support and provision of stipend which has played a catalyst in achieving the goal. But in case of secondary, higher secondary and higher education the achievement seems

² As per Muslim Law, the daughter will get half of the son's property.

to be very low. In the matter of higher education of girls from Dalit and backward community the achievement becomes very trivial. One of the main reasons identified for Dalit and other backward girls' inability to access higher education is 'poverty'. To encourage girls from Dalit and other backward communities to higher education, Bangladesh government has introduced stipend for them under the ministry of Social Welfare. Besides, total seven public universities in Bangladesh introduced admission quota for students from Dalit community. It has helped increasing the number of enrolment of Dalit students at the higher education. Despite, lot of initiatives taken by the government and different civil society organizations, the enrolment rate Dalit girls in higher education in Bangladesh is still below satisfaction level. The main reasons behind it are poverty, patriarchal mind-set of the family and society, early marriage and social insecurity for girl child.

In terms of employable skills, the UN committee urged Bangladesh to intensify the implementation of gender-sensitive poverty reduction and development programmes in rural and urban areas and to ensure the participation of women in the development of such programmes.

Bangladesh government has taken a number of initiatives to ensure economic empowerment of women through skills training. A project under the Ministry of Women and Children Affairs³ is going on which aims to capacitate women on computer operation. There is another project run by the same ministry which has been providing financial and technical support to the women involved in small entrepreneurship. The ministry also runs a project to provide direct support to the marginalized women living in the urban areas of Bangladesh. Besides different civil

³ Ministry of Women and Children Affairs, Bangladesh, Available at: <http://www.mowca.gov.bd/>, Last accessed on 31 May, 2017

society organizations providing skills training to women from Dalit and other backward communities so that they become skilled and feel encouraged to go for alternative jobs.

The Constitution of Bangladesh has provided no discrimination on the basis of caste (also other variables). However, in the case of Dalits, there are no policies to validate that in terms of civil, political, economic and legal measures. Thus the inequalities between the communities have increased, leading to wide forms of discrimination and violence, often targeting on the women. This research aims at providing a comprehensive analysis of the efforts to address Dalit women's economic rights including rights to higher education, land and access to employable skills in Bangladesh.

Summary of Findings from the field

Total 500 Dalit women, men and adolescent girls from 5 districts of Bangladesh took part in this research. The districts are Dhaka, Jessore, Khulna, Joypurhat and Naogaon. Total 25 focus group discussions have been conducted with them. In addition total 12 key informant interviews were conducted with relevant government officials, academicians, Members of Parliament and human rights activists.

Land is one of the fundamental needs for human being. Land gives human being safe shelter and contribute in their economic empowerment. According to a recent study (Bangladesher Krishi-Vumi-Jola Songskarer Rajnoitik Songskriti, 2016) approximately 60% household of Bangladesh is landless. The number of landless people is high among the marginalized and disadvantaged group of people. About 6.5 million Dalits live in Bangladesh and most of them are landless. According to a recent study

conducted by Nagorik Uddyog approximately 99.47% of Dalit living in the urban areas of Bangladesh is landless. Most of them live on government khas land or on property owned by Bangladesh railway or other government institutions. The situation is different in rural areas where almost 61.47% Dalits own land. However, the status of land ownership among the Dalit women is much disappointing as we witnessed less than 1% Dalit women own land. More than 90% Dalit men, women and adolescent girls know that according to their religion Dalit women are not entitled to inherit property from their parents or husband. As a result, almost all the people of Dalit community (including women) kept ignoring land rights of Dalit women which has now been established as a social custom and belief.

General findings on Dalit woman's land rights issue in Bangladesh-

- 50.6% Dalits live on khas land
- 50.4% Dalits are Landless
- Only 0.8% Land owned by Dalit women
- Out of 300 DW respondents, 4% got land through inheritance
- 46% believe that men to Inherit Land is more important
- 66% believes that Dalit women should have land rights to their ancestor's and husband's land and property
- 100% believe that Dalit women's land ownership is restricted by religion

Education is one of the fundamental needs recognized by the constitution of Bangladesh. The current literacy rate in Bangladesh is about

60%.⁴ Though the literacy rate in Bangladesh has been increasing day by day due to some positive initiatives of Bangladesh, completion of higher education rate is not that much high in the last few years. Bangladesh government has achieved tremendous success in increasing the enrollment rate in primary education. But, in terms of higher education it still remains as a challenge keeping pace with the achievement. The status of higher education among Dalit women can easily be understood where the national statistics of higher education isn't much rich. On the other hand, to promote higher education of Dalits, 8 public universities have introduced quota for Dalit students. This mechanism has started back in 2013-14. Within these four years, total 22 female students have got admission in different public universities. This is indeed a very good sign. At the same time, a follow up is required to see the future position of these female students as we have many evidences of denial attitude of the authorities in giving so called 'upper class' jobs to the Dalits.

General findings on the status of higher education of Dalit women in Bangladesh-

- Almost no respondent is informed about the policy of free education and stipend for girl children
- Main challenges for higher education of Dalit girls are early marriage, poverty and lack of awareness of parents.
- Prevalent culture of dowry led the Dalit parents stop education of their girl children. They prefer to spend their money as dowry rather spending in education.

- According to the government policy, higher education is accessible for all the students, who have achieved Higher Secondary Certificate. But as it is expensive, in maximum cases, it is not affordable for Dalits.

Work and descent based discrimination against Dalits in Bangladesh is the most common factor which restricts their freedom of choice and force them to continue their traditional occupations. Though recently the Dalit community has made mentionable progress in education, the education rate among Dalit women is lower than Dalit men. Prevalence of early marriage among Dalit women disrupts the way of their education and self development. Early marriage confines their lives into family affairs. As a result, most of them can't take the opportunity to go for a job. Very few of them sometimes manage to get a job of cleaner at government institutions through offering high bribe. Those who can't offer bribes can't take the challenge of changing their financial status since they don't have any employable skills. Bangladesh government has provision of different skill development trainings for marginalized, disadvantaged and Dalit community under the department of social services and department of women affairs. But very few Dalit women in the rural areas have this information. Moreover those who know about these trainings don't get much scope to attend due to their full-time involvement in the family affairs and restriction by the family members. However, few Dalit women can overcome those challenges due to their tremendous will power and support from some non-government organizations.

⁴ National Web Portal, Bangladesh Available at: <http://www.bangladesh.gov.bd>, Last accessed on 12 march 2017

General findings on the status of employable skills of Dalit women in Bangladesh-

- For providing employable skills for livelihood for Dalits, Department of Social Welfare is covering 25 districts in 2016-17 (under social safety net program). The provision of skills training for Dalit, Bedey and Horijon community started in 2012-13. Total 5300 people from these communities so far received skills training. But there is no mention of how many Dalit so far received skills training, let alone mentioning the number of Dalit women. The chart below shows fiscal year wise number of Dalit, Bedey and Horijon who received skills training.
- Dalit community are not aware about the policy of providing skill development training specially for Dalits
- Access to the government services for Dalit women in rural/remote areas is hard, as the initiatives are mainly district centric
- According to the policy, need assessment for training should be done at local level but there is no disaggregated data for Dalits – which is a challenge to provide trainings

A comprehensive programme should be undertaken and implemented by the government as well as civil society organizations to ensure completion of higher education, right to land and employable skills for Dalit women in Bangladesh. Government institutions and NGOs, specially the organizations working in promoting and protecting the rights of Dalits, should conduct promotional activities on government policies and facilities for girl students. It will help to reduce drop out of Dalit girls from school due to poverty. Government should revise the

Khas Land Distribution Policy and preserve quota for Dalit and Dalit women. Relevant laws and policies to ensure land rights of Dalit women should be enacted by the government. Dalit women should be encouraged and included in the government implemented skills trainings with financial facilities so that it can help them going for alternative jobs. Furthermore, massive awareness and advocacy programmes should be undertaken by the civil society organizations in collaboration to ensure higher education, land rights and employable skills for Dalit women.



Chapter-1
Introduction

The constitution of the People's Republic of Bangladesh pledges to give equal rights and opportunities for all citizens of the country. Article 28 clearly declares: 'The state shall not discriminate against any citizens on grounds only of religion, race, caste, sex or place of birth.' The Constitution is also committed for overall development of women. The promise of the State to guarantee the rights of the women is reflected in Articles 27, 28, 29 and 65 of the Constitution of the People's Republic of Bangladesh. In particular Article 28(4) paves the way for enactment of legislation to facilitate women's development saying 'nothing in this article shall prevent the State from making special provisions in favour of women or children or for the advancement of any backward section of citizens'. To make the State more accountable towards the development and protection of women, Bangladesh has also signed the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW)⁵.

Constitutional obligations and commitments to the international agreements have influenced the government establishing programs to promote women's overall development. The first National Women's Development Policy (NWDP) was formulated in 1997 and subsequently updated in 2011. The long awaited National Women's Development Policy (NWDP), 2011 is considered to be a milestone on the way to women development in Bangladesh. The NWDP-2011 is broadly divided into three parts with 49 articles, the first part (Articles 1-15) discusses the background, reality and the state of women in society; while the second part (Article 16-41) contains the aims and objectives

⁵ Ministry of Women and Children Affairs (MoWCA), Chapter 5, available at: http://www.mof.gov.bd/en/budget/14_15/gender_budget/en/04_30_MoWCA_English.pdf, Last accessed on 13 February 2017

of the policy. The third part (Article 42-49) suggests the strategies for its implementation. In accordance with the national constitution, the policy has provisions ensuring women's human rights and fundamental freedom (Article 17), development of female child (Article 18), elimination of all forms of discrimination against women (Article 19), education (Article 21), sports and culture (Article 22), poverty elimination (Article 24), economic empowerment (Article 25), making gender responsive budget and gender disaggregated database (Article 27), food security (Article 30), political empowerment (Article 32), health and nutrition (Article 34) and housing and shelter (Article 35). Though Dalit women were not included in the policy, there are provisions protecting the rights of small ethnic and marginalized groups of people, including for the development and growth of women in these communities Article 38(1) as well as calling for undertaking special programs aimed at development of marginalized women (Article 38(3)).

However, despite having equality under the constitution and commitment to the international agreements, Dalits in Bangladesh still face discrimination in every sphere of their lives and do not enjoy equal treatment as citizens. There are an estimated 6.5 millions Dalits living in Bangladesh though there is no census or other official data available on the demographic or social aspects of people discriminated against based on work and decent (Islam and Parvez, 2013; Uddin, 2014). While Dalits are mostly identified based by caste in South Asian countries, this is not the case in Bangladesh. Dalits in Bangladesh are positioned in the lower part of the society due to their work and descent. Dalits are 'untouchable' to the so called 'dominant caste' and 'upper class' citizens. They are restricted from freely accessing shops, restaurants, barber shops, hotels and places of

public bathing, or places of worshipping. (Uddin, 2014, p-32). This social exclusion restricts their access to education, bound to do the ancestral jobs which keeps them in the cycle of poverty.

Bangladesh is going to celebrate the 50th anniversary of independence in 2021. To mark the year in the history, Bangladesh government has set development goals known as vision 2021 and developed 'Perspective Plan for Bangladesh 2010-2021' to achieve the goals, where it is mentioned that "vision 2021 calls for Bangladeshi socio-economic environment to be transformed from a low income economy to the initial of a middle-income nation by the year 2021, when poverty would have all but disappeared, where society would be full of caring and educated people living healthy and happy lives. In line with constitutional obligations and international commitments to human rights, Bangladesh in 2021 shall be a country in which (i) every citizen has equal opportunities to achieve his/her fullest potential; (ii) all citizens enjoy a quality of life where basic health care and adequate nutrition are assured; (iii) all citizens have access to a modern, technical, and vocational education tailored to meet the human resource needs of a technologically advancing nation; (iv) sustainability of development is ensured through better protection from climate change and natural disasters; (v) there is respect for the principles of democracy, rule of law, and human rights; (vi) gender equality is assured; so are the rights of ethnic populations and of all other disadvantaged groups including persons with disability; and (vii) the diversity and creativity of all people are valued and nurtured." (Page 11) Vision 2021 prioritizes not only on economic growth, it gives emphasis on higher living standards of the citizen in a wide range of human development indicators.

Central to the current discussion is the

admission in the plan that social exclusion is one of the major underlying causes for extreme poverty (p-91). Dalit women face multiple forms of discrimination, because they are both women and Dalits (BDEWF et al., 2013; Rasheed, 2014). Bangladesh is a firmly patriarchal society and Dalit women are often the worst affected by these systems due to the prevailing beliefs about the status of Dalit women in Bangladesh (Pervin et al., 2013). Though a number of laws have been enacted to prevent woman and female child abuse in Bangladesh, such efforts have not led to improvements in the lives of Dalit women.

Notable legislation enacted to target the rights of Dalit women include:

- Dowry Prohibition Act-19806
- Child Marriage Restraint Act 2014 (draft)⁷
- Women and Children Repression Prevention Act, 2000 (amended 20038)
- Hindu Marriage Registration Act-20129

⁶ Legislative and Parliamentary Affairs Division, Ministry of Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs (2010), Available at: http://bdlaws.minlaw.gov.bd/pdf_part.php?id=607, Last accessed on 15 March 2017

⁷ Mohosinul Karim (2014), 'Cabinet Okays Cabinet okays Child Marriage Restraint Act 2014', Published on Dhaka Tribune date September 16, 2014, Available at: <http://archive.dhakatribune.com/law-rights/2014/sep/16/cabinet-okays-child-marriage-restraint-act-2014>, last accessed on 15 March 2017

⁸ Legislative and Parliamentary Affairs Division Ministry of Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs (2010), Available at: http://bdlaws.minlaw.gov.bd/bangla_pdf_part.php?id=835, Last accessed on 15 March 2017

⁹ Legislative and Parliamentary Affairs Division Ministry of Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs (2010), Available at: http://bdlaws.minlaw.gov.bd/bangla_pdf_part.php?id=1105, Last accessed on 15 March 2017

Women Abuse Prevention Cell and rehabilitation centers for abused women have been established to give legal assistance and counselling for prevention of women and abused children.

A major cause of discrimination towards Dalit women is lack of uniformity in the provisions of family laws for different religions in Bangladesh. Women of different religions enjoy different rights as per their own religious laws. For inheritance, the Muslim are governed by the Sharia Law which is applicable for more than 90% of the population. According to the Muslim Shariah, a Muslim woman has some limited right to inherit property, while Hindu law in general does not have any provision for Hindu women to inherit, except in few extraordinary and exceptional circumstances. The maximum entitlement of a Hindu woman according to the law ends only with the right to be maintained by the males before marriage at the paternal side, and husband's side after her marriage till her death. According to the Christian Law son and daughter will have equal rights to father's property. The existence of different sets of laws for different communities results in communities following their traditional ways and customary laws keeping women in a subordinate position. For example, to resolve internal disputes within the community, Dalits have their own system of arbitration, which they call panchayet. Panchayet is fully male dominated. The norm is that Dalit women will not participate in the panchayet (Islam, Farzana and Uddin, Md. Nasir. (2008).

This report attempts to identify the gaps in legislations and policy right to land, higher education and employable skills for livelihood for Dalit women. It is worthwhile to mention that the issues of Dalits is relatively new in Bangladesh. The term 'Dalits' got official acknowledgement

only few years back. In 2008, the political parties have recognized Dalits for the first time in Bangladesh and from 2010 the government of Bangladesh has started keeping budgetary allocations for Dalits. Therefore, getting Dalits in legislation and policies is very rare. Thus, the report gives emphasis on equality and provisions for marginalized. Besides reviewing the legislations and policies, the report comprised the primary information through conducting Focus Group Discussion with the women, men, girls and boys of the community.



Chapter-2

Rationale, Objectives and Methodology Background

Background

There are around 6.5 million Dalits in Bangladesh and approximately half of them are women. Dalits experience extreme levels of marginalization and social exclusion and it becomes multiple if it is matter of Dalit women. Dalit women, living at the bottom of both the caste and gender hierarchies, face multiple forms of discrimination and are particularly vulnerable. Dalit women in Bangladesh are discriminated in two ways. Firstly, they are discriminated by the dominant caste (majority of them belong to Muslim society) of the society. Secondly, they are discriminated by their own patriarchal community for being women. Therefore, Dalit women in Bangladesh experience widespread discrimination, exploitation, violence and inhumane treatment due to the intersectionality of caste, class and gender identities. They are vulnerable to a number of human rights violations both from the wider society and from within their communities. Majority of Dalits are Hindu and in general women of Hindu community do not own lands which places them in a more vulnerable position than Dalit men. Besides, urban Dalits mainly live in colonies made especially for them where they have to live in small spaces for many generations, they have to share toilets, bathrooms and in many cases, kitchen as well. This situation also increases the vulnerability of Dalit women. While the women of mainstream community and some of the male Dalits are moving forward in education, economic empowerment, getting access to justice and other government services, the Dalit women lag behind due to their caste as well as gender identity.

Rationale of the study

Dalits are almost ignored in the development agenda and plan of the government for many

years. The issues of Dalits was brought into light only few years back. After many years of advocacy of the civil society organizations and Dalit activists, some of the major political parties have used the word 'Dalits' for the first time in their election manifesto before the National Parliamentary Election in 2008. Later on, Bangladesh Awami League has formed the government and in 2010, the government has allocated amount in the national budget for Dalits which is for the first time in Bangladesh history. After 2010, the government is continuing the allocation of budget for Dalits under social safety net programmes of Social Welfare Ministry. Besides, government has included the word 'Dalits' in the National Social Protection Strategy (NSPS) 2014 and mentioned that this community face many types of challenges such as: (1) untouchability and hatred, (2) social exclusion, (3) lack of dignity, (4) estrangement from livelihood, (5) forced eviction from land, (6) insecurity within family and society, (7) ignorance and lack of information, (8) environmental disaster, (9) lack of access to legal aid services, (10) lack of access to government services. Despite mentioning the challenges, no specific programmes are considered for Dalits in the strategy.

Not only the government, Dalit issues have been ignored or denied as well by the academics, researchers, civil society and donors. Till now there is minimum evidence based study on Dalits. And Dalit women's issues have received slight national or international attention till date. Minimum empirical research has been undertaken to define and realize the issues of Dalit women. Again the existing literature on Dalit women mainly focused on the overall situation and deprivation of Dalit women and not on economic rights and empowerment. Keeping this in mind, this study has been undertaken to examine the government

policies for the economic rights on Dalit women with the focus on their right to higher education, land rights and employable skills for livelihood. This report has also examined the views of the community members, mainly Dalit women and girls on their understanding of economic rights as well as the challenges and realities the community is facing. This report also aims to provide concrete recommendations to strengthen the economic rights of Dalit women. Besides, this report will contribute in creating awareness of concerned ministries and relevant departments to formulate policies for Dalit women and of the Civil Society Organizations to take special development agenda for Dalit women.

Objectives of the Study

Dalit women in Bangladesh have traditionally faced intersectional discrimination on the basis of gender, class, caste. Their economic rights were never considered in policies and programmes of the government which is a serious violation of human rights. Though government has considered the community as one of the vulnerable and marginalized community in few policies, but did not consider the rights and needs of Dalit women in designing interventions and policies. Besides, it is mentioned earlier that there is minimum systemic and substantial study on Dalits. The aims of study on Dalits undertaken so far was to document the nature and extent of work and descent based discrimination. However, none of the studies have thorough description on the forms of discrimination of economic rights of Dalit women. Therefore, the major objectives of the study is to identify and explore the existing policies and practices women's access to economic rights, with focus on access to land rights, higher education and employable

skills, and eventually identify the gaps to ensure the economic rights of Dalit women.

The specific objectives of the study are as follows:

- To get an overview of the economic status of Dalit women with reference to their access to land rights, higher education and employment skills for livelihood.
- To identify the international standards that are adhered to by the Bangladesh government to reduce and/or eliminate the discrimination against Dalit women.
- To explore the national standards in the context of land rights, higher education and employable skills and identify the gaps in the case of Dalit women
- To identify the challenges of Dalit women in realizing their economic rights, in particular, the rights to land, higher education and employable skills for livelihood

OVERALL METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY

To reach the objectives, this study has applied a mixed methodology. To identify the national standards, government policies on land rights, higher education and employable skills for livelihood was examined as 'secondary literature review'. To get the qualitative information on the status of Dalit women in the particular areas mentioned earlier, Focus Group Discussion (FGDs) have been conducted in five districts with 500 Dalit women, girls, men and boys. Besides, to explore the thoughts of activists, civil society and duty bearers, Key Informants Interview (KIIs) have been conducted with policy makers, government officials, members of Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) and relevant stakeholders.

SECONDARY LITERATURE REVIEW

To identify the gaps in policies for the economic empowerment of Dalit women, the study focused on the policies on Land, higher education and employable skills for livelihood. As there are no specific policies and/or schemes for Dalits on land and higher education, the study reviewed the policies in general for all citizens. In 2013, the Ministry of Social Welfare formulated the 'Implementation Guideline: The Livelihood Development Program for Dalit, Bede and Horijon Community'. This document has been reviewed to explore the opportunities of employable skills for Dalits and to identify the gaps for economic empowerment of Dalit women.

FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION

As a part of the methodology the FGD, the study was conducted in five districts with 500 respondents. The respondents were Dalit women, girls, men and boys. The Dalit population in Bangladesh consists of more than 80-sub caste groups and includes Hindus, Muslims and Christians. The Dalit population lives in both rural and Urban areas. In rural areas maximum of them are typically employed in their family profession (e.g. cobbler, fishermen, pig raring, kalu, weaving, gardener etc) and few on agricultural labour and urban areas where their primary employment comes from cleaning, waste removal and street sweeping. For FGDs, Dalit community members from both rural and urban areas were considered. The following districts have been chosen due to their higher population of Dalit women than other areas.

District	Number of Respondents
Dhaka	100
Jessore	100
Khulna	100
Naogaon	100
Joypurhat	100
Total	500

DHAKA

Dhaka is the capital city of Bangladesh and located in the centre of the country. Dhaka is densely populated. It is an urban area with the majority of Dalits living in 17 segregated Dalit colonies. Due to the population of Dhaka being significantly higher than the other areas for sampling, 200 respondents were selected from the Dalit colonies in the urban centre.

JESSORE

Jessore is a rural district in southwest Bangladesh. Jessore district is made up of 8 Sub-districts (Upazilla) and has a total population of 2.7 million. Dalits living in the sub-districts of Jessore mainly involve in their family profession. Agricultural labour is also common form of employment for the Dalit population. 100 respondents were selected from this district with 25 coming from each Sub-district.

KHULNA

Khulna is a densely populated city in central Bangladesh. It is the third largest city in Bangladesh. Khulna district is made up of 9 Sub-districts (Upazilla) and has a total population of

around 2.3 million. The Dalit population live both in rural and urban areas of the city. 100 respondents will be selected from 2 Sub-districts (Fultola and Botiaghata).

JOYPURHAT

Joypurhat is a rural district in north-western Bangladesh. It is made up of 5 Sub-districts. Many of the Dalits are sweepers, cleaners or cobblers. Agricultural labour is also common form of employment for the Dalits in Joypurhat. 100 respondents will be selected from Joupurhat Sadar (municipality) and Patchbibi Sub-district.

NAOGAON

The Naogaon district is a rural region located in northwestern Bangladesh. It is divided into 11 Sub-districts. The major sub caste of Dalits are Bashfor, Hela, Hari, Dome, Rajbangshi, Vuimali, Rabidas, Rishi etc. They are mainly involved in their family profession. Agricultural labour is also common form of employment for the Dalit population. 100 respondents will be selected from 2 sub-districts (Naogaon Sadar and Atrai).

The participatory approach was applied during conducting the FGDs. The following questions were discussed during the FGD, with focus on all three research areas, although the major focus of research in Bangladesh was focused to women's access to land rights:

a. LAND RIGHTS

- How many of the participants have owned land (in the name of Dalit women)?
- What is the status of Dalit women's ownership of land and property?

- How does Dalit society react on the issue of land rights for Dalit women?
- What positive changes can land ownership bring in the lives of Dalit women?
- What are the major challenges for Dalit women to get rights to land?

b. ACCESS TO HIGHER EDUCATION

- Status of higher education for Dalit women/ girls in the area (Are all the female children getting access to higher education? And comparative picture of Dalit male and female in higher education)
- What are the main challenges for Dalit women/ girls in getting access to higher education?
- What steps can be taken to ensure higher education for Dalit women/girls?

c. EMPLOYABLE SKILLS

- What is the status of employable skills among Dalit women in the area?
- What benefit did it bring to them?
- Do they have information about the available skill training in the area?
- What are the challenges for Dalit women getting access to employable skills?
- What steps can be taken to ensure employable skills to Dalit women?

KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEWS

For KIIs, representatives from different stakeholder groups were selected. Policy makers, government officials, members from Civil Society Organizations were targeted so that different points of view could be explored. Besides, as the study mainly focused on land rights, higher education and employable skills for livelihood for Dalit women, specially the government officials were targeted for the discussion. Considering the level of interviewees, the questions for KII were semi-structured. The guiding questions for the KII were as below:

- Are there any policy provisions and practices for the economic empowerment for Dalit women? If 'yes', what are those?
- What are the challenges for providing Dalit women the rights to lands and higher education
- What measures the Dalit community can take to ensure the rights (land rights, higher education and employable skills) of Dalit women?
- What are his/her recommendations and way forward?



Chapter-3

**International Legal
Standards**

Bangladesh has ratified almost all major international convention and treaties. Major of these are: International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (CERD) 1965, International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) 1966, International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) 1966, Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) 1979 (with reservation on Article 2 and Article 16 (c)), UNESCO Convention against Discrimination in Education 1960, Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) 1989. In conjunction with these legal frameworks, UN Committees have made specific recommendations to the state on how Bangladesh can implement the standards. The major recommendations on Land Rights, Higher Education and Employable Skills are:

I. ACCESS TO LAND RIGHTS

- Everyone has the right to own property alone as well as in association with others. No one shall be arbitrarily deprived of their property (Article 17 UDHR)
- The State shall take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women in rural areas, in particular, by ensuring that women enjoy equal treatment in land and agrarian reform as well as in land resettlement schemes (Article 14(g) CEDAW)
- The State should undertake all necessary measures for the realisation of the right to development and ensure, inter alia, equality of opportunity for all in their access to basic resources (such as land)... (Article 8(1) Declaration on the Right to Development)
- States Parties shall, when the circumstances so warrant, take, in the social, economic,

cultural and other fields, special and concrete measures to ensure the adequate development and protection of certain racial [caste] groups or individuals belonging to them, for the purpose of guaranteeing them the full and equal enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms (Article 2(2) ICERD)

- No recommendations or reference to the land right of Dalits in Bangladesh have been made to date.

II. ACCESS TO HIGHER EDUCATION

- The States Parties recognize that, with a view to achieving the full realization of the right to education, that primary education shall be compulsory and available free to all. Secondary education in its different forms, including technical and vocational secondary education, shall be made generally available and accessible to all by every appropriate means, and in particular by the progressive introduction of free education. Higher education shall be made equally accessible to all, on the basis of capacity, by every appropriate means, and in particular by the progressive introduction of free education (Article 13 ICESCR)
- Every child has the right to education and states parties shall make primary education free and compulsory for all; develop different forms of secondary education, including general and vocational education, and make them available and accessible to every child, including financially accessible; make tertiary education accessible to all on the basis of capacity by every appropriate means; encourage regular attendance at schools and the reduction of dropouts (Article 28 CRC)
- State Parties undertake to prohibit and to

eliminate racial (caste) discrimination in all its forms and to guarantee the right of everyone, without distinction as to race, color, or national or ethnic origin, to equality before the law, notable in the enjoyment of... the right of education and training(Article 5(e)(v) ICERD)

- States Parties shall take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women in order to ensure to them equal rights with men in the field of education and in particular to ensure, on a basis of equality of men and women(Article 10 CEDAW)
- States parties shall eliminate discrimination in education that has the purpose or effect of nullifying or impairing equality of treatment in education and in particular (a) depriving any person/s of access to education; (b) limiting any person/s to education of an inferior standard; (c) maintaining separate educational systems or institutions for persons (subject to Article 2); or (d) inflicting on any person/s conditions which are incompatible with human dignity (Articles 1 & 3 UNESCO Convention against Discrimination in Education 1960)
- States should adopt special measures in favour of descent-based communities in order to ensure their enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms, in particular concerning access to... education; combating multiple discriminations faced by Dalit women in the area of education; preventing, prohibiting and eliminating practices of segregation in education. (CERD. (2002) General Recommendation 29: Decent-based Discrimination, paras 6, 12 & 15)
- The UNESCO Salamanca Declaration and Salamanca Framework for Action 1994 emphasized that schools should accommodate

all children regardless of their physical, intellectual, emotional, social, linguistic or other conditions(Article 3:6)

- Goal 2 of the Millennium Development Goals state that governments will 'ensure that, by 2015, children everywhere, boys and girls alike, will be able to complete a full course of primary schooling.'
- The principle of non-discrimination should be fully and vigorously applied by the Bangladesh State and integrated into the implementation of all other articles to guarantee, without discrimination, the rights set out in the Convention. The Committee further recommends that the Bangladesh State take the necessary measures to ensure that efforts to address persistent discrimination and reduce disparities are adequate and effective in the family, schools and other settings, and in particular among marginalized and excluded children, including girls, children of ethnic minorities and refugee children. (CRC. (2009) Concluding Observations on Bangladesh State report. UN Doc. CRC/C/BGD/CO/4, para. 33)

III. ACCESS TO EMPLOYABLE SKILLS FOR LIVELIHOOD

- Everyone has the right to work, which includes the right of everyone to the opportunity to gain her/his living by work which s/he freely chooses or accepts, and will take appropriate steps to safeguard this right(Article 6(1) ICESCR)
- The steps to be taken by a State Party to achieve the full realization of this right shall include technical and vocational guidance and training programmes, policies and techniques

to achieve steady economic, social and cultural development and full and productive employment under conditions safeguarding fundamental political and economic freedoms to the individual (Article 6(2) ICESCR)

- Everyone has the right to the enjoyment of just and favourable conditions of work, including fair wages equal remuneration for work of equal value without distinction of any kind; safe and healthy working conditions;(Article 7 ICESCR)
- States undertake to eliminate racial (caste) discrimination in all its forms and guarantee the right to everyone, without distinction, to equality before the law in the enjoyment of the rights to work, to free choice of employment, to just and favourable conditions of work including remuneration, to protection against unemployment, to equal pay for equal work(Article 5 ICERD)
- States should eliminate discrimination against women in the field of employment to ensure, inter alia, the equal right to work, employment opportunities, free choice of profession and employment, right to safe working conditions, and prevention of discrimination on grounds of marriage or maternity(Article 11 CEDAW)
- States should take legislative, administrative, social and educational measures to ensure the right of every child to be protected from economic exploitation and from performing any work that harms or interferes with the child's education, health or development(Article 32 CRC)
- State members to this Convention undertake to declare and pursue a national policy designed to promote, by methods appropriate to national conditions and practice, equality of opportunity and treatment in respect of employment and occupation, with a view to eliminating any discrimination in respect thereof(Article 2 ILO Convention no. 111)
- States should take special measures to promote the employment of persons affected by descent-based discrimination in the public and private sectors (CERD. (2002). General Recommendation 29, para. 36)
- States should take all measures necessary in order to eliminate multiple discrimination, including descent-based discrimination against women, particularly in the areas of employment (CERD. (2002). General Recommendation 29, para. 12)
- States should take measures against public bodies, private companies and other associations that investigate the descent background of job applicants (CERD. (2002). General Recommendation 29, para. 38)
- The Bangladesh government should adopt an explicit policy to address the situation of Dalits, and to eliminate discrimination against them; and to take special measures to improve the situation of sweepers, including by ensuring the protection of their health while at work. (Independent Expert on water and sanitation and the Independent Expert on human rights and extreme poverty (2010)Mission report - Bangladesh (presented at 15th session HR Council, September 2010). UN Doc. A/ HRC/15/55, para 125(c))



Chapter-4

National Legal Standard

I. ACCESS TO LAND RIGHTS

Access to land rights is a key factor in the empowerment of women. Land property is one of the best resource to reduce poverty and ownership of land is a symbol of social prestige and power. However, women in Bangladesh face multiple barriers to enjoying the benefits of land rights due to the discriminatory laws and social practices. Bangladesh does not have uniform family law with the right to inherit ancestral lands changing for women depending on religious practice. Muslim women can inherit parent's land but only half that of the brother's. e.g. if a brother gets 1 acre, the sister is allowed half an acre. Hindu women are not allowed to inherit parent's lands and for Christian women, inheritance is equal for men and women. Policy and laws do not make efforts for ensuring women land rights.

The current study undertook a comprehensive review of government policies and legislation to identify the gaps in policies and legislations on land rights for women, in particular, Dalit women. The review covered the Constitution of Bangladesh, National Women Development Policy, 2011, and the government programmes that are implementing for land rights of women, specially khas land (government owned land) distribution policy.

Article 42(1) Constitution of Bangladesh states: subject to any restrictions imposed by law, every citizen shall have the right to acquire, hold, transfer or otherwise dispose of property, and no property shall be compulsorily acquired, nationalized or requisitioned save by authority of law. The provision does not include any reference to gender.

National Women Development Policy 2011, Article 25.2 includes in its provisions the intention to 'give women the rights to wealth and resources earned

through income, succession, loan/credit, land and market management'.

Another initiative the government of Bangladesh has undertaken is the Khas (Government owned land) Land Distribution Policy that guarantees joint ownership of husband and wife (Jinnah, Shah I Mobin, 2013). A goal of this policy was to entrench the rights of poor women to land.

Access to Land Rights for Dalit Women: In Practice

Despite the constitutional guarantee, access to land rights for Dalit women has failed to result in legislative or policy support that enables Dalit women to realise these rights. Dalits have little capacity to purchase or inherit land from their ancestors due to high rates of poverty. Furthermore, as majority of the Dalit women are Hindu customary law creates an additional barrier as women are not permitted to inherit land, either from parents or husbands. For Muslim Dalit women, while they are allowed to inherit land they most usually do not have the rights to make decisions on the lands, with the right of control being in the hands of brother/s or husbands.

II. ACCESS TO HIGHER EDUCATION

In order to address the MDGs, Bangladesh government has made efforts to support all children accessing education. The initiatives include making primary education free and compulsory, introducing stipends for girls to complete secondary education and providing food support for students. Secondary education has been made free for girls in rural areas. 10

¹⁰ The Daily Sangram, Dated 12 July 2011, Available at: <http://www.dailysangram.com/post/57966>, Last accessed on 15 March 2017

According to the University Grant Commission (UGC) of Bangladesh¹¹ there are currently 37 public universities in Bangladesh and 97 private universities. The Bangladesh Education Statistics-2015 of Bangladesh Bureau of Educational Information and Statistics (BANBEIS)¹² states that approximately 8,72,891 students have been receiving higher education at different universities. Among them approximately 4,92,110 students have been studying at public universities and 3,79,781 students have been studying at private universities. The percentage of male and female students at public universities is 63% and 37% respectively, while the percentage at private universities is 72% and 28% respectively. Though the enrollment rate of women has increased, it is still extremely low.

Constitutional Guarantee

- No citizen shall, on grounds only of religion, race, caste, sex or place of birth be subjected to any disability, liability, restriction or condition with regard to access to any place of public entertainment or resort, or admission to any educational institute (Article 28 (3) Constitution of Bangladesh)

Policy Provisions

- The National Education Policy 2010 mentions that special provisions like free admission, free education materials, free lunch at schools and stipends will be arranged to attract and retain these street and extremely marginalized children in schools. Effective measures will be taken for their safe protection within the schools as well (Article 24(2))

¹¹ University Grant Commission, Bangladesh, Available at: <http://www.ugc.gov.bd/en>, Last accessed on 31 May, 2017

¹² Bangladesh Education Statistics-2015 of Bangladesh Bureau of Educational Information and Statistics (BANBEIS)

- The National Education Policy 2010 also states that existing discrimination will be minimized by phases. To meet this end, special programmes will be undertaken to extend special assistance to the schools in the rural and backward areas so that the situation gets improved within some years (Article 25(2))
- Appropriate facilities similar to the steps noted in the primary education section will be provided to ensure equal opportunities for the students who suffer from some limitations in accessing secondary education. Regional discrimination will be dealt with accordingly (Article 9, Section 4 National Education Policy 2010)
- Measures will be taken to provide residential facilities, special help and scholarships for the children of freedom fighters, of small ethnic communities and socially backward groups for their higher education (Article 2, Section 8 National Education Policy 2010)
- Increase education of women, to eliminate discrimination in education rate and opportunities between man and woman and to follow the Education Policy 2010 aimed at mainstreaming women in the development (National Women Development Policy 2011, Article: 21(1)) .
- Gender equality at all levels of education will be ensured. Free education and stipend for girl student at rural areas will be continued. Besides mass awareness raising initiatives will be undertaken (Perspective Plan for Bangladesh (2012)).
- All students enrolled in primary, secondary, and tertiary levels will have access to gender responsive health, nutrition, water and sanitation, socio-cultural development, greater

participation in sports and ensuring a fruitful learning and living environment (Perspective Plan for Bangladesh (2012)).

- Government will adopt and implement policies to provide stipend for poor female students and students from ethnic minorities to receive higher education and conduct research(Article-50 (3), Education Policy-2016)

Legal provisions

- ‘Education on special demand’ means making learning process easier for the students with physical and mental impairment (physically challenged or autistic) under the regular teaching learning process or ensuring quality education for children from ethnic minority or special education for enhancing any particular skills of children(Article-25, Draft Education Act-2016).
- ‘Inclusive Education’ means providing equal opportunity and environment for children with special demand for learning regardless to their gender, religion, race, ethnicity, disability, poverty level or deprived due to geographical location or environmental factor(Article-29, Draft Education Act-2016).
- Government will take initiatives to ensure gender equality and equity at all levels of education(Article-50 (1), Draft Education Act-2016).
- Government will take initiatives to ensure proper infrastructure development and social circumstance for female students(Article-50 (2), Draft Education Act-2016).
- Government will take initiatives to provide stipend or loan with interest free or low interest facilities to female students for receiving higher education and conducting research(Article-50

(3), Draft Education Act-2016).

- The concerned authority will include gender studies and reproductive health at secondary level curriculum. (Article-50 (4), Draft Education Act-2016)

Access to Higher Education for Dalit Women: In Practice

Though the National Education Policy-2010 and National Women Development Policy-2011 have several provisions of promoting female education, there is no mention of giving priority particularly to the female students from Dalit community. Provision for the ethnic minority groups are mentioned in few articles of both the policies, but it difficult to understand how the Dalits are covered in this group since the communities aren’t separately identified here.

In Article-21.1 of National Women Development Policy it is mentioned to increase the number of female students at all levels of education. It is to be noted that the current participation of women in higher education is around 30%. The enrollment rate is very low in case of Dalit female students. Though the policy has set goal of increasing number of female students, there is no mention of any strategy of how this goal will be fulfilled.

Keeping in pace with the provisions of National Education Policy-2010 and National Women’s Development Policy, Bangladesh government has taken initiatives to provide financial support to the students. It is a matter of hope that many poor students have been benefited through the provision of stipend. It is worthwhile to mention that this provision is generally applicable for all the poor students. There is no mention of giving priority especially to the female students from Dalit

community.

There is no evidence based research or data on Dalit participation at higher education. However, from 2013-14 Dhaka University has introduced a quota for Dalit students in general. Later by the year 2016-17, total eight public universities have introduced the same quota for Dalit students though there is no separate declaration for female Dalit students. Around 24 Dalit students have been taken the opportunity of getting admission using the quota system for them.¹³ This number is identified through Nagorik Uddyog and BDERM's own record keeping system. Seven are female which is 30% of the total students got admission under the Dalit quota.

III. ACCESS TO EMPLOYABLE SKILLS FOR LIVELIHOOD

To identify the opportunities of employable skills for livelihood of Dalit women, the report has focused on government programs, policies and legislation. As Dalit rights are a relatively new issue in Bangladesh, there are no specific government programs for Dalits. Consequently, this report will focus on the provisions of employable skill for livelihood for all citizen and then identify how these efforts impact Dalit women.

Constitutional Guarantee

- There shall be equality of opportunity for all citizens in respect of employment or office in the service of the Republic. No citizen shall, on grounds only of religion, race, caste, sex or place of birth, be ineligible for or discriminated against in respect of, any employment or office in the service of the Republic (Article 29 (1)-(2) Constitution of Bangladesh)

¹³ Nagorik Uddyog record

Policy Provisions

Special attention has been given to educate and develop skills of women in the National Women Development Policy-2011¹⁴. The policy aims to increase education levels of women, to eliminate discrimination in education rate and opportunities between man and woman and to follow the Education Policy 2010 aimed at mainstreaming women in development (article 21.1). It has also emphasized the need for continuation of all efforts to eliminate illiteracy of the women and in particular, to give utmost importance to educate and train the female children and women in technical, technological and scientific pursuits (article 21.2). The policy stated to continue with stipends for the female students to ensure participation in education of the female children and to take steps to make female education free up to honors level.

Training centers at division, district and Upazilla shall be set up in addition to strengthening of the existing Women Development Training Institute at Dhaka. These centers shall impart technical and vocational training and training rights of the women, their education and related awareness (Article 45, National Women Development Policy-2011).

Government Programs

Under the Department of Youth Development¹⁵ of Ministry of Youth and Sports, Bangladesh government has introduced employable skills

¹⁴ Ministry of Women and Children Affairs, Bangladesh, Available at: http://mowca.portal.gov.bd/policies/64238d39_0ecd_4a56_b00c_b834cc54f88d/National-Women%20Development%20Policy-2011English.pdf, Last accessed on 13 March 2017.

¹⁵ Department of Youth Development under the Ministry of Youth & Sports, Bangladesh, Available at: <http://www.dyd.gov.bd/>, Last accessed on 31 May, 2017.

training for unemployed youth. It has identified 33 trades under institutional training and 41 trades under unofficial training. The institutional trades include: livestock, fisheries, first aid, agriculture, industrial sewing, block-boutique and screen printing, office management and computer application, computer basic, computer graphics, electrical and house wiring, refrigeration and air conditioning, electronics, beautification and hair cutting, housekeeping and laundry operation, food and beverage, mobile computer training, cow fattening, bird flu prevention awareness training, gardening and vegetable cultivation, seed production, mushroom cultivation, food processing, knitting, linking machine operating, oven sewing machine operating, mobile servicing, Arabic language learning, blanket making and handicrafts. The unofficial trades include: poultry, fisheries, livestock training, nursery, agriculture, vegetable cultivation, dress making, screen printing, spray printing, candle making, jute material making, cycle & rickshaw repairing, welding, photography, bamboo materials making, paper bag making, dry fish production, etc. According to the information of Department of Youth Development, priority should be given to the youth from ethnic minority, but they could not give any information about giving priority to the youth from the Dalit community.

Bangladesh government has also introduced skills training option for the unemployed youth especially for women under the Department of Women Affairs¹⁶ of the Ministry of Women and Children Affairs. This department provides computer skills training, block-boutique training, tailoring, show piece making, mobile phone servicing, beautification and nursery training for women.

¹⁶ Department of Women Affairs is an institution under the Ministry of Women and Children Affairs, Bangladesh, Available at: <http://www.dwa.gov.bd/>, Last accessed on 31 May, 2017

However, Dalit community has been included in the government policy for the first time by the Department of Social Services¹⁷ under the Ministry of Social Welfare. This government department has separate policy for the development of living standards of Dalit, Bede and Horijon community.

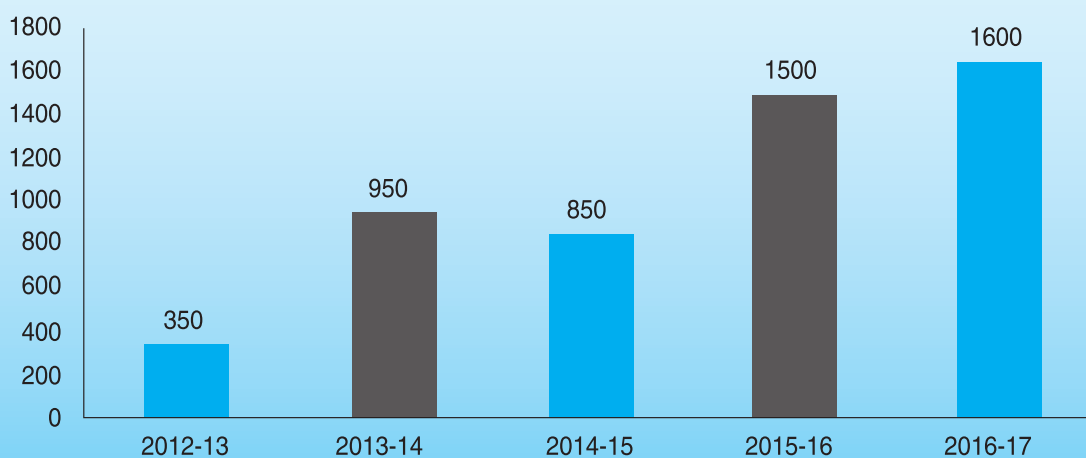
The 2013 policy for the development of living standards for Dalit, Bede and Horijon communities is an implementation policy which focuses on education, social protection and employable skills. Under the education program, stipends are provided to the students of these communities based on the levels they are currently studying. To address employment skills, the policy provides training to the people of these communities aged over 18 years and engage them in income generating activities. The policy also issues taka 10,000/- (non-refundable) for starting small business activities. The trades covered by the policy include hairdressing and beauty therapy, driving; television, fridge and air condition repairing; automobile, Anser (a para police force), Village Defense Party (VDP), nursing, ward boy, agriculture, fisheries, livestock, computer-office application.

According to the information of Department of Social Services 2,100 people from Dalit, Bede and Horijon communities received skills training under this policy. But it didn't mention desegregated data of Dalit men and women who received skills training. Among them total 210 people has got financial support for starting small entrepreneurship.¹⁸

¹⁷ Department of Social Services is an institution under the Ministry of Social Welfare, Bangladesh, Available at: <http://www.dss.gov.bd/>, Last accessed on 31 May, 2017

¹⁸ Life standard development programmes for Bede (gipsy) and backward community under the Department of Social Services, Bangladesh, Available at: <http://www.dss.gov.bd/site/page/909e2813-4cbf-49a8-81bf-12366bb20ee4/>, Last accessed on 31 May, 2017

Number of people who received skills training from government institution under Dalit, Bedey & Horijon life standard development programme



For providing employable skills for livelihood for Dalits, Department of Social Welfare is covering 25 districts in 2016-17 (under social safety net program). The provision of skills training for Dalit, Bedey and Horijon community started in 2012-13. Total 5300 people from these communities so far received skills training. But there is no mention of how many Dalit so far received skills training, let alone mentioning the number of Dalit women. The chart below shows fiscal year wise number of Dalit, Bedey and Horijon who received skills training.

The policy is a positive step for the Bangladesh government in supporting unemployed youth from the Dalit, Bede and Horijon communities to receive training for alternative jobs outside of those traditionally reserved for Dalits. However, it is doubtful this program will reach Dalit women unless special efforts are made to include provisions that address their needs.

In 2012 the Prime Minister of Bangladesh issued a directive to prevent social and economic marginalization of professional sweepers. The directive stated that 80% post of sweepers/

cleaners must be reserved for professional sweepers in the City Corporation/municipality, government and autonomous offices. The directive also included an order to provide decent jobs to members of the Dalit professional sweeper according to their qualification.

The Case of Dalit Women

There are no policies relating to employable skills for livelihood that support Dalit women. Dalits, in general, live in segregated areas meaning general trainings are often inaccessible to Dalit women. Though the Dalit men have some mobility, living in a patriarchal society, Dalit women often do not have the resources to travel in order to reach trainings. Furthermore, government training centers are mainly at the district level making trainings inaccessible for rural living Dalit women.



Chapter-5
Status of Dalit Women's
Access to Land Rights
in Bangladesh

Land is one of the fundamental needs of human being. Land gives human being safe shelter and contribute in their economic empowerment. According to a recent study 19 approximately 60% of households in Bangladesh are landless. The number of landless people is highest amongst the marginalized and disadvantaged.

The purpose of the research was to focus on access to land rights for Dalit women. However, during the primary information collection, the general land rights situation of Dalit community was also came in the discussion due to the overall low rates of land ownership in the Dalit community. Thereseearchwith community members (500 respondents, women, men, boys and girls of Dalit community), demonstrated thatapproximately 99.47% of Dalit living in the urban areas of Bangladesh are landless. Most Dalits live on government khas land, on property owned by Bangladesh railway or other government institutions. The situation for Dalits is better in rural areas where almost 61.47% Dalits own land.

General Findings

Out of 500 respondents -

- 50.6% Dalits live on khas land
- 50.4% Dalits are landless
- Only 0.8% land owned by Dalit women
- Out of 300 dalit women respondents, 4% got land through inheritance
- 46% believe that men to inherit land is more important
- 66% believe that Dalit women should have land rights to their ancestor's and husband's land and property
- 100% believe that Dalit women's land

¹⁹ Bangladesher Krishi-Vumi-Jola Songskarar Rajnoitik Songskriti, 2016

ownership is restricted by religion

Findings by District

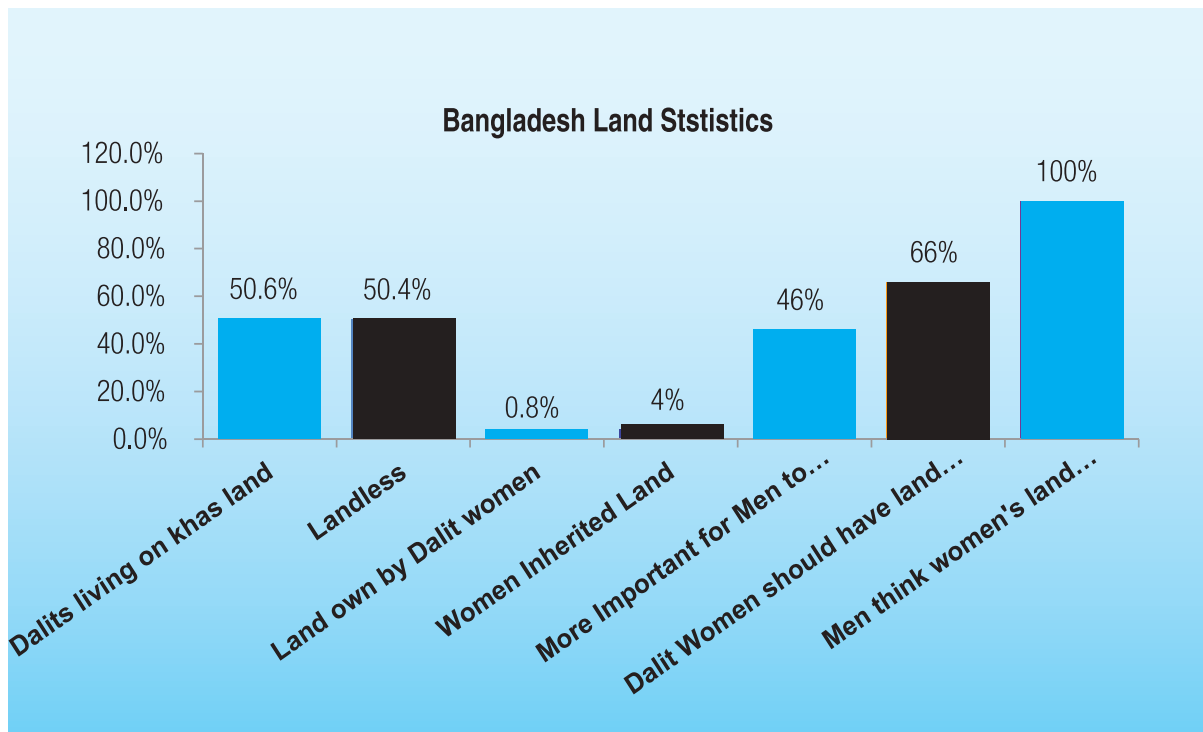
Right to lands of Dalit women is different in rural and urban areas. Therefore, the below discussion was made on district wise findings.

Joypurhat

Total 98Dalit women, men and girls participated in the discussion. Among them 60% were landless and living on government khas land or property owned by government institutions. Rest 40% respondents live have their own land.

60 Dalit women participated in the discussion. None of them inherited any land or property from their ancestors or husbands. They know that they don't have any right to their ancestor's property since they saw their mothers and other elder female members of their families didn't receiveany land or property from their ancestors. They have taken the custom of deprivation from land rights as normal. Even around 40% of them think that getting land is more essential for men than the women. But all of them agreed that Dalit women should have rights to their ancestors and husband's land and property. They opined that the government should make law to ensure land rights for Dalit women.

18 adolescent girls participated in the discussion. The participants reported that none of their mothers inherited any land from their ancestors. The participants responded that having land or property for a Dalit women is very important. Some participantswitnessed that elder family members, especially their grandmothers, had faced ill treatment by the other members of the family. The participants suggested if the elder female members



of the family possessed some land or property, they might not experience such ill treatment.

20 men participated in the discussion. Almost all of them said that a woman's right to land has been restricted by the religion. 20% of them think that women don't need any land since their husband owns land and they will not suffer from scarcity of a shelter. 80% of them think that Dalit women should have land rights. They opined that if Bangladesh has the uniform family code with equal rights to inherit ancestors' land and property, Dalit women would have in better position in getting access to land rights.

Jessore

100 respondents participated in the discussion. The question of having lands in women's name was very unusual for both Dalit women and men. Out of 60 Dalit women respondents, one woman owned land. The one who owned land had 3.25 decimal land in her name that her husband had bought in her name. He also bought same size land for his name as well. The respondents

believed that women do not need to have property, it is husband's and/or son's duty to look after them in their old age. Although the Bangladeshi government has the policy to distribute Khas (government owned) land to landless people, mostly men and single women of majority Muslims get the opportunity, Dalits are always excluded from this. The respondents of Rishi community shared that they have been requesting collectively to give a piece of land to one of the single women in their community to the Union Parishad (local government) for last 5/6 years but have been unsuccessful. The respondents mentioned that as they are not aware of the policy, they could not do the bargaining properly.

Dalit men and adolescent girls (20 men, 20 adolescent girls) also opined that Dalit women do not have land rights. They added that according to the government policy on land distribution to the landless, Dalits are one of the major rights holders group, but they are deprived as the local government authorities do not consider their application. The respondents reported the

local government authorities did not consider the Dalit men when issuing government owned land, the questions of giving land to Dalit women is far behind. Interestingly, respondents of men group did not support the idea of giving land rights to Dalit women. According to them, it is beyond their culture. All the respondents were from Hindu community and they stated that the women of their community do not have the right to inherit parents' and husbands' land and property. Respondents mentioned that at the time of marriage, Dalit women get many things from their parents as dowry including cash money, gold, furniture, electronic gadgets, motorbike – but parents of the bride never think of giving land property as dowry. Respondents agreed that this culture comes from the patriarchal attitude and mindset and said Dalit community believes that in-laws identity is the actual identity for Dalit women, they do not want to transfer their land in women's name.

But adolescent girls commented that having lands in own name is helpful in strengthening confidence. The adolescent group added that government should not limit the right in giving more priority to the men in the land distribution policy. And respondents among girls group that this discrimination towards Dalits is one of the major cause of Dalit girls' drop out from education.

Khulna

100 respondents participated in the discussion. Among them 20% were landless and living on government khas land. The rest 80% of the respondents live in their own land.

60 Dalit women participated in the discussion. 90% of the respondents believed that it is necessary for women to inherit land. They stated that this

would help the Dalit women feel secure, especially after marriage. 90% of the respondents found the customs of mentioned that they do not support the religious system for Hindu Dalit women in inheriting ancestor's land, rather they said, the government should enact law in favor of Hindu women in this regard. They added that having rights to land might help increasing their dignity at in-laws house, this may also help them enjoying economic freedom and make their own decision. The respondents stated that having rights to land might also help the Dalit women being proactive in protesting domestic violence against them.

Total 20 adolescent girls participated in the discussion. 10% of them said that their mothers inherited some land from their parents. They also informed that they would be the owner of their mother's property since they heard that girl children own mother's property as per the Hindu religion. But all of them think that girls should have equal rights to ancestor's property as the boys. Because it might give financial solvency, liberty of decision making and contribute in their economic empowerment. Moreover, it might help them living in the society with dignity.

Total 20 men participated in the discussion. They informed that few Dalit women from their area own land and property. They said that those women are comparatively ahead from those landless women in terms of social dignity. Around 80% of them think that social awareness is very important in establishing rights of Dalit women on property. Almost all of them think that Dalit women should also have rights to ancestor's property and the government can take proper step to ensure Dalit women's rights to property.

Naogaon

Total 100 participants participated in the discussion. Among them 45% is landless and living on government khas land and property owned by other government institutions. The rest of the Dalits have their own land.

Total 60 Dalit women participated in the discussion. None of the participants own any land. 25% of them think that parents spend a lot during their marriage. They also give dowry to the groom during marriage. Moreover, the persons they married to also possess some lands which they think enough to guarantee a shelter for them. So, they don't feel it is necessary for parents to give them land or property after spending a lot of money for the above mentioned purposes. 75% of them think that it is necessary for Dalit women having rights to ancestral land and property since both men and women have equal rights. According to them, the parents should not practice any discrimination among their children. They think both boys and girls should equally be treated regarding distribution of land and property. 50% of the think that Dalit women's right to land and property will help increasing their social dignity and decrease the incident of domestic violence. They think government should enact law to establish Dalit women's rights to land.

Total 20 adolescent girls participated in the discussion. All of them informed that their mother didn't possess any land of their own. As a result of that they don't have any freedom to express their opinion in the family. They informed that patriarchal mindset of the society doesn't allow Dalit women to enjoy their rights. According to them, it is essential to first work on changing patriarchal mindset of the society to establish Dalit women's land rights.

Moreover, the government should enact law with the provision of land rights for Hindu and Dalit women.

Total 20 Dalit men participated in the discussion. They reported that the Dalit women in their area were worse off than men, but the situation had started changing. The society has now realized the importance of providing equal opportunity to Dalit girls regarding their education. So, the respondents think that their mindset regarding land rights of Dalit women will hopefully be changed in future. But they also emphasize of having specific law to establish women's right to ancestral land and property.

Dhaka

Total 60 Dalit women participated in the focus group discussion. Dalits in Dhaka city live in colonies and working mainly as cleaners/sweepers. Most of these colonies were built in British period when the community was brought from India. Neither men nor women have the right to own the land on which they live and living on the land is conditional. If no family member works as cleaner/sweepers under City Corporation, the family have to leave the space. This is one kind of bonded labor, the Dalits in the colony have to be involved in their ancestral job to keep the right to live in a small room of a colony in Dhaka city.

Likewise, Dalit women in Dhaka city do not think of having land in their own name. Out of 60 respondents, 3 in Nazirabazar colony and one in Telegue colony have land in their own name. Parents have bought this land in their daughters name. Inheritance law is same for the Dalits in Dhaka. Women do not have the right to land after the death of their parents. Due to this, Dalit women also prefer to get huge dowry during their marriage.

Case Study

Parent's consciousness helps getting land and property rights

Sadhana Rani (24) was married at the age of 15 when she was reading at class IX. She has got 1 brother and 1 sister. Her father had some property which he distributed among all his children. He gave one half to his son and the other half was equally distributed among his two daughters. After marriage Sadhana's father sold Sadhana's land and purchased one kath land at her name in the urban area. But Sadhana's husband got angry when he knew that the land was purchased at his wife's name. He had a clash with his parents in law for not purchasing the land in his name. But Sadhana's father didn't bow down their heads to the illegal demand of their son in law. They also built a house on that land and rented it to others. They even didn't give a penny to their son in law from the rent of the house. Rather they have been depositing that money to secure the future of their daughter. However, Sadhana's parents have similar plan for their second daughter who have been studying at higher secondary level.

They also admitted that, except gold ornaments, they do not get anything after marriage, husbands are the main owner of all items they bring from their parent's house at the time of marriage. Dalit women believe that male members of the family are mainly responsible for looking after the family. Therefore, the men should have the rights to the family property. 95% of the respondents informed that they are comfortable with the Hindu law of inheritance.

Comments of Key Informants

To understand the policy and implementation gaps on rights to land for Dalit women, the study conducted three key informant interviews. Two key informants were government official and one was a civil society activist to understand their views on Dalit women's land rights.

Md. Billal Hossain, Upazila Nirbahi Officer (UNO), Botiaghata, Khulna

Md. Billal Hossain is the UNO (Chief Administrative Officer) of the sub-district for more than two years. He mentioned that the government is very sincere about the rights of all citizen, specially for the marginalized community. He said that, his office follows the government guidelines in distributing the khas land. There is no reason for discriminating against any community. He added that there is no specific government policy for the Dalit community in distributing lands. He also mentioned that without the disaggregated data for Dalits, it is a problem for government officials to ensure the rights of Dalits. In the question of rights to land for Dalit women, he said that it is beyond the control of government officers. As the Hindu Dalits do not allow women to have the rights to land, he, being a government officer, cannot do anything on this. He suggested that the human rights activists can raise voices for the enactment of uniform family law so that the Dalit women can also have the rights to land.

Ms. Joya Maria Perera, Assistant Commissioner (Land), Naogaon

Ms. Perera mentioned that the government of Bangladesh is committed to providing equal treatment to all citizens. Therefore Dalits and Dalit

women are also eligible for applying for Khas (government owned) land if they would meet the criteria. The key informant added that generally, Khas land can be distributed among poor families in limited circumstances, if they have become destitute by natural disaster or any family legally resettled by the government. She mentioned that there is no specific planning in regards to land distribution for Dalits.

Mr. Mushfiqur Rahman, Office In-charge, Association for Rural Cooperation (ARCO), Joypurhat

ARCO is local national organization working for the marginalized community in Bangladesh. The organization has been implementing a project in Joypurhat and Naogaon district for the socio-economic and human rights development of Dalit and Adibashi community.

He said that ARCO had been working to ensure land rights of Dalits at Joyprhat district. He added that many Dalits at Joypurhy at don't have their own land. They have been living on railway land by building temporary shelter. He informed that ARCO has been facilitating advocacy with the local municipality to ensure allocation of government khas land for landless Dalits. He said that the local municipality agreed to allocate khas land for Dalits living on railway land at Joypurhat. The key informant thought that Dalit women would not get any benefit due to patriarchal mindset of the community. Mr. Rahman opined that the government should enact a law ensuring Dalit women's rights to land.

Mr. Taposh Roy, Upazilla Social Welfare Officer, Dhamuirhat Upazilla Parishad, Naogaon

As a man of the Hindu community he knows that the Hindu women in Bangladesh don't have rights to the ancestor's land but they can inherit their ancestral land only if they don't have any brother or if their parents willingly give it to them. He said the Dalit women are also deprived from land rights. He thinks that they should also have rights to their ancestral land and government may enact laws ensuring land rights for Dalit women.



Chapter-6

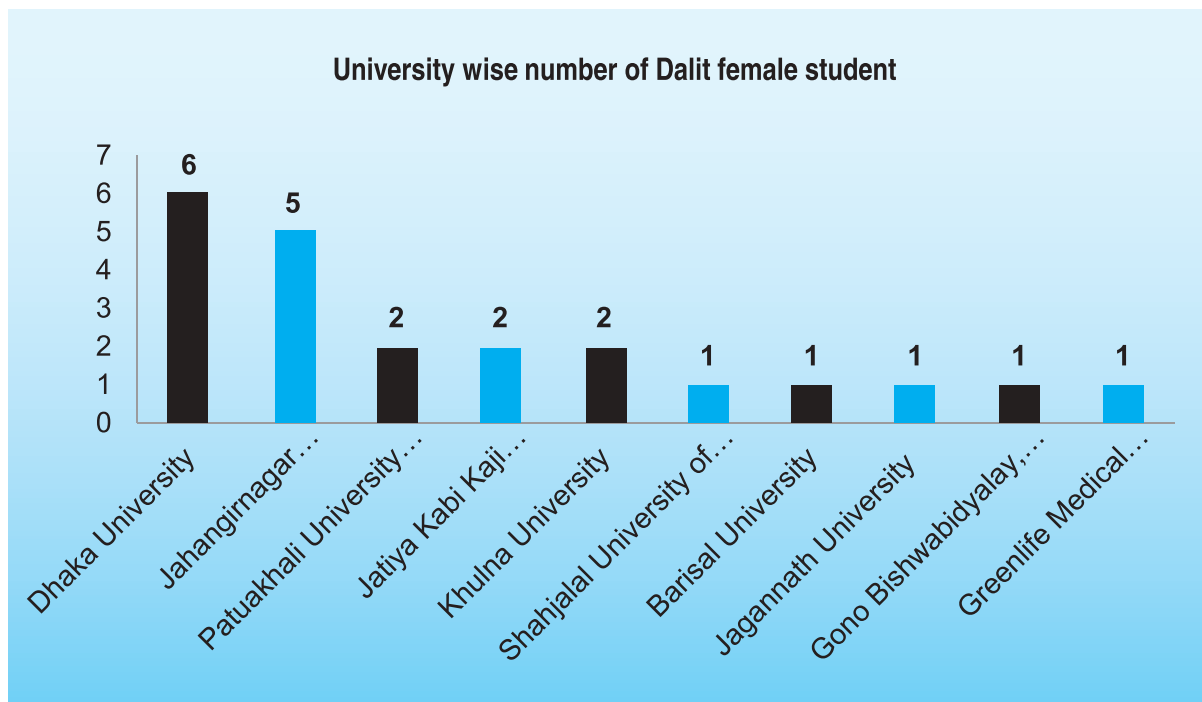
**Status of Dalit Women's
Access to Higher
Education in Bangladesh**

Education is a fundamental need recognized by the constitution of Bangladesh. The current literacy rate in Bangladesh is about 60%.²⁰ Though the literacy rate in Bangladesh has been increasing, completion of higher education has not been enjoying the same rate of improvement. Consequently, Dalit women have very low participation rates in higher education.

- Dowry culture led the Dalit parents stop education of their girl child/ren. They preferred to spend their money on dowry rather than on education.
- ‘Insecurity’²¹ is one of the major causes for not sending the Dalit girls in higher education.

General Findings

- Almost no respondent knew about the policy of free education and stipend for girl children.
- Patriarchal beliefs of the Dalit community is a major barrier for access to higher education for Dalit women.
- Main challenges for Dalit girls accessing higher education were identified as: early marriage, poverty and lack of awareness of parents on the importance of education.



²⁰ National Web Portal, Bangladesh Available at: <http://www.bangladesh.gov.bd>, Last accessed on 12 march 2017

²¹ prone to be stalking and abuse

District wise findings

Joypurhat

60 Dalit women participated in the FGD. None of the respondents had ever attended higher education. 80% of the Dalit women respondents said that their parents arranged marriage for them before the age of 15. As a result, they could not complete school. The respondents also stated that another major reason of not being able to access higher education was poverty. The respondents reported that the Dalit parents are not aware about the importance of education and higher education. They said that nowadays, all Dalit parents send their girl children to school but at the same time they do not consider higher education to be important for Dalit girls. Out of 60 Dalit women respondents, only two had reached higher secondary level. The respondents stated that early marriage is one of the major obstacles in getting access to higher education for Dalit girls. The respondents reported male family members do not want to get them admitted to higher education since they are afraid of not finding out an educated man in their own caste to marry.

20 adolescent girls participated in the FGD. They said that only one girl from their community had reached higher education study. The respondents reported that most of the girls in that area were married before they complete their secondary and higher secondary education. The respondents answered that their parents do not want to continue their education because they feared of getting a suitable groom for their daughter if they waited until after they completed their education to be married.

Total 20 Dalit men participated in the FGD. About 80% of them do not want to take the risk of

completing higher education for their daughters because they think their daughters might not get a suitable groom after completing higher education.

Jessore

Total 60 Dalit women, 20 adolescent girls and 20 men were targeted for the FGD conducted at Jessore district but representatives from surroundings have joined the discussion as well (women 105 and men 35). The FGDs were conducted with the targeted groups from Kahar, Rishi, Malo, Pal and Kawra communities

Among the participants of the women's group, no one was found completed higher education. Only two of the respondents had completed higher secondary education and only eight of the respondents had completed secondary education. Early marriage was the main reason for dropping out of school. The respondents stated that dowry is very prevalent in Dalit community and the amount (both cash and kind) would become higher if the age of the bride was higher. They added that their own community would condemn their parents if they fail to arrange marriage for their girl children in early age (13/14). Poverty is another obstacle of having higher education for Dalit women. It was asked in the discussion that if the parents have both girl and boy children and less money what would they prefer would they choose to send the boy or the girl to school. Respondents consistently stated they would never select the girl child to send to school. The main reason of this is the customs of Dalit community. The community is very patriarchal and they do not think of staying with their girl child or taking support from them in their old age. Sense of security is not a big concern for Dalit girls. They reported that their girl children do not face sexual harassment as being Dalit, teasing is common

for both Dalit and other mainstream girls. All the respondents were committed to provide minimum education, but not higher education, to their girl children

Regarding accessibility, the private institutes for higher education are not far from their community and getting admission is not difficult for them. But, as the community is in general poor, and the higher education is expensive, it is not always affordable for them.

In Jessore, the Kawra community was selected for FGD with adolescent girls. This community was found as the most backward in terms of higher education for Dalit women. There were 20 girls in the discussion, out of them seven had already dropped out of school. All these seven have completed primary education, i.e. class five only. Seven are studying in class six, two of them are in class eight, three are in class nine and one is doing graduation. Though some of them are continuing their study, they informed that they are not sure, when the parents will stop their study. The girls that have dropped out are waiting to marry soon and they do not feel shy to share this.

35 Dalit men from Pal community joined the discussion. They reported that they do not have time to think about higher education of their girl children. Rather they are trying to save money to pay as dowry. According to them, this will help their children to be happy when they are married. They are not aware about the government policies for girl students. Even they do not know that beside the stipend policy for girls under the Ministry of Education, Social Welfare Ministry have separate policy for education of Dalit students only. The male respondents agreed that education for their girl children is a least priority to the Dalit fathers.

Khulna

A total of 60 Dalit women, 20 men and 20 adolescent girls participated in the FGD conducted at Khulna district.

Among the 60 Dalit women respondents, no one had completed higher education. Out of the participants, none had completed higher secondary education. Only 10% of them completed secondary education. They stated early marriage and lack of awareness of their parents were the reasons for not having the opportunity to continue their study further. Respondents added that their families were not able to support their educational cost. As a result, they dropped out from the schools. 30% of them informed that they faced discrimination at school for being Dalit including bullying by their classmates and teachers but they didn't leave school for this.

The literacy rate among the adolescent girls is better than the literacy rate of Dalit women. Total 20 girls participated in the discussion and had attended different levels of education. Though they didn't face much difficulty up to secondary level, they were not sure about how long they could continue their study. The respondents stated that many adolescent girls from their community were married by their parents before completing their secondary education. The respondents added that parents should be sensitized from giving equal opportunity to boys and girls for higher education.

20 Dalit men participated in the discussion. The respondents were reluctant about educating their daughters. Though they admitted that higher education for girls is equally important for them, they were not in the position financially to support the expense of education. Moreover, they also didn't want to take the risk of waiting until the child

was too old to be considered suitable for marriage.

Naogaon

A total of 60 Dalit women, 20 men and 20 adolescent girls participated in the FGD conducted at Naogaon district.

60 Dalit women participated in the discussion. None of them completed their secondary education. They reported that their parents could not support their education due to poverty. 80% of them were married before they reached 15 years. As a result, they could not continue their study. Most of them didn't get enough support at their in-laws house to resume their study. Some reported that they could not manage to continue their study after marriage even though their families though their husbands and parents-in-law had no objection.

Total 20 adolescent girls participated in the discussion. The participants had studied at various levels. The participants reported they didn't know whether they would be able complete higher education or not because, none of their elder sisters could pass the SSC since their parents made them marry at early age. They seemed to be little confused when they were asked whether they want to complete higher education. Only 25% of them said that they want to complete higher education.

20 Dalit men participated in the discussion. The participants reported that education for girls is equally important as for boys. They stated that they had been sending their daughters to the schools, but they weren't sure about how long they could support education for their daughters. They were very much anxious about the security of their daughters traveling to class. The participants stated that spending a long time on education might delay or stop their marriage, so

they were not interested in higher education for their daughters.

Dhaka

There are 17 Dalit colonies in Dhaka city. Mainly the sweepers/cleaners community lives in these colony. FGD is conducted with the 60 Dalit women living in three colonies – Ganaktuli, Nazirabazar and Telegue colony.

Among the participants of women group, Telegue women are in most favorable situation. This was the only community the study found which allowed women to participate in Panchayet, their own customary system to lead the community. Though the FGD was held in the capital city of Bangladesh, there is minimum reflection of this in the life of Dalit women. Generally, women in Dhaka enjoy more freedom than any other city in Bangladesh. Dalit women of Dhaka city have more mobility however higher education for them is not in their consideration. Out of the participants only seven had completed higher secondary certificate examination. Out of these seven, two were continuing their higher education under National University²².

The women's group admitted that early marriage was one of the main reasons for a lower rate of higher education for Dalit women. The women blamed their girl children for early marriage stating that the environment of the colony was not healthy, they live in a very congested area. Many of the girls became involved in love affairs at a young age and lose their interest in higher education. The group reported this was why parents have to arrange

²² Is a parent university of Bangladesh that was established by an Act of Parliament as an affiliating University of the country to impart graduate and post-graduate level education to the students through its affiliated colleges and professional institutions throughout the country.

Case Study

Going against the Tide

Mina Rani Biswas (21 years) is the daughter of Lili Rani and Bidhan Kumar Mondol. They live in Kawra para, Dorajhat union, Bagharpara sub-district under Jessore district of Bangladesh. They belong to the Kawra community and pig rearing is their ancestral occupation. Bidhan Kumar Mondol is also involved in the same occupation and he used to move around with his herd of pigs in different parts of the country. Lili Rani lives with her two children at home. Traditionally, Kawra community is very patriarchal, they give minimum priority of girls' education and used to arrange marriage for their girls at the age of 13/14 at maximum. Lili Rani is the only exception in the community. She had completed Secondary School Certificate (SSC) examination. Despite extremely willingness, Lili Rani could not continue her study and had to marry Mr. Bidhan, though he is less qualified (in terms of education) than Lili. When her daughter was born, Lili started dreaming to fulfil her dream through her baby girl. She had to fight against the whole community to continue her daughter's education. Now, Mina Rani is the only female in the community who is doing her graduation (Honors in Political Science). There is not even a single male student with her in the community and the community members tease her saying that she would not get anyone to marry. Though the community does not allow inter caste marriage, Mina does not care about that. She wants to be an example in the community by completing the highest level of education.

marriage for them. Accessibility in higher education was not an issue for the Dalit women in Dhaka city as there are many renowned academic institutes in Dhaka. The respondents did not indicate dowry was a negative element of their culture as Hindu women do not have the property rights, giving dowry is in another way of ensuring justice for Dalit women. The respondents mentioned that they thought is the main reason of their dropped out from education. Except the Telegue, other respondents informed that women do not need higher education, it is the husband's responsibility to earn and maintain the expenditures of the family. In general, poverty and traditional mindset is mainly responsible for low rate of higher education for Dalit women. No respondents were aware of the government policies on education for girl students. The respondents also admitted that, days are changing, Dalit women should come forward to have higher education.

Comments of Key Informants

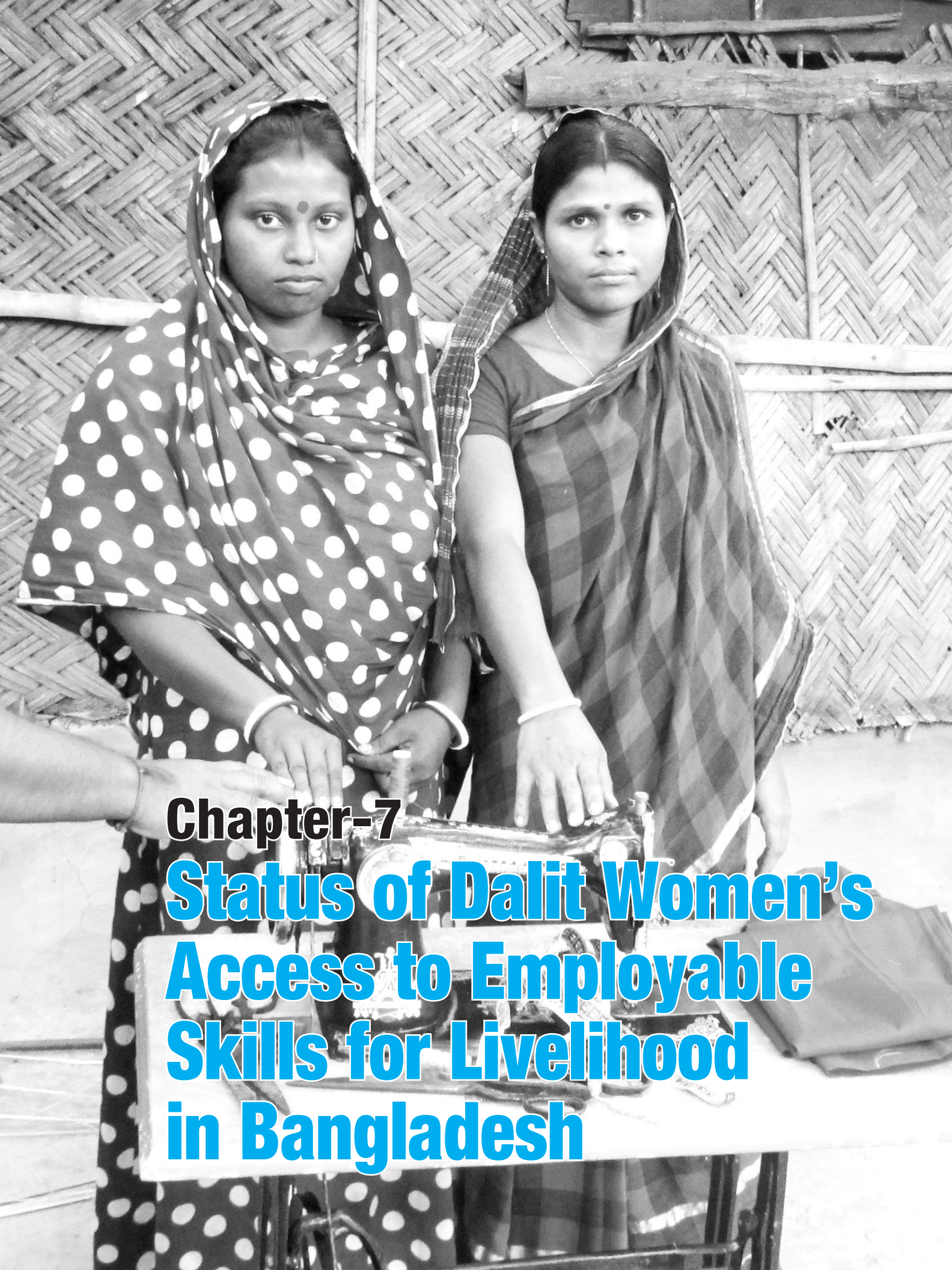
Mr. Johurul Islam, Upazilla Education Officer (Primary), Dhamuirhat Upazilla Parishad, Naogaon

In reply to a question about available government facilities to Dalit children for education, he informed that children studying at primary level getting taka 300/- per month as stipend.

But this stipend is applicable for all children studying at govt. primary school. There is no consideration whether the child is from Dalit or other community. In response to a question why the dropout rate among Dalit children is high at primary level, he said that their parents aren't much conscious about their education. To reduce the dropout rate of Dalit children from primary school, they requested the school teachers to discuss the

importance educating their children especially girls in the monthly meeting. In addition, he also requested the school teachers to visit home of the most irregular Dalit children and make them regular to the schools.

In response to a question why the admission rate of Dalit girls to higher education from his respective working area is so low, he again held their parents ignorance responsible for this. As a result of their ignorance, they get their children married at early age which almost destroy their hope of getting admission to higher education. When he was asked about what measure should be taken to ensure higher education to Dalit girls, he replied that firstly, we have to raise awareness among Dalit parents about the importance of educating their daughters. He added that a realization among the Dalit parents should be created so that they don't consider their daughters as burden and give equal importance to both their sons and daughters. On the other hand, it has to be ensure that government stipend for Dalit students at higher education level should be available and accessible so that Dalit girls don't leave their study due to lack of financial support. Finally, he gave emphasize on introducing quota for Dalit girls at all public university and encourage them to get admission at higher education



Chapter-7
Status of Dalit Women's
Access to Employable
Skills for Livelihood
in Bangladesh

Work and descent based discrimination against Dalits in Bangladesh is the most common factor which restricts their access to different forms of employment and forces Dalits to continue in their traditional occupations. Though recently the Dalit community has made progress in education, the education rate among Dalit women is lower than Dalit men. Prevalence of early marriage among Dalit women disrupts their education and professional development. According to the data of a study titled 'Bangladesher Dalit Somaj: Boishommyo, Bonchono o Osprisshota' 2376 percent of the cases girls were married before reaching 18 years. According to the Bede community, they are not interested to educate their girls and most are married off early. They think that if the girls become educated it will be harder to find an equally educated groom for them. Early marriage confines their lives to family affairs. As a result, most Dalit women don't have the opportunity to work.

General Findings

Dalit community isn't aware about programmes providing skill development training specially for Dalits but 40% of them said that they know information of some trainings provided by Upazilla Women Affairs Office.

10% of Dalit women informed that they received training on sewing and beautification from the office of women affairs.

Access to the government services for Dalit women in rural/remote areas is hard, as the initiatives are mainly district centric

²³ Bangladesher Dalit Somaj: Boishommyo, Bonchono o Osprisshota (2014) by Altaf Parvez and Mazharula Islam, published by Nagorik Uddyog and BDERM.

According to the policy, need assessment for training should be done at local level but there is no desegregated data for Dalits – which is a challenge to provide trainings

District wise Findings

Joypurhat

Total 98 participants participated in the discussion. Almost 85% of them said that they don't have any information about the available employable skills training for them in the area. 8% of the total participants attended different skills training and 60% of them were women.

Total 60 Dalit women participated in the discussion. 90% of participants reported that they didn't have any information about the available skills training for Dalit women in the area. 10% of them only know that there is provision of government training but couldn't give any information about how many trades were in the skills training. Only 5% of participants received skills training on sewing from local government and non-government institutions. Three of them received training from a local NGO and two of the received from government institutions. Only two of them were found involved in income generating activities. All the participants emphasized on the need for more information to be disseminated in the community about available opportunities. They also urged the local NGOs to facilitate awareness activities on women's involvement in income generating activities so that the families could allow the women to attend skills training programs.

18 adolescent girls participated in the discussion. 90% of them believe that it is essential for Dalit women to attend skills training beside education because, most parents don't want to

provide higher education to their daughters married them at an early age. Despite their willingness, many Dalit girls married early don't have the opportunity to continue their study after marriage. They believe that skills training may help them make up the gap in their education and can make them capable of earning and providing financial support to their families.

Total 20 men participated in the discussion. They reported that parents become obliged to have their daughters married at early age since they suffer from social insecurity. But they always encourage women of their families to get some skills so that they can earn some money. 75% of them informed that they have no information about available skills training in the area. They recommended mobile skill training in their area so that it may save their time and travel costs.

Jessore

100 participants participated in the discussion. Out of 60 respondents in the Dalit women group, only two knew about the government policies of providing livelihood skills for the women, which is under the Ministry of Women and Children Affairs (MoWCA). They even do not have idea on the skill developed training for Dalits under social safety net programme of Social Welfare Ministry. One Dalit woman from Kahar community had received training from a tailor and now was earning money and managing her own expenses. She has become an example for the women of that community. Three women from Rishi community were working as day labor. In spite of doing the same work as men, these three women were being paid half the amount the men were earning. No one from Malo (fishermen) community in Jessore was involved in income generating activities. They only help

the husbands doing their work. All respondents emphasized the availability of information about skills development training. The

respondents preferred to have the training centers close to their place. They also added that the government should make the information available for the Dalit community as this policy is aimed at their community. As they are not informed about the policy, they did not have idea on accessibility or affordability of the services provided by the government.

Though adolescent girls have more mobility than Dalit women, they also did not have information about skills development training opportunities for Dalits under the Social Welfare Ministry. The group showed a positive attitude after learning about the government scheme. The respondents mentioned that this facility will help them to earn money. Some Dalit girl respondents said that they had given up their dream of doing something like their classmates from mainstream, but after knowing the services available for Dalits, they became hopeful that they will work in future and build their own identity.

Representatives from Pal community participated in the FGD in Jessore. They were also unaware of the social safety net programme for Dalits. The Ministry does not segregate training for men and women so according to them, the discussion is helpful for Dalit men as well. The respondents mentioned that their ancestral occupation does not have demand nowadays but they do not have other skills. The respondents also stated that due to poverty, they are often unable to manage all expenditures of the family. If the female member of the family could receive training and earn money, it would be very helpful.

Khulna

100 participants participated in the discussion. 82% of them said that they don't have any information about the available employable skills training for them in the area. 10% of the total participants had attended different skills training and 50% were women.

60 Dalit women participated in the discussion. 85% of them said that they didn't have any information about the available skills training in the area. The remaining 15% said that they knew about skills training but didn't know how many trades were there and which organizations had been providing those skills training. 46% of the participants said that their families would not allow them to take skills training since their families thought that women should only be engaged in family affairs. However, 20% of the participants said that they were not interested in attending skills training. However, 10% of the participants who received skills training on sewing and handicraft could not utilize their skills due to no available opportunities. The participants stated that Dalit women were far behind in terms of their educational qualification so the skills training authority should review applicant's competency and relax educational qualification for Dalit women to enable access. Moreover, the participants suggested that local government and non-government organizations could conduct awareness campaign on the importance skills training for Dalit women.

20 adolescent girls participated in the discussion. 10% of them dropped out of school due to poverty. No participants had attended any skills training. 75% of them said they knew about skills training but were not sure about how many trades were there and which organizations had been

providing those trainings. 90% of the participants were interested in attending skills training. The participants reported that they did not believe completing higher education guaranteed a good job as they had observed the men in their community struggling to find employment. Participants believed that skills may help them getting a decent job if they don't complete higher education. Participants emphasized the need to sensitize their parents so that they could allow them attend skills training. However, the respondents opined that the local NGOs can assist them to get information and services available in the area under the government agencies.

20 men participated in the discussion. 70% of respondents said that they didn't have any information on the available trainings in that area. The remaining 30% knew that the department of youth and development provided training to the youth but they didn't know much about the trades. 35% of the respondents thought that women should concentrate on family affairs rather than going outside and attending any training. 10% of the participants received training on computer, fisheries and cow fostering, but none of them were able to use the skills. The respondents thought the situation was more worse for Dalit women. The respondents believed the skills training authority should also provide employment support to the skilled men and women. The participants also suggested can arranging financial support for those who want to start their own business after attending training.

Naogaon

100 participants participated in the discussion. 45% of them said that they don't have any information about the available employable skills

training for them in the area. 15% of the total participants had attended skills training and 70% of them were women.

60 Dalit women participated in the discussion. 90% of them knew about available skills training in the area, but only 18% of the total female participants had attended skills training on sewing, handicraft and beautification. 40% of the participants were involved in income generating activities though they didn't receive any formal training. The participants mainly knitted bamboo basket which is specially made for catching fish. They said that bamboo baskets still had high demand in the local market but it involved hard labour with little payment, so many wanted to leave that work. The women who received sewing training received no financial support from the institution to purchase a sewing machine. Participants had purchased their own sewing machine and had been working from home, but they reported only get order from the women and girls from their own community as women of other communities living around them don't want to come to them since they belong to a lower caste. 80% of participants were interested in attending skills training. They have their choice to sewing and handicraft training because they think that it will give them opportunity to work at home without hampering their household activities. But skills training on handicraft are not available in that area. So they urged to the local authority to introduce training on handicraft. Participants also sought support from the local government and non-government organizations to encourage the families to let their women receive skills training and providing training in their local area so that it might minimize the travel cost.

20 adolescent girls participated in the discussion. Almost all of them knew that government and non-

government organizations offered skills training for the disadvantaged and marginalized group of people. 95% of them were interested in attending skills training. Most of them preferred training on nursing because they think that this skill has high demand in job market as the health service sectors have been expanding day by day. 60% of participants planned to attend skills training after completing SSC exam. Skills training support from the government and non-government organizations are available at sub-district level, but it is difficult to attend training since there are no travel facilities from the organizer and travel is costly. Participants suggested a mobile training course for the people of their community.

20 men participated in the discussion. 10% of participants received computer skills training . All of them have information about the available skills training in the local area, but they were not sure they could attend the trainings since the participants believed the trainings required a certain level of educational qualification which they didn't have. The participants were interested in send their children for skills training because they didn't want their children to have the same profession as their forefathers did. The participants reported they would send their children for skills training after completing their SSC exam.

Case Study

Mindset keeps Gouri away from development

Gouri Rani Das (30 years) is living in Nazirabazar colony in Dhaka, Bangladesh. She has got married 17 years back and now she has two children, both are boys. Her husband is a sweeper in the city corporation and earns minimum. Gouri Rani believes that men are solely responsible for the wellbeing of the family and therefore men should be the only decision makers. Women do not need to think about doing any income generation activities. She strongly believes that dowry is good for women, they get more honor and respect from the in-laws family, if they could bring more dowry (both cash and kind) from their parents. Puja Rani (20 years) is a Dalit youth, living in the same colony. She is involved in Dalit rights movement and a member of Bangladesh Dalits and Excluded Rights Movement (BDERM). She has collected information on skill building trainings for women by the government and tried to include the women from her colony in the service. She thought that as the women sit idle after doing the household works, if they could receive the training, they would be involved in income generating activities and would provide economic support to the family. The government training center is very close to the colony. But Puja failed to convince Gouri Rani. She did not agree to join the training though her husband has to struggle a lot to maintain the expenditures.

Now Puja Rani feels the need of awareness session among the Dalit women of the community so that the women of the community could come out from the traditional mindset.

Dhaka

60 Dalit women participated in the discussion. Though they live in the capital city, 60% of participants said that they did not have any information about the available employable skills training for them in the area. Dalit women preferred to receive training on traditional works for women, e.g. sewing, block and boutique, beautification. No respondents agreed to receive non-traditional skills e.g. driving, motor mechanic or mobile repairing because they think that it would be easier to get the job. The respondents reported that they have less time to go for skill development training as they need to do all housework. Participants also mentioned that while restriction on mobility for Dalit women in Dhaka has decreased they needed to have husband's/ male family member's permission to go for training.

Comments of Key Informants

Mr. Abdur Razzak Hawladar, Director – Programme on the uplift of Dalit, Bede, Horijon and Hijra community, Department of Social Welfare, Dhaka

Mr. Abdur Razzak Hawladar has been appointed as Director very recently. He reported that he is going through the policy of social safety net programme that covers the needs of Dalit, Bede, Horijon and Hijra community. He stated that government of Bangladesh is very sincere for the empowerment of all marginalized communities, including Dalits.

Bangladesh government started allocating budget for improving of Dalit housing since 2010. The government also started allocating budget for Dalit community under the social safety net programme

from 2013-14 fiscal year. In the budget of social safety net programme, government specified certain amount for Dalit by separately mentioning the word 'Dalit' so that the Dalit can only be benefited from this allocation. But from 2016-17 fiscal year's budget, the word 'Dalit' was replaced by the word 'Backward Community' which includes all people from marginalized communities of Bangladesh and Dalit community is one of them. As a result, the allocation was distributed among more communities was earlier allocated only for them. Moreover, by using the word 'Dalit' in the national budget, the government has acknowledged the existence of Dalits in Bangladesh. But now the government is giving explanation that 'Dalit' is itself a degrading word and the government doesn't want to use the word in the government documents. As he was questioned why the word 'Dalit' was replaced by the word 'Backward Community' in their budget, he replied saying that 'Dalits' is a derogatory word, therefore to show respect to the community, the word is not mentioned in their budget. But Social Welfare Ministry has kept separate budget for Dalits along with other marginalized group under social safety net programme. According to him, the community will not be away from the development agenda.

He also mentioned that the budget for 'Dalits' has been designed to cover three basic needs of the community. First of all, the community member will receive BDT 500/month as poverty allowance. There is a provision of education allowance for Dalits school going children. To support the community accessing alternative occupations, the ministry has a budget for skill training financial support for Dalits.

The key informant stated that the main challenge to implement the program is lack of disaggregated

data for Dalits. He mentioned that the policy for the upliftment of the community mentioned that the need assessment for training and stipend should be done by the local government authority (Union Parishad, Upazilla Parishad). But the local government doesn't have any knowledge on Dalits. The government also does not provide any circular or documents to identify Dalits. Therefore, the local government authority depends on the civil society organizations and the local Dalits leaders to do the needs assessment. For poverty allowance, the local government has the full authority to identify and select the poorest Dalit families of the respective area as the budget amount is minimum. All Dalit families will not be covered. He added that it creates an opportunity of malpractice; sometimes leaders use their power and take bribe to enlist the name.

He added that for 2016-17, 25 districts (out of 64) have been identified to provide trainings for Dalits. The social welfare department has asked for the needs for training from the district social welfare offices. Besides, 34 districts will be covered for poverty allowance and stipend. The government is expanding the programme gradually.

One of the major findings from FGD was, Dalit community does not aware about the policy of Social Welfare Ministry. He said that he would take necessary steps for the publicity of the policy. At the same time, he recommended that civil society disseminated the information at all levels through their regular works at community level.

Ms. Ayesha Siddique, District Women Affairs Officer, Dhaka

Ms. Siddiqua stated that the Ministry of Women and Children Affairs (MoWCA) do not have separate allocation for Dalits. The key informant also reported that, she did not have clear knowledge on Dalits. She stated that the government should have circular on the community so that the officers like her would be more careful for the upliftment of the community.

She highlighted that MoWCA has different programmes for destitute women in general. She mentioned that Dalits women can be benefited from the skill building training programmes from the Department of Women Affairs. She added that the department provides specialized training on five trades for having employable skills for livelihood. These include: sewing and dress making, karchupi, food processing, block and boutique and beautification. She also added that all 64 districts are covered under the programmes and as these are especially for the disadvantaged group of women, Dalit women must have access to the programs. For the question of untouchability, she mentioned that she never had heard this type of issue/complain, therefore not able to response. She requested that civil society organizations should be proactive to include Dalit women under the programme. She has also emphasized the need to conduct advocacy and campaigns at a grassroots level as she felt that the local government authority is the prime stage to provide support to the Dalit women.

Mr. Taposh Roy, Upazilla Social Welfare Officer, Dhamuirhat Upazilla Parishad, Naogaon

Mr. Taposh Roy has been working at Dhamuirhat Upazilla Parishad for more than 4 years. The key informant responded that he had little idea about the Dalit population of Dhamuirhat. He stated that before preparing the list of Dalits, Horijon, Hizra and Bede community, they identified them. In response to a question how they identified Dalit in that upazilla he said that the Dalits were identified based on their occupations. They enlisted only Robidas community as Dalit and had been providing financial support to them under the social safety net programme. He reported that total 20 people (Female-7 and Male-13) from Robidas community of Dhamuirhat have been receiving financial support under that programme. Each enlisted person had been receiving taka 400/- per month. He informed that his department had been trying to maintain gender balance in terms of providing this support to Dalit community.

He reported that Social Welfare office has been providing skills training to the youth from disadvantaged and marginalized group. Since these services are open for all, the Dalits can also avail them. He reported that people from Dalit community had been getting these services. He reported that Social Welfare office has been providing computer training to the youth from disadvantaged and marginalized group. Eighty youth have been receiving training under this programme but he could not give any statistic about Dalit's participation in this training course. He stated that women's participation in the training is comparatively low. The reasons he mentioned were lack of education, early marriage and lack of social security for Dalit women.

**Md. Altaf Hossain, Trainer, Upazilla
Women Affairs Office, Dhamuirhat
Upazilla Parishad, Naogaon**

Mr. Altaf Hossain who has been working as a Trainer under the Upazilla Women Affairs Office did not have any idea about the Dalit population of Dhamuirhat upazilla. The discussion started after providing him some necessary information about Dalit community.

The key informant said that his department doesn't have any specific allocation for Dalits, but the Dalit women can get support from the existing programme. They have an allowance for lactating mothers inside the municipality area. The community also has Vulnerable Group Development (VGD) programme and maternity allowance for the poor mothers. They encourage poor women to form cooperative society and register so that they can become skilled in leadership.

With a view to creating self employment opportunity, Upazilla Women Affairs Office distributed sewing machine among the poor and trained unemployed women. The key informant stated that this opportunity is open for all. But he could not provide any idea whether any women from Dalit community accessed the opportunity or not.



Chapter-8

**Conclusions and
Recommendations**

CONCLUSIONS

The human rights issue of Dalit community were not widely discussed and recognized in Bangladesh since independence. However, Dalit human rights drew the attention of some of the national civil society organizations when Dalits in Bangladesh began mobilizing and raising their voices. The Dalit movement in Bangladesh started at the beginning of 21st century which though helped bringing positive changes in the lives of Dalits, it has a very minimum effect in the lives of Dalit women. This study has made an effort to bring out state of deprivation of Dalit women with special focus on their access to higher education, land rights and employable skills.

The study has found the practice of patriarchy in Dalit society at extreme level. The Dalit women hardly get opportunity to enjoy freedom of expression. Different schemes and quota system for Dalits have been recently introduced in Bangladesh. These measures brought some positive changes for wider Dalit community keeping Dalit women aside. Furthermore, there is no mention of special provision for Dalit women in the policies adopted by Bangladesh government.

Most of the respondents participated in the study held patriarchal mindset of the society responsible for their least progress in education, land ownership and engagement with the employable skills. The study also found high rate of early marriage in Dalit society which negatively affects their education, health and social dignity. However, introduction of quota system for Dalit students at different public universities has created opportunity for them getting access to higher education. Land rights of Dalit women isn't recognized and practiced in Dalit society due to religious

restriction. However, land distribution law and its practice among majority (in Muslim community) have encouraged some of the parents to distribute some of their lands to their daughters. This is a very positive indication that they study found 4% Dalit women inherited lands from their parents. The provision of skills training for Dalit, Bedey and Horijon community that started in 2012-13 so far covered 5300 people from Dalit community. But, many people from Dalit community especially Dalit women didn't get this opportunity. The statistics on Dalit community published by the department of social services didn't include all the community. As a result, many Dalit women are still deprived of such government facilities. Hence, it is required that government skills training should reach to more Dalit women.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. ACCESS TO HIGHER EDUCATION

- Government and civil society organizations, specially the organizations working in promoting and protecting the rights of Dalits, should conduct promotional activities on government policies and facilities for girl students. It will help to reduce drop out of Dalit girls from school due to poverty.
- Awareness program on benefits of education, both from government and civil society, needs to be apprehended in Dalit colonies and settlements.
- Child Marriage Restrain Act 2016 needs to be reconsidered as it has kept the provision of "special circumstances" in the name of ensuring their "best interest". According to this provision, marriage of a minor girl in special

circumstances will not be considered as crime (Daily Prothom Alo, 24 November 2016²⁴)

- Alternative occupation for Dalits need to be ensured to reduce poverty
- The Dowry Prohibition Act, 1980 needs to implement properly²⁵
- More advocacy and campaign needs to conduct so that government ensures special measures for Dalits higher education

2. ACCESS TO LAND RIGHTS

- Bangladesh government should enact 'uniform family law' instead of religion and custom-based laws.
- Government should revise the Khas Land Distribution Policy and preserve quota for Dalit and Dalit women
- Income generating activities for Dalit women need to ensure. As many Dalit women will join the workforce, their traditional mindset will be changed.

3. ACCESS TO EMPLOYABLE SKILLS FOR LIVELIHOOD

- Government and civil society organizations should take necessary measures to disseminate the services of Social Welfare Ministry for Dalits
- The training centers should be decentralized so that Dalit women from remote areas can also avail the facilities
- Technical and vocational institutes should introduce quota for Dalits

²⁴ The Daily Prothom Alo, 11 November 2016, Available at: http://epaper.prothom-alo.com/contents/2016/2016_11_24/content_zoom/2016_11_24_5_6_b.jpg, Last accessed on 15 March 2017

²⁵ Ministry of Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs, Bangladesh, Available at: http://bdlaws.minlaw.gov.bd/print_sections_all.php?id=607, Last accessed on 15 March 2017

Appendix A

- Existing related laws and policies in Bangladesh
- Bangladesh Labour Act (2006)
- Domestic Violence Act (2010)
- Gender Responsive Budget 2009-2011
- Education Act-2016
- National Council for Women and Child Development, 2009
- National Human Rights Act (2009)
- Policy for the Advancement of Women
- Vision 2021 – aimed at mainstreaming gender issues
- National Women Development Policy (2011)
- National Labour Policy
- National Women's Advancement Development Policy

REFERENCE LIST

Begum, Ferdousi Sultana (2014), "Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment: Suggested Strategies for the 7th Five Year Plan, Prepared for General Economic Division, Planning Commission, Government of Bangladesh. Available at: http://www.plancomm.gov.bd/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/16_Gender-Equality-and-Womens-Empowerment.pdf, Last accessed on 30 January 2017.

Hertel, S. & Minkler, L. (2007) Economic Rights: The Terrain. In: HERTEL, S. & MINKLER, L. (eds.) Economic rights : conceptual, measurement, and policy issues. New York: New York : Cambridge University Press.

Islam, Farzana and Uddin, Md. Nasir. (2008), 'The Intricate Tale of Social Exclusion: Dalit Women's Experiences of Caste, Class, Citizenship and Gender in Dhaka City', The Jahangirnagar Review, Part II: Social Science, Vol. 32).

Jinnah, Shah I Mobin (2013), "Land and Property Rights of Rural Women in Bangladesh", available at: <http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/HRBodies/CEDAW/RuralWomen/CDABangladesh.pdf>. Last accessed on 23 April 2017.

Legislative and Parliamentary Affairs Division Ministry of Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs (2010), Available at: http://bdlaws.minlaw.gov.bd/bangla_pdf_part.php?id=835, Last accessed on 15 March 2017.

Legislative and Parliamentary Affairs Division Ministry of Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs (2010), Available at: http://bdlaws.minlaw.gov.bd/bangla_pdf_part.php?id=1105, Last accessed on 15 March 2017.

Legislative and Parliamentary Affairs Division Ministry of Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs (2010), Available at: http://bdlaws.minlaw.gov.bd/pdf_part.php?id=607, Last accessed on 15 March 2017.

Ministry of Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs,

Bangladesh, Available at: http://bdlaws.minlaw.gov.bd/print_sections_all.php?id=607, Last accessed on 15 March 2017.

Ministry of Social Welfare, (<http://www.msw.gov.bd/site/page/22f31a43-bdab-4613-9fa2-4bb9ab5fe539/%E0%A6%AC%E0%A7%87%E0%A6%A6%E0%A7%87,-%E0%A6%A6%E0%A6%B2%E0%A6%BF%E0%A6%A4,-E0%A6%B9%E0%A6%B0%E0%A6%BF%E0%A6%9C%E0%A6%A8>), Last accessed on 10 March 2017.

Ministry of Women and Children Affairs (MoWCA), Chapter 5, available at: http://www.mof.gov.bd/en/budget/14_15/gender_budget/en/04_30_MoWCA_English.pdf, Last accessed on 13 February 2017.

Ministry of Women and Children Affairs, Bangladesh, Available at: http://mowca.portal.gov.bd/policies/64238d39_Oecd_4a56_b00c_b834cc54f88d/National-Women%20Development%20Policy-2011English.pdf, Last accessed on 13 March 2017.

Mohosinul Karim (2014), 'Cabinet Okays Cabinet okays Child Marriage Restraint Act 2014', Published on Dhaka Tribune date September 16, 2014, Available at: <http://archive.dhakatribune.com/law-rights/2014/sep/16/cabinet-okays-child-marriage-restraint-act-2014>, last accessed on 15 March 2017.

National Plan of Action for Children Bangladesh 2004-2009, Ministry of Women and Children Affairs, Government of the Peoples Republic of Bangladesh, available at: <http://www.lcgbangladesh.org/Education/reports/NPA%20Master%20Clean%20Final%2022%20June%202005.pdf>, Last accessed on 12 March 2017.

National Web Portal, Bangladesh Available at: <http://www.bangladesh.gov.bd>, Last accessed on 12 march 2017.

Parvez, Altaf and Mazharula Islam (2014) Bangladesher

Dalit Somaj: Boishommyo, Bonchono o Osprisshota (Dalits in Bangladesh: Discrimination, exclusion and untouchability). Dhaka: Nagorik Uddyog and BDERM.

Perspective Plan of Bangladesh: 2010 – 2021, (April 2012), General Economics Division, Planning Commission, Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh. Available at: <http://www.plancomm.gov.bd/wp-content/uploads/2013/09/Perspective-Plan-of-Bangladesh.pdf>, Last accessed on 13 February 2017.

Pervin, Nadira, Altaf Parvez, Afsana Binte Amin, Abdullah Al Istiaque Mahmud and Zakir Hossain (2013), Dalits in Bangladesh: Life in agonies and deprivation. Dhaka: Nagorik Uddyog and BDERM.

The Daily Prothom Alo, 11 November 2016, Available at: http://epaper.prothom-alo.com/contents/2016/2016_11_24/content_zoom/2016_11_24_5_6_b.jpg, Last accessed on 15 March 2017.

The Daily Sangram, Dated 12 July 2011, Available at: <http://www.dailysangram.com/post/57966>, Last accessed on 15 March 2017.

Uddin, Mohammad Nasir (2014), Benchmarking the Draft UN Principles and Guidelines on the Elimination of (Caste) Discrimination based on the Work and Descent, Bangladesh Report. Dhaka: Nagorik Uddyog.



নাগরিক উদ্যোগ
NAGORIK UDDYOG
CITIZEN'S INITIATIVE

With the support of

