

**ANNUAL
REPORT
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BANGLADESH NARI PROGATI SANGHA

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Cover Design
D-Graph Computer System
Tel : 9339936

Published in
July 2001

Published by
Bangladesh Nari Progati Sangha
House # 255 Road # 19 (old)
Dhanmondi, Dhaka – 1209
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Printed by
The Laminators
95/6 Distillery Road
Gandaria, Dhaka.
Tel : 7410838, 7410765

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BNPS : At a Glance

Date of Founding: 24 June 1986

Geographical Coverage

District	06
Thana	18
Union/Ward	59
Village/Para	258

Micro Groups and Members

Micro Groups	Nos. of Groups	Members
Savings & Credit Groups	924	11634
Awareness Building Groups	61	882
General Groups	71	1101
Cultural Groups	32	509
Democracy Groups	152	2695
Middle-Class Women Groups	27	324
Total	1267	17145

Federating Groups

Number of Area Committees	162
Number of Union/Ward Committees	06

Total number of people directly involved : 75,000 (Approximately)
in different activities since inception

Education Support

School	30
Students	1020
Teacher	30

Cumulative Information on Savings and Credit

Group Savings Generated (Tk.)	69,17,193
Credit Disbursement (Tk.)	55,013,596
Number of Credit Recipient	16,647
Rate of Credit Recovery	94.96%

Staff

	Female	Male	Total
Full time	94	58	152
Part time	36	2	38
Total			190

On Going Projects and Donors

Project	Donor
Strengthening the Women's Empowerment Process in Bangladesh	ICCO, The Netherlands, and EZE, Germany
Socio-economic and Political Empowerment of Women in Bangladesh	HBF, Germany
Democracy Education for Effective Local Elected Bodies	TAF, Bangladesh
Promoting Responsive Governance and Gender Justice	SDC, Bangladesh
Empowerment of Women through Greater Access to National Resources	Bangladesh Freedom Foundation

Legal Status : BNPS is registered with

- ▶ Women Affairs Directorate, No. MBP-465/86 dated 24.06.86
- ▶ Department of Social Service, No. DSS/FDO/R-271 Dated 27.09.88

Foreword

Since inception, BNPS has been undertaking programmes at micro and macro level with a view to facilitating a social transformation towards empowerment of the marginalized section of people particularly women. At the micro level, women are organised to build their institutions for making them collectively stronger to establish their rights by themselves, simultaneously the civil society at the local level are sensitised to various development and gender issues for creating an enabling environment at the local level. At the national level, BNPS has been initiated advocacy campaign for policy reform. Issues identified at the grassroots level are correlated with policy advocacy and lobbying at the national level. Groups of the civil society, NGOs and women activists are integrated in different initiatives.

Though the initiatives of BNPS are not very large compare to other NGOs in Bangladesh, the strategic contributions of the organization over the period has been considered crucial in the development arena. Some of such interventions include, reform in the local government system, education system, wider public opinion in favour of secularism and non-communal ideals and increased participation of women in politics.

BNPS is a learning organisation where every little step ahead are counted and each learning elements are measured for further strengthening of the endeavours of the organization.

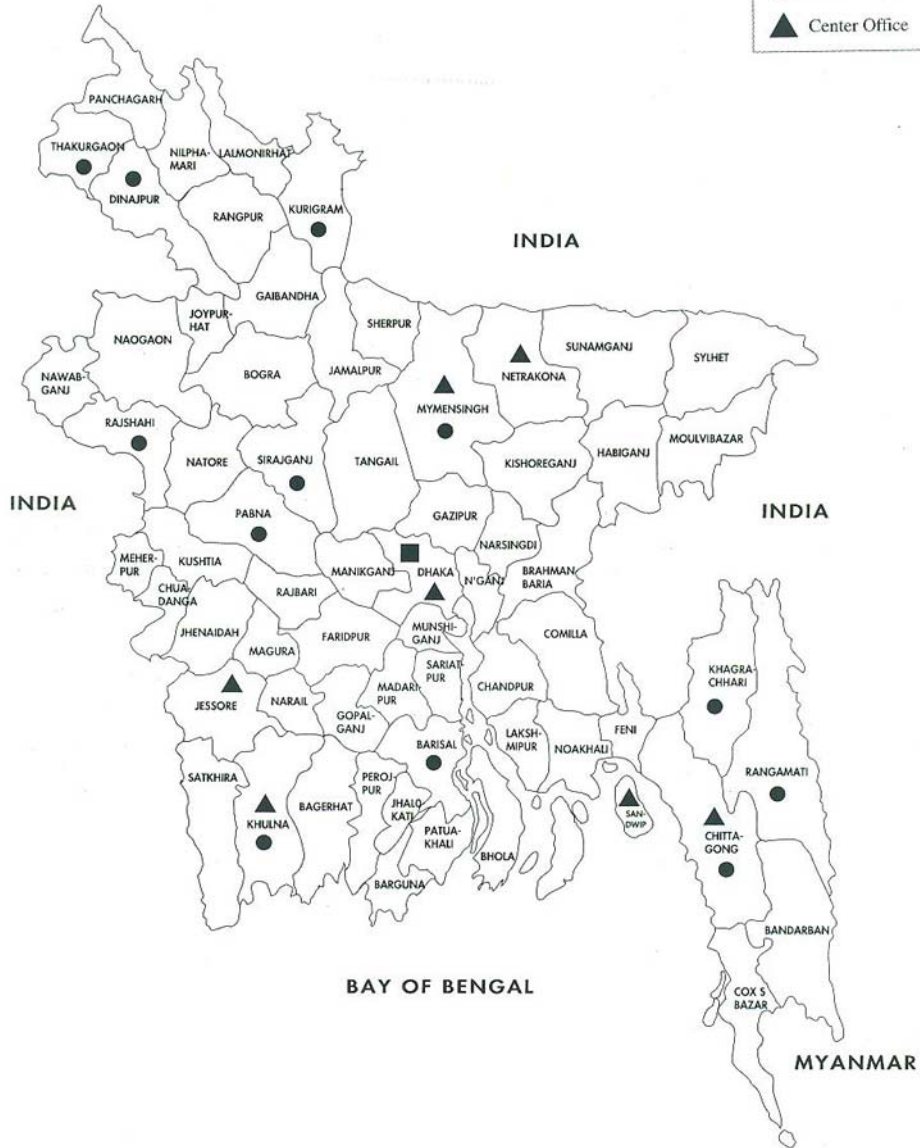
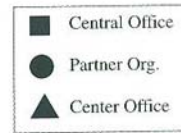
This Annual Report 2000 of BNPS illustrates major initiatives, outcomes and insights of the organization accounted throughout the year. It is our pleasure to share the report with all the stakeholders, and well-wishers of the organization, and we hope that the readers will find it informative both in quantitative and qualitative terms.

In this connection we would like to express our appreciation to our donors and program partners for their effective support towards the objectives of the organization. Without their help, the course of the organization could be much harder and it might not be possible to come through. In the upcoming days, we sincerely request cooperation from all the progressive force to win the struggle against injustice on women.



Rokeya Kabir
Executive Director

Working Area of BNPS



BNPS : An Introduction

BNPS was set off in June 1986 by a group of committed professional and activist women who came forward to advocate alternative development processes that would give prime emphasis on the fundamental rights of the most deprived and marginalized people of Bangladesh, particularly women. Since then, the organization has been initiating programmes positively causative to empowerment of women of all social categories in Bangladesh. And over the period of time, BNPS established itself as the leading women organization in the country with its strong and committed women leadership, development partners, other networks and alliances.

BNPS is an implementing agency as well as an organization that provides supports in partnership with other actors in the area of women empowerment to reach out to the clientele throughout the country. The organization is actively involved in networking, lobbying and advocating at the local, national and regional level in order to ensure a shift in macro and micro level policies in favour of the women.

The **vision** of BNPS is a society that is free from all sorts of discrimination against women and where women enjoy equal rights and status in all sphere of life from family to state.

The **mission** of the organization is to empower women socially, politically and economically through institution building, awareness raising, social mobilization and advocacy.

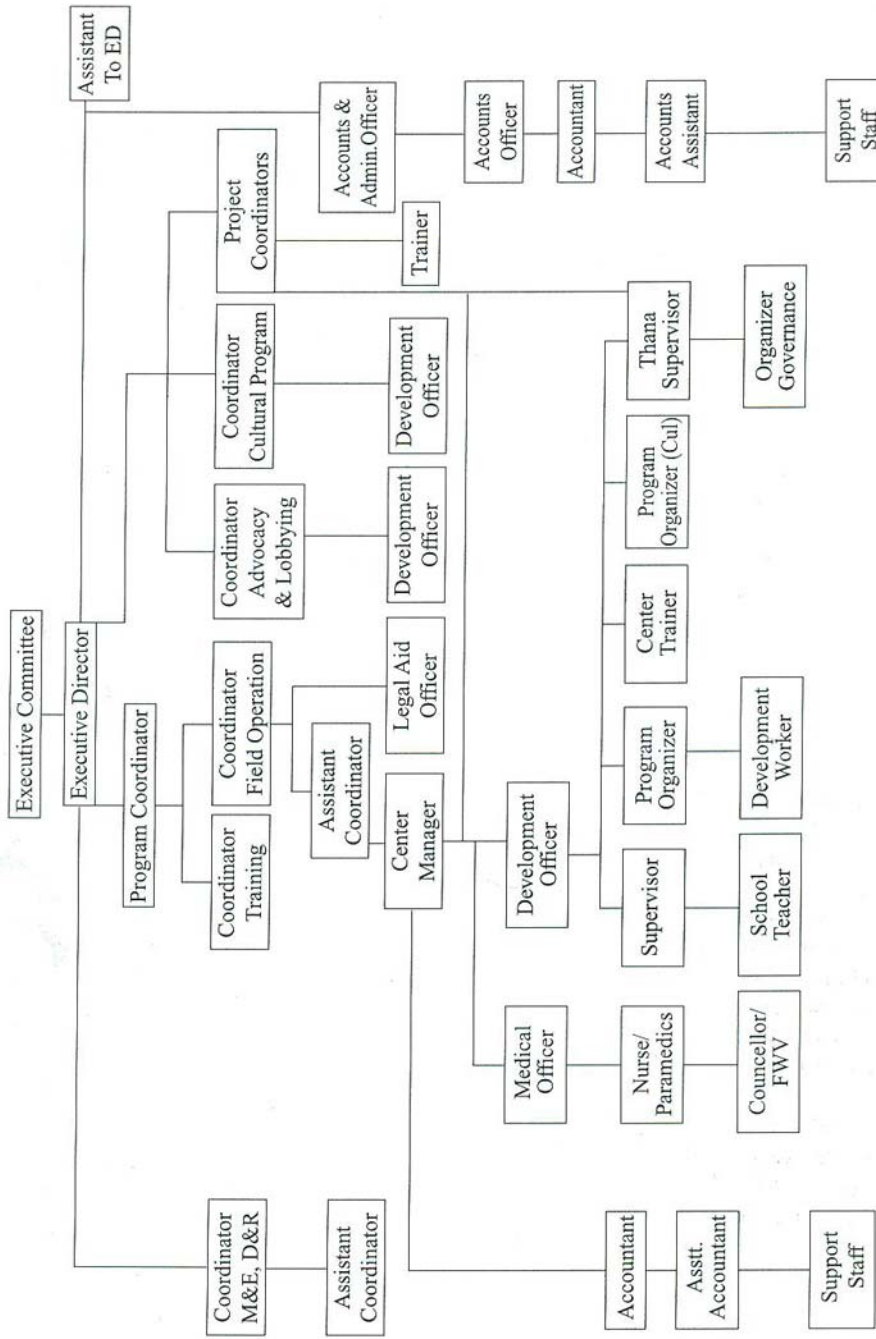
The **core programs** of BNPS include Institution Building, Development Education, Political Empowerment of Women, Income and Employment Generation for Women, Advocacy and Lobbying, Legal Awareness and Legal Aid, Non-formal Education for Children and Adolescent Girl, Health Education and Services for Women and Poor, and Environment and Disaster Management.

Cultural Activism, Institutional Capacity Building, Documentation and Publication, and Monitoring and Evaluation are the other programs of the organization, which provides effective **support** in attaining the expectations of other programs.

Core beliefs of the organization

- Feministic ideals
- People centeredness
- Rights-based approach
- Non-communal and secular
- Anti-fundamentalism
- Sensitive to ethnic values and culture
- Pro environment and conservation of natural resources

Organogram



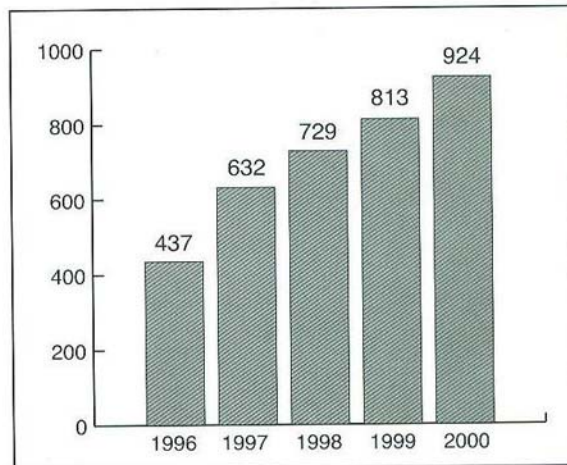
Institution Building

Institution Building program has been designed to make the women at the grassroots level united and collectively stronger. This program includes formation of micro groups and broader federating groups. The groups in different phases go through a continuous process of awareness sessions on various social, political and economic issues.

There are three types of micro groups i.e. Awareness Building Group, Savings and Credit Group, and General Group. Awareness Building Groups are primary groups; members of these groups participate in awareness sessions for four months. After that, the group members who are willing to receive credit support and interested to be involved in all other grassroots level initiatives of the organization, form Savings and Credit Groups. Rest of the members of the Awareness Building Groups, who are not willing to get credit supports, form General Groups. Members of General Groups meet once a month and other group members meet every week.

Area Committees and Union/Ward Committees are the federating groups of the micro groups. Area Committees are formed with the representatives of 4-6 micro groups of nearby places. Each Area Committee of a Union/Ward selects one representative to join in the Union/Ward Committee. Meeting of the Area Committees held monthly and for Union/Ward Committees it is quarterly. Other than these micro and federating groups, group members also form issue-based committees like committee to resist cruelty and violence against women, and association of small women entrepreneurs.

Over the period of time, BNPS has been able to create an impression among the grassroots women of its working area that the organization is indeed working for the real betterment of the poor. Though the organization works in some urban areas where dropout rate of group members is a little high and in some disaster prone areas very often number of groups breaks down significantly, even then there was 15.5 percent increase in overall group formation (total groups in 1999 was 1,095 and in 2000 was 1267), and 8.5 percent increase in number of group members (15,777 group members in 1999 and in 2000 it was 17,145). In most places, particularly in Netrakona, Dhaka and Sandwip, existing group members and community people played a significant role to encourage grassroots women to form new groups. It might be noted here that providing only credit support is not the major agenda of BNPS. For this the organization had to face a tremendous pressure from different Micro Finance Institutes (MFI) that are very much influential and strategic to capture established micro groups to make their profit.



Growth of Saving and Credit Groups during last five years

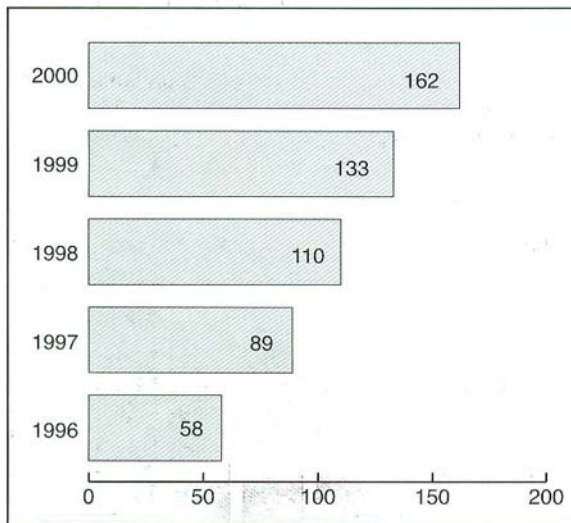
Throughout the year 2000 there was a general attitude among the group members to participate more in the income generation activities. During this period number of Savings and Credit Groups increased by 13.5 percent and General Groups decreased by 15 percent. It is a clear indication that they count the capacity building on income generation as an essential part of overall empowerment process of women.

Institution Building program has created opportunities for the poor, in their working areas to be united and to undertake different initiatives of their own. They are now able to realize the benefits of forming their own institutions and can feel the difference by comparing their previous situation. Major increase in forming federating groups clarifies the concept of group members on collective efforts. There was 22 percent increase in formation of Area Committee, and for the first time six Union/Ward Committees formed in 2000 among the group members of BNPS. Almost all the micro groups already joined the Area Committees especially in the old working areas of the organization. These committees played a vital role in mitigating problems among the group members and also to take joint initiatives of development activities and protesting against any discrimination on women.

Leadership quality among the members of comparatively old groups increased up to a considerable level. Groups which are more than three years old, regularly organized group meetings if the grassroots level worker of the organization could not be present on the scheduled day. Leaders of groups, different committees and broader federating groups were very much aware about their responsibilities and found capable of act

properly. The member of federating groups shared discussion issues of the Area Committee and Union/Ward Committee meetings with general members of micro groups and they also maintained liaison with community leaders.

There are a number of instances in all the working areas of BNPS where group members found taking joint initiatives to solve their family level problems. The rate of wife beating, child marriage, dowry, polygamy and such other occurrences were negligible in the families of group members of BNPS. If group members got to know of any such incident they take instant initiatives to mitigate the problem. Even they also take necessary initiatives if any injustice happened to be occurred in their society.



Year wise increase in formation of federating groups during 1996-2000

Considering the potentiality of broader federating groups, it was observed that these groups were mostly concentrated in mitigating conflicts among the group members and in limited cases, organizing mobilizations against cruelty on women. Further strengthening of the federating groups was under special consideration of BNPS and in future specific initiatives would be taken in this regard.



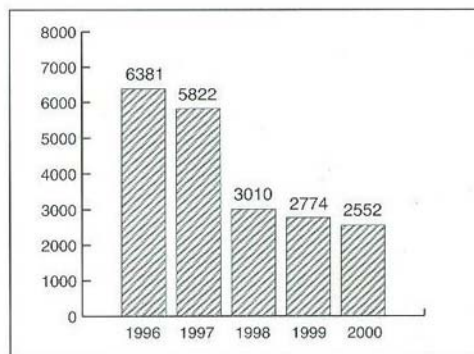
Development Education

Since inception, BNPS has placed particular emphasis on raising awareness of grassroots women on different development issues which the organization feels a crucial area of intervention for the overall empowerment of women. The initiatives implemented through Development Education Program includes non-formal training courses both in-house and field based on social issues, workshop and opinion sharing meeting with community leaders and male family members of the group members, and cultural programs.

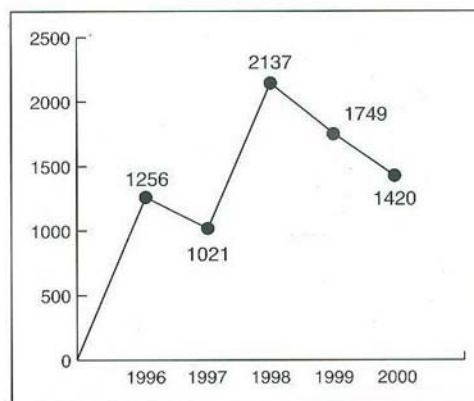
The main objective of the Development Education Program is to facilitate social empowerment of the poor women through raising their level of consciousness and increasing analytical skills. This program also enables the women to enhance their management and communication skills and it plays an effective role in establishing women rights.

Different training courses of this program are implemented following specific modules developed by BNPS. These training modules were revised last year and had a better result in communicating different issues. Non-formal training courses were organized at the group level and the Development Workers and Supervisors of the centre offices facilitated those. In-house training courses were organized at the centre level, which were facilitated by the trainers. Workshops and opinion sharing meeting of the Development Education Program were organized at the field level as well as at the centre level. Senior program staff of the centre offices facilitated those activities. Cultural programs organized under this program were performed by the members of the cultural groups who are trained by the organization.

As a result of different initiatives of Development Education Program, group members were found



Year wise data on number of group members in the training course on Societal Analysis during last five years



Year wise data on number of participant in the training course on Leadership during last five years

Fatema saved a girl From the probable rape

Fatema - a group member of Mymensingh centre of BNPS. Once she was cooking in her house beside the railway. It was just before sunset in the afternoon. All on a sudden she heard a hue and cry and saw some neighbouring wicked boys irritating an unknown girl. The boys were trying to make the girl go with them and assuring the girl that they will reach her to her destination. But the girl did not agree to go with them. Fatema appeared to the scene and asking the girl came to know that the girl lost her grandmother at the rail station, as there was huge crowd while she was going to visit her maternal uncles' house. But the girl does not know the way to her kin's house.

Fatema got the matter, console the girl and offered the girl to stay overnight with her. But the boys got angry for this. However, Fatema was desperate and took the girl to her house ignoring the threat of the boys. The boys attacked her house with arms at midnight to kidnap the girl. They stroke her house with the hockey sticks and asked her to hand over the girl to them. They threatened her that they will kill her if she does not do so.

Fatema came out of the house with a sharp 'Daa'(a traditional cutter used at kitchen works) and challenged the boys. Her brave made the boys frightened and they passed out. Then she called others of the slum to wake up, as she was apprehensive about another attack by those boys. Fatema along with the other slum dwellers guarded the girl whole night. In the next morning she made the girl reach to her uncles' house by herself. And the girl became saved from a definite violent occurrence.

According to Fatema, she got such courage from the education of BNPS. She cannot help standing with courage for a woman when the woman got to get injustice. She got that much of mental strength. She believes that the oppression on women will definitely be stopped if every woman comes forward. She also learnt that the oppressions should be resisted otherwise the situation would perpetuate only and in future the situation will not be changed.

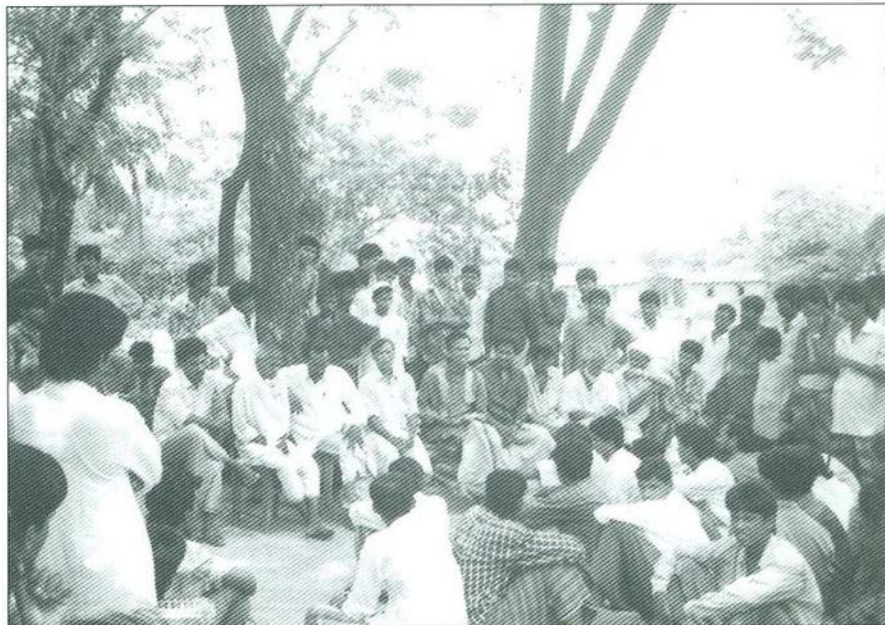
CASE STUDY



more aware of their status and situation in the society and they have instances of being able to transfer such awareness into action when necessary.

Group leaders/area committee leaders in Netrakona and in Sandwip participated in the local level arbitration in their area specially on women's issues. Participation of women in the arbitration process was quite unimaginable in those areas even 2/3 years back.

Through workshops with community leaders it has been observed that male members of the community and male members of group members' families are more sensitise to the initiatives of BNPS and supportive to the involvement of women in BNPS groups. Such support was very important towards creating an enabling situation for women and it was planned to provide more inputs in this initiative in coming days.



Advocacy and Lobbying

BNPS believes that favourable policy environment is most essential for establishing a society free from all sorts of discrimination against women, for which the organization has been functioning since its inception. Advocacy and Lobbying Programme of BNPS was set up with a specific view to create an enabling environment for women in the ever changing socio-political environment and the programme is intended to bring in a sustainable change in the life of the grassroots people especially women.

One of the main characteristics of this programme is to ensure linkage of the grassroots with the national level initiatives, which is generally overlooked in most of the advocacy initiatives. However, BNPS always tries to provide proper focus on grassroots level initiatives and on concerted steps of multidisciplinary people towards positive change.

Organising workshops, seminars, debates, rallies, cultural programs, conducting studies, preparing information materials are the major activities of Advocacy and Lobbying Programme of BNPS. Other than these, meeting with policy makers and implementing agencies organized, and networking with like-minded organisation also maintained regularly.

Through workshops at local, divisional, and national level, a good number of people of civil society groups, government officials, political leaders, members of the parliament, and honourable ministers joined in the efforts of the organisation in creating a favourable policy environment for women.

These workshops have significant effects in raising conceptual clarity of the participants on respective issues and also created pressure on the government to formulate women's friendly policy environment.

Activities carried out in 2000

Activities	Achievement
Organise workshop at local levels	20
Organise workshops at divisional levels	6
Organise workshop at national levels	6
Organise press conference	1
Organise workshop with middle class women	114
Follow up workshop on Gender Issues	1
Day observation at local levels	7
Rally	5
Debate among school/college student	6
Conduct Study	1
Publish Poster	4
Publish Leaflet	1
Booklet	2
Publish Calendar	1
Newsletter	2



Issues concerning women's and democratic rights covered in different workshops during 2000

- ▶ CEDAW and Situation of Women in Bangladesh
- ▶ Demand for Increased Reserved Seats for Women in the National Parliament and Direct Election in those Seats
- ▶ National Policy for the Advancement of Women
- ▶ Beijing Platform for Action
- ▶ Status of Women in Existing Family Law
- ▶ Women in Media
- ▶ Implementation of Constitutional Commitment to Achieve Women's Rights
- ▶ Guardianship Act and Women in Bangladesh
- ▶ Intervention Needed for Resisting Violence against Women

Throughout the year, one of the main agenda of BNPS was to raise public opinion on the demand for increased reserved seats for women in the national parliament and direct election in those seats. Along with other activities, a mass rally was organised on the issue in Dhaka. All those initiatives of BNPS received big coverage in the print media and there was immense pressure on the government from different section of the society. Unfortunately, lack of commitment of both the ruling and the opposition political parties the demand disfavoured.

The press conference was held on the findings of the six divisional level workshops on 'Intervention Needed for Resisting Violence against Women'. Observing the intensity of violence against women, BNPS undertook that initiative and it was also widely covered by the national newspapers.

Through different communication materials i.e. poster, booklet, leaflet, calendar, newsletter etc. it was possible to disseminate message of the awareness issues and demands among the mass people. These materials were distributed countrywide through partner organisations and networks.

Debate competition was also very effective to raise awareness on women issues among the students, teachers, parents and general audiences. Such competition was common in most of the educational institutes earlier. However, now a day it is very rare to find that debate competition is being organized at schools or college level specially outside Dhaka. In this regard initiative of BNPS is contributing in reviving the environment.

BNPS conducted a study titled 'Madrasah Education: An Alternative Observation'. This study was a follow-up initiative of the previous study titled 'Madrasah Education in Bangladesh: Background, Present Scenario and the Position of Women'. The study highlighted the process how madrasah education contributes in formulating mind set-up towards religious fundamentalism in Bangladesh and its discriminatory attitude on women. Through this study opinion was collected on further continuation of madrasah education from members of the civil society groups, and most of them opined to establish a common education system in the country. To make the findings of the study available among the broader groups of people, BNPS has plan to print it and that would be done in the year 2001.

Throughout the year a good number of workshop organized among the middle class women. These workshops were facilitated by the senior level staff of the centre offices and issues like CEDAW, BPFA, Family Laws etc. discussed there. Through this initiative it was intended to raise interest of the middle class women to be involved in the mainstream women's movement. However, this initiative is still at the primary stage and so far it was observed that some of the member of the middle class women groups were active at the local level in demanding their practical needs. The organisation succeeded up to a considerable level in making the middle class women enthusiastic and active against social discriminations at their levels. To further strengthening of this endeavour, BNPS is in the process of developing a flexible policy on working with the middle class women.



BNPS always provides special importance on collective efforts towards empowerment of women, and working through network and alliance is one of the major strategies of the organization. At the national level BNPS is involved with a number of networks/forums and those are Association of Development Agencies in Bangladesh (ADAB), Democracy Forum (DF), Coalition for the Urban Poor (CUP), Sammilita Samajik Andolan (SSA): a network of development organizations working for bringing communal harmony and involved against religious fundamentalism to uphold the rights of religious and ethnic minority groups; Legal Awareness Forum (LAF), Association for Land Reform and Development (ALRD), Parash: an environmental group, Gender Justice Network, Sammilita Nari Samaj (united women group), and National Committee on Beijing Plus Five (NCBP).

At the regional and international level, BNPS is involved with the South Asian Network of Gender Activists and Trainers (SANGAT), Centre for Asia Pacific Women in Politics (CAPWIP), Asia Pacific forum on Women Law and Development (APWLD), and the International Restructuring Education Network Europe (IRENE). BNPS is also the member of the External Gender Consultative Group (EGCG) of the World Bank, and in 1998 the organization acquired the SPECIAL consultative status with Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) of the United Nations.

At the international level BNPS participated in five workshops/seminar throughout the year 2000. Two workshops were organized by the Federal Foreign Office of Germany in Berlin and those were on the 3rd Global Forum on Economic and Social Equal Opportunity, and on Milestones in Empowerment: Beijing - Beijing+5 - Beijing+10 - An Interim Stocktaking of International Women's Policy. Ms Rokeya Kabir, Executive Director of BNPS participated in these workshops. She also participated in the International seminar on Organizing Women Workers in the Informal Sector Initiatives and Alternatives to



Self-Empowerment. This seminar was organized by International Restructuring Education Network Europe (IRENE) at the Evangelische Akademie in Mulheim, Ruhr, Germany. Besides, Mr Habibur Rahman Chowdhury, Program Coordinator of BNPS, participated in two seminars in Germany organized by NETZ-Bangladesh and Centre for Bangladesh Studies. One workshop was on 'Situation of Women in Bangladesh and Role of Small Credit in Empowerment of Women'. Another workshop was organized by Centre for Bangladesh Studies on 'Situation of Women in South Asia and Empowerment of Women'.

In the international workshops/seminars, program experiences of BNPS on issues of women and agenda of the organization on different international policies shared with the participants. These programs also provided the opportunity to further strengthening of contacts with different international networks involved in the area of women's empowerment.

Income and Employment Generation for Women

In the traditional patriarchal society like ours, women are economically dependent on men. They are marginalized from the mainstream economic activities. This alienation adversely contributes to empowerment of women, socially and politically. Income and Employment Generation for Women Program of BNPS considered as an essential part of its empowerment initiatives in general, which contributes to achieving economic empowerment of women as well as towards social and political empowerment. Major components of this program are skills development training, management training, generation of savings by the group members, and financial support to the group members. Besides, in the national level, BNPS is involved in creating a policy environment which would facilitate easy access of women to national resources.

The poor and landless people in Bangladesh have little access to formal credit and they have to depend on informal sector e.g. money-lenders for credit to meet their consumption and investment needs and have to pay a heavy rate of interest. In this regard, Income and Employment Generation for Women Program of BNPS played a significant role in providing necessary supports to the poor women to create their own financial base. The experience of BNPS revealed that women have potentials for becoming important producers, traders and independent income earners if they are provided with the necessary access to credit, skills and human development training.

Over the period of operation, some noticeable changes has been observed among the group members of BNPS who have developed the ability to make profit over their IGAs. Some of them are involved in small or big purchases particularly the raw materials they need for their IGAs and sell their products in the market. Earlier they were dependent for this on their husbands, sons or other neighbouring male persons. Due to this, sometimes they were even cheated.

Women in the rural areas were not allowed to go to certain places, like market, hospitals without any male companions. After being involved with IGAs through micro-credit they are now going to the market, medical centres outside the village, their relative's houses, movies or any social gatherings either organized by NGOs or so others.

Skills development training has impacted on the grassroots women in building their capacity to implement IGAs. And it not only benefits the group member who directly get the training, other members of the group are also benefited through observation of implementation process of IGAs and sharing experience in the group meetings.

The main features of the BNPS credit fund

- (a) Credit support is provided exclusively to women from lower income strata
- (b) No collateral is required to receive loan
- (c) Loans are given mostly for productive purposes with an aim to increase family income and increase organising and leadership capability of women.
- (d) Repayment is expected to be made from the income of the IGAs
- (e) Loans may be given for individual or collective investment
- (f) Repayment is made in small instalments as agreed at the time of receiving loan
- (g) No loan issued to buy assets from another poor women of similar socio-economic status
- (h) Service charge is a straight 12 percent per annum.
- (i) Regular monitoring is ensured to oversee the performance of the credit fund

The wheels of fortune

Jaymon's life rolling towards happiness

Jaymonnesa - a struggling woman became able to shake her hands with happiness after a long struggle against the catastrophic poverty. Hard work, support from BNPS and good counselling made all these possible to her livelihood. Now she is self-reliant, and a successful business person.

Jaymon got married to a rickshaw-puller when she was only 12 as she was grown up in her step mothers' family. Subsequently she became a mother when she even does not know what does a marriage mean. But somehow she was happy with her family but her husband left her with a 3 years baby getting married with another woman. Jaymon fell into a great dismay. Then she migrated to the city and started as a domestic help in a house. But she had to leave her job for unfriendly situations. Getting back from the town, she started cutting and selling grass and that made her live from hand to mouth with her baby. Then started a small business of dried fish. Such a way she tried one after another but could not drive the chronic poverty away.

By this time her baby boy became young without literacy and slum livelihood usually made the young boy go to the bad. She made the boy get married thinking that this might change him. But she was wrong. The boy was very lazy but the size of the household was increasing and meanwhile Jaymon became a grandmother. The amount of household expenditure increased more.

Jaymonnesa was very enthusiastic being a group member of BNPS when the organisation starts at Kalibari sandbar of Mymensingh. She used to make savings and attend the meetings regularly that established her as a sincere member of the group. BNPS provided her Tk. 2000 (about USD 40) credit and she started her dried fish business once again with a new hope. As her capital was bigger than the previous periods, she was able to refund the regular instalments and bought a rickshaw for her son with her savings money. Being the owner of a rickshaw her son started working with full of enthusiasm and he was earning more. Next time Jaymon took another loan of Tk. 5000 as to make her business bigger. The wheels of Jaymons' life started rolling towards happiness.

Meanwhile Jaymon got married once again. Her newly married husband assisted her in the business. They repaired their house by the business profit. Now Jaymon is thinking over to buy a new rickshaw and sending her grandchildren to the school.

Jaymon is grateful to Bangladesh Nari Progati Sangha. According to her, she would never forget the benefit she got from the organization and the happiness she is going through has been provided by BNPS.

CASE STUDY



Women's ownership of productive assets, including cattle, poultry, sewing machine, house and even homestead land increased and they are also having cash savings. Women's involvement increased in major decision making such as purchasing land, rickshaw or livestock for income earning process and at the same time family matters like marriage of their daughter or son. Ability to make choices improved concerning the way their money to be used, visiting their natal homes, sale of jewellery or land, and work outside home.

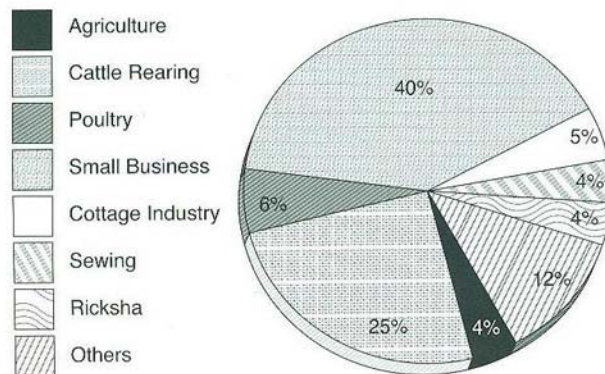
In some respects few activities of this program have a quite a bit of risks as it deals with the cash money. Because of the pressure from the male members of the family, some group members had to invest money in a trade which is too risky or for which they do not have enough expertise. In most of such cases, they loose money. In this regard BNPS has provided special importance on more intensive supervision of income and employment generation activities by grassroots level workers.

Operation procedure of BNPS credit

- ☆ Conduct base-line survey
- ☆ Form self-help groups
- ☆ Raise socio-economic and political awareness
- ☆ Strengthen leadership and management skills
- ☆ Provide training on Income Generation Activity (IGA) Management
- ☆ Render skills development training to the group members
- ☆ Provide financial support
- ☆ Provide follow-up support

The cumulative recovery rate of credit in 2000 was about 95%. Although this rate is quite high compared to the national banking figures, still there was a feeling in the management that the rate should be at least three percent more. However, it had been identified that increased competition among NGOs, who attract established group members with their bigger credit supports, and lack of capacity among some staff caused that lower rate in credit recovery. Initiatives had been taken to improve discipline of groups as well as strengthen capacity of staff on credit management.

Throughout the year 2000 total Tk. 22,007,900 was provided among the group member as credit support from the Revolving Loan Fund (RLF) of BNPS, and following chart shows the sector wise ratio of this disbursemen



Under national level initiatives, a study on 'Allocation for Women in the National Budget' conducted in last year, which was the pioneering work in Bangladesh. Through this study it was identified that only 3.8% development project is allocated exclusively for the development of women during the fiscal year 2000-2001. It was planned to share findings of the study among the mass people through divisional level workshops and publishing the report on this study. Besides, another study titled 'Impact of Globalisation on Women' had been initiated that would be completed in next year.



Political Empowerment of Women

Political empowerment of women is the prime concern of BNPS through which, the organization believes that, it would be possible for the people of the distressed community to enjoy the outcomes of positive changes in overall development arena. Until September 2000 different initiatives of this program were implemented through two different projects financially supported by The Asia Foundation (TAF), and Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC). TAF funded project was ended in September 2000 and in October SDC funded project started a new phase for three years where all the components of the TAF funded projects were accumulated.

Specific objectives of the Political Empowerment of Women program are to raise awareness of the voters of their democratic rights, promote local level good governance, make the local government bodies more effective and responsive to the women, enhance consciousness of the political parties and thus improve the democratic culture in the society.

Voters awareness, training of the LG representatives, dialogue between voters and representatives, networking among the women members, sharing meetings with Local Elected Bodies (LEBs) and community leaders, workshop with community leaders, dialogue sessions between the LEBs and voters, coordination meeting with GO, NGO, local political leaders and other stakeholders, planning workshop with women members, sharing meetings and workshops with leaders of LEBs, Union Development Committee (UDC) and Union Women Development Committee (UWDC) are the major activities of this program.

At the national level, a very few women are active in politics in Bangladesh. In the national parliament there are reserved seats for women who are, in most cases, accountable to the men, in particular, to the ruling party who selected them rather than to people. BNPS along with the other women's groups and civil society members organized a series of activities throughout the year 2000 on the demand of increased reserved seats for women in the parliament and direct election in those seats. Unfortunately, no political party expressed their genuine interest to introduce such option, and according to the constitution of the country the provision of reserved seats for women in the parliament would be over in 2001.

Local government system is one of the basic areas that can help improve political status of women at the grassroots level. A strong local government system is yet to be installed in the country. After independence different governments had reformed the system but due to lack of necessary political will, the local government system was manipulated. However, compared with many other countries in Asia and Africa, the potential merits of political empowerment of women in Bangladesh are not all that bleak. About thirteen hundred women in Union Parishads had been elected in the Union Parishad and involved in the main stream of local governance and development interventions. They would still perform better with systematic judicial and legislative support from the government.

Local level activities of the program implemented in Netrakona and Sandwip area of BNPS, and in the working area of ten partner organizations. The partner organizations are working in different geographical areas with diverse socio-economic and political features.



The outcome of this program was very optimistic. Staff of local NGOs were trained to run democracy education and advocacy initiatives, to increase awareness of voters and community leaders on democratic rights. Strength of the UP enhanced and elected representatives was sensitised to women's rights & issues. Managerial and professional capacity of the women/local NGOs increased. Besides, Political leaders, MP's, middle class women/civil society groups, sector professionals, law enforcement agencies have been sensitised on women's rights & issues. Program implementation process of the implementing agencies enhanced. Access of grassroots people to resources, programs and services of the Local Elected Bodies (LEBs) increased considerably.

Through working with the partners, BNPS ensured successful and efficient program implementation as a part of its own program replication throughout the country. This has been also proved as a cost effective strategy rather than increasing the own working area of BNPS.

Because of the traditional mind setup of people and limitations of implementing various initiatives, a number of challenges were faced by BNPS all through the year. Some LEBs misunderstood BNPS and partner organizations claiming that they were pushing the grassroots people to create problems. Threats of fundamentalist groups, local political elites and terrorists had to tackle down with much courage. In some cases LEBs were not much cooperative in different initiatives of the program. Regular coordination among the government employees and LEBs was really a challenge as there is no clear-cut guideline from the government about the nature of coordination between the UP and local branches of government agencies.



BNPS at Sandwip

Sandwip, known as 'Daughter of the Sea', a geographically modifying marooned sandbar in the Bay of Bengal originated about three thousand years back. Once upon a time the area was 630 sq. miles and now it is an island at risk of gradual erosion and belongs only 95 sq. miles. Most probably the name Sandwip came from the 'Sand-Heap' as given by the English merchants for its overflow of sands. Since 7th century the Arabian merchants started coming and living in the island for business purpose. According to Ibn Batuta, the place later on became a centre of Islamic indoctrination. The island has been ruled by the Mughals, Portuguese, Mogs and by the English in different times. The Pirates used to use the island as their base for gulf robbery.

The Islanders all the time fought against the oppression and misrule although they were living against the hostile nature. Their participation in the anti-British liberation movements, Language movements, United Front election, Liberation movement and in the present days' political activism is remarkable. Comrade Mozaffar Ahmed, Revolutionary Lalmohan Sen, Mohammad Waliullah (Olee Gandhi), Rajkumar Chakrabarti, Belal Mohammad, Abul Kasem Sandwip, Alamgir Kabir - they were some of the sons of this soil who had great contributions towards the politics of the Indian Subcontinent, Pakistan and Bangladesh.

According to the Survey 1996, Total population of Sandwip is 377,887. Among them 38,500 are engaged with agriculture, 14,540 with service and 3,315 with business. Others are mainly Potters, Weavers, Fishermen, Blacksmiths and traditional Palkiwalla. The socio-economic condition of the area depends of the randomly changing nature as it is geographically near to the natural calamities. As a result, the sudden change of job of the islanders becomes very visible. The landlessness along with the joblessness increased every year due to the continuous sea erosion. A large number of the jobless people have migrated to the main land largely in Chittagong.

BNPS started working at Sandwip in 1987 and from its inception up to the present times BNPS implemented all its programs in the four Unions of the island i.e. Sarikait, Musapur, Mogdhar and Maitbhanga. By 2000, the organization provided services to 34,565 persons under its Development Education program. The program covered 39% of the total population of the working areas, which is 9.15% of the total population of Sandwip. The IGA program supported 31,860 persons that is 35% people of the program area and 8.43% of the total population of the island. The Political Empowerment of Women program covered the people beyond the program area that covered almost 77% people of the program area and 20% people of Sandwip.

Over the years, the patriarchal social system and ideological backwardness of the area ignored the equal rights of women in Sandwip. The livelihoods of the womenfolk were being controlled by the will of their male counterparts ignoring the value of their humane existence. BNPS from its inception at Sandwip took massive programs on awareness raising aiming to build women a critical mass and the group members now are raising their voice for their demands. They became able to discover their own leadership qualities, which are being reflected on their direct participation in the rural conflict resolutions and Salish processes and their active role in the demanding process. They are taking active part by themselves solving their personal and social problems through the group initiatives. As a result of the technical and financial support of BNPS many of the women got free from the Mahajans (traditional money lenders). Now they are self-reliant by their small income generation activities. This reliance created a rights-orientation in their mindset in making decisions and providing opinions in their family and partly in the society.

The program area of BNPS has been advanced remarkably with the support from the organization in the area of disaster support and preparedness, health awareness and preventing contagious diseases, democratic activities, preventing women oppression, dowry, child marriage and polygamy along with the cultural and advocacy activities. Sandwip is frequently called as the 'land of the fundamentalists' where no women could go out of their home without wearing borka (the veil). The situation was unchanged at the time when BNPS started its activities there. While there was a group meeting the field workers had to stay behind a curtain. The group members used to listen to the workers seating on the other side of the curtain. However, today the scenario has been changed noticeably and women are actively participating in all the socio-political and economic activities of the island. The major manifestation of the impact of BNPS program could be found from the frequent participation of women groups in the Salish process, making decision and creating pressure to impose their decisions.

Presently, a significant portion of the women group of the island are facing a comfortable experience in their daily life and livelihood, which could easily be remarked from their living pattern. And it is the contribution of the learning that women are equal to men as the human being that benefits both the men and women. BNPS has both direct and indirect contributions creating such an enabling humane environment.

A Step Forward

Sandwip is an island, separated by the sea from the mainland, which is clouded by religious fanaticism and superstitions. Based on a number of religious institutions, fatwabaj and fundamentalist forces are much active in that piece of land and these forces are a threat to the process of empowerment of women. Taking the challenge from the fanatic lunatics and reactionary groups, BNPS undertook activities in the 4 unions of Sandwip in 1987 to increase and enhance the participation of women in the empowerment and decision making process. BNPS realized from experience that strong organizing capacity and bold leadership is a must to bring effective changes. And hence BNPS adopted the strategy of forming Groups, Area Committees and Union Committees among the disadvantage women groups. In continuation of this process, in December 2000 BNPS formed two Union Committees- one at Sarikait and one at Maitbhanga under Sandwip Thana. To create responsive and effective leadership among the women, the union committees were formed through direct election. The specific activities accomplished to conduct the election, were as follows-

- Selection three leaders from each Area Committee as voters and preparation of a voter list following that provision;
- Announcement of the election within 15-20 days after completion of the voter list;
- Mailing the voter list to the candidates just after the announcement of the election;
- Selecting symbol for each post and allocating those among the candidates through lottery;
- Preparing separate ballot paper for each post of candidature with the symbols;
- Preparing ballot boxes, booths and seals.

For the posts of the president, the general secretary and the organizing secretary of the union committee there were 6, 8 and 5 candidates respectively in the Sarikait union and 4, 3 and 4 candidates respectively in the Maitbhanga union. From among the competitors for the posts, in the Sarikait union Basanti Das (President), Khuku Chakrabarti (General Secretary) and Sheuly Rani (Organizing Secretary) were elected and in the Maitbhanga union Kusoomful (President), Tukun Das (General Secretary) and Maleka Begum (Organizing Secretary) were elected. The Sarikait union committee comprises 21 members and Maitbhanga union committee 16 members.

The candidates had to face lot of hurdles; there were threats from the fatwabaj. After the announcement of the date of election and preparation of the voter list, all the candidates campaigned door-to-door ignoring the threats of the fundamentalists. The candidates appealed to the voters to vote for them. Some of them approached the voters collectively.

In both the unions BNPS centre offices were used as polling centres where votes casted during 10 am to 1 pm. Voters were present in the centres in time, they lined-up in queue and voted in a peaceful manner. Voter's presence was above 90 percent.

Candidates who were not successful in the elections took the results easily, they said that it was necessary for them to reach all the voters, as they could not approach all of them, they could not succeed. They also mentioned that it was a lesson that if all the voters are not approached properly no one can expect victory. The candidates elected went to the houses of all the voters to bid thanks to them.

Through this election, all the candidates and voters have experienced a lot about the electoral process and voter-management. They think that this experience will help them in next elections.



**Major activities accomplished under Political Empowerment of
Women program throughout the year 2000**

Sl.	Activity	Achievement	
		Nos. of Events	Participants
01.	National level sharing meeting	02	52
02.	National level workshop	05	143
03.	Organize training workshop on report writing and accounts management	01	20
04.	Organize strategic planning workshop	01	29
05.	Publish leaflet	01	-
06.	Publish report on workshops and sharing meetings	01	-
07.	Planning workshop with women and LEBs	01	49
08.	Publish report on divisional and national level conference of women UP members	01	-
09.	Organize project orientation course with the chief executives of partner organizations and centre managers of BNPS	01	16
10.	Organize project orientation course with the field level staff of the partners organizations and BNPS	02	48
11.	Sharing meeting with LEBs, UDC, UWDC, community leaders, and group leaders	31	1161
12.	Organize sharing meeting on birth, death and marriage registration	16	741
13.	Dialogue sessions with LEBs and voters	23	2769
14.	Workshops with community leaders	50	1827
15.	Coordination meetings with GO, NGO, local political leaders and other stakeholders	12	150
16.	Workshops with UDC & UWDC leaders	06	244
17.	Refreshers workshops with LEBs	06	162
18.	Organize training workshop with the LEBs	10	214
19.	Organize debate among the students of schools	09	-
20.	Organize rally on human and democratic rights	22	20,000 (approximately)
21.	Organize cultural show at village level on democratic, human rights and gender issues	14	15,000 (approximately)
22.	Organize meeting of social watch groups	26	1211
23.	Organize awareness sessions with the group members	3249	34923

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Centre Manager

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Contact Person: Ms Ferdousi Sultana
Centre Manager

BNPS Jessore Centre
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Jessore
Contact Person: Ms Rabeya Begum
Development Officer

BNPS Khulna Centre
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Contact Person: Ms Farida Yasmin
Development Officer

BNPS Mymensingh Centre
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Development Officer

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Centre Manager

BNPS Sandwip Centre
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Contact Person: Mr Ferdous Ahmed
Centre Manager

Legal Awareness and Legal Aid

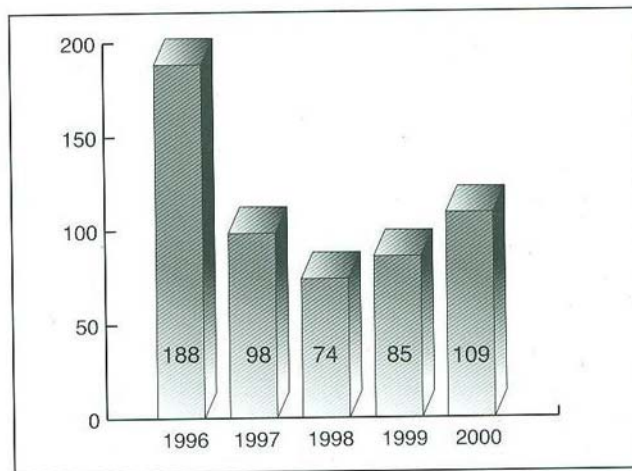
The main objective of Legal Awareness and Legal Aid Program of BNPS is to raise the awareness level of group members on their legal rights and facilitate their actions on legal issues. Basically legal aid support provided only among the group members of BNPS, however, in some significant cases of women rights violation, BNPS also extend its support to the general people.

To raise the awareness of group members on legal issues, BNPS organized discussion sessions at the group level according to the training module on legal education. This module was developed by BNPS and there were 15 issues, which were discussed by the staff of the organization at the weekly group meetings. Other activities implemented under this program were facilitating local level arbitration (shalish), and organizing workshops and discussion meetings comprising representatives from different backgrounds such as Imam, Qazi, Student, Club members, Journalists, Woman leaders and Community leaders etc.

Throughout the year 2000, BNPS extended its legal support among 109 women, which is 28% more than the previous year. Besides, 36 women were referred to other legal aid agencies. In most of those cases women were victim of the violation of family law, and legal awareness initiatives of BNPS was one of the main reasons behind increased number of women wanted to establish their rights.

Through workshops and discussion sessions on legal issues, community leaders and other members of the civil society groups were more aware on women issues and motivated to play a supportive role in establishing women's rights. Participation of women in the local level arbitrations was not an exceptional scenario in the working area of BNPS and that was possible through support of the local leaders and other influential people of the community. In 2000, total 32 workshops and discussion sessions organized in the working area of BNPS and 1067 people with different background participated in those workshops. During the same period 19 shalish organized by the group members of BNPS where group leaders and Area Committee leaders played important roles in mediating problems.

It was observed in the working areas that Legal Awareness and Legal Aid program of the organization brought noticeable changes among the group members regarding birth registration and marriage registration. All the group members collected birth registration certificate from the respective authority for their children who born in 2000, and there was no marriage without registration in families of the group member's



Number of people assisted through legal aid during last five years

during the period. Those initiatives of group members also had positive effect on the general people of the community and they were also found motivated to do the same.

During the year 2000, there were some instances of withdrawal/compromise of the cases in process. The reasons behind such cases were mainly for problems concerned to khorposh and dower, social and family's pressures, pressure from the accused, and slow pace of the judicial process.

In Bangladesh, violence and injustice against women are still common phenomena. There are poor recognition of women's rights in the male dominated society. The law enforcement bodies, administration, lawyers and judges are to be sensitive enough of issues related to injustice against women. The legal system and the handling of judicial procedures needs respecting women's dignity.

CASE STUDY

Futile Justice

Zarina got married with Akhter Hussein to realize her dreams of happiness, but it was in vein. Zarinas of this country have such a fate that their dreams never do come into reality. Akhter Hussein, an idle person, had no regular job. He was unable to maintain the family and for this he and his mother used to torture her when they were short of money and used to create pressure on Zarina to go to her father's house for the money of dowry.

Zarina is the daughter of Md. Abdul Khaleque of Daserkandi village of Demra thana under Dhaka district. They have no land of their own. Zarina's mother Paribanu works as a domestic help. Their family solely depends on the physical labour of the parents. Zarina is the eldest of the offspring's and she had no brother who can earn for the family. Zarina's poor parents somehow managed ten thousand of taka for dowry. But all these efforts ended in nullity, Zarina did not get the trace of happiness in her husband's house. Finally, after 5 months of marriage Zarina was forcibly sent to her father's house. At that time she was pregnant.

A few days later Zarina gave birth of a boy baby, she named him Nadim. But her husband did not come to see her and her baby. She waited for three years and at last on December 23, 1997 she communicated with the president of Nari Nirjaton Protirodh Committee of Trimohony seeking help from the Dhaka centre of BNPS and filled an application accusing her husband of dowry. She also mentioned that she wants to live peacefully with her husband. According to the procedure of the organization a legal notice was issued to the husband for a Shalish to meet the problems. In presence of both the sides, BNPS arranged 2 Shalishes, but the mother-in-law of Zarina denied accepting any formalities. In this context BNPS advised both the sides to meet the problems mutually. Zarina, thinking the future of her baby, agreed to live with her husband. But when her husband divorced her she decided to go to the court.

To support Zarina, BNPS filed a case against the husband for dower and alimony in the court. On 5/7/2000 in absence of the accused the case was raised in the court for hearing unilaterally. The court delivered a judgement in favour of Zarina and announced a decree to give Zarina 51500 taka. The accused was ordered to pay the amount of money within 30 days. After a failure from the side of the accused she again filed a case on 14/8/2000 for a decree.

But it was impossible for Zarina to receive the amount of dower, as there were systemic complexities. As a result Zarinas of this country do not get any benefit from the judicial process. Their dreams remain dreams. If there is no significant change in the judicial system Zarinas will never be assisted. Their conditions will be remained unchanged.



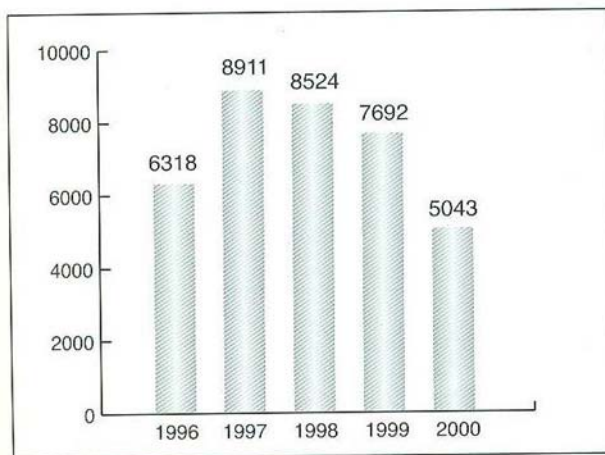
Health Education and Services for Women and Poor

Education on health issues is the essential part of the Development Education program of BNPS and health services of the organization provided exclusively in the working area of Netrakona and Sandwip as support from other NGOs and government is very much limited in those areas. BNPS always believe that health issues, being highly technical, are domains of public service providers. However, realizing the endangered health situation, which questions the sustainability of other achievements, BNPS has established health centres in two of its project areas.

During 2000 the service delivery however remained at the basic level, as trained doctor of Netrakona Centre and Paramedics of Sandwip Centre left the organization. Doctors normally avoid working in these not easily accessible areas and BNPS was unsuccessful to recruit new doctor and paramedics for Netrakona and Sandwip. Number of people received health services also decreased in this year.

The program is a well composition of both the curative and preventive healthcare support. The program includes awareness sessions on health education at the group levels, curative medicine support to the group members and their families, staff training on health, basic training for selected Traditional Birth Attendants (TBAs), and refresher course for TBAs. Besides, BNPS operates satellite clinic in different places of Netrakona and Sandwip, which reduced the peoples' especially women's' misery of receiving healthcare facilities going far from the village.

Health education so far observed quite effective among the group members of BNPS. They were well aware about health issues especially regarding children and women health. Group members can describe different measures required to keep the environment clean and healthy. However, because of resource constrains and other practical reasons, group members in urban slum areas had to live in an unhealthy atmosphere. Even after that, if the condition deteriorates, they organize themselves to protest against respective authority and group members of Dhaka Centre had success stories in such cases.



Number of people received health support during last five years

At Centre levels, 100% under 6 children of BNPS group members have been properly immunized against 6 major diseases. Group members of Netrakona, Sandwip and Dhaka centre have taken initiatives to set up sanitary latrine and tube well spending their savings amount. 100% Group members of those centres know how to make oral saline.

In the working area of BNPS, many people outside the group members are unaware of health issue. The health situation is affected negatively by unavailability of local health services. Public services are not available as well. In addition, health problems of women are not sufficiently recognized as important events.

Non-formal Education for Children and Adolescent Girl

BNPS operates 30 non-formal primary schools at Chittagong, Netrakona, Sandwip and Dhaka. Children of its group members and the school dropouts of the area get the opportunity to study in those schools up to Class-III. Total number of students in those schools were 1020. The program follows the curriculum of Non Formal Education of Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee (BRAC) with some additional information on gender issues.

In 2000, the rate of attendance in BNPS operated schools was 82% and students dropouts rate was 4%. Though these were at the satisfactory level yet, special measures e.g. ensuring regular participation of the parents in the monthly parents meeting and intensify supervision were recommended by the central level management to improve the situation.

Through analysing different information of this program it was found that quality of the education provided in BNPS operated schools were much better than other government and non-government schools in the areas. Students of these schools easily get admitted in the upper classes of government schools and were doing better in the examinations.

Other than providing educational support to the children, each year BNPS organize annual sports and cultural program for the students of its non-formal primary schools. The cultural program and sports competitions are not only enjoyed by the students of the schools, but it is also observed with much enthusiasm by their parents and the community people.



Environment and Disaster Management

Environmental degradation in Bangladesh has reached to an alarming state threatening the prospects of poverty eradication and promotion of sustainable development. Practices in agriculture, industrial and development sectors caused severe damage in the ecosystem, which made the poor community of the people most vulnerable to their existence.

The major objectives of Environment and Disaster Management Program of BNPS are to raise awareness of the common people on the impact of environmental degradation and minimize the effect of natural calamity. Issues of environmental development and disaster management are essential parts of the awareness initiatives of BNPS through which program partners of the organization learned about necessity of thwarting environmental degradation and further nourishment of natural environment. The organization is also involved in mitigation, preparedness, emergency response, and post disaster rehabilitation activities. BNPS facilitate formulation of Disaster Management Groups and regularly organized disaster management training courses for the group leaders.

In 2000, there were eight Disaster Management Groups in Sandwip consisting of 110 male members, and two training courses were organized where 50 group leaders participated. Some parts of Sandwip were flooded over in 2000 due to the unusual tidal wave of the Bay of Bengal. But this time devastation was less, because the people of that area moved away earlier to the tidal wave and group members of BNPS played the central role in moving the people from the danger area. In Netrakona, 10,000 fruit and wood saplings were distributed among 1000 group members for plantation.

Geographically Bangladesh is in the most disaster prone area of the world. Big flood, drought, cyclone, tornado are very common in almost every year in this country. Out of seven working areas of BNPS, sea and river engulfed Sandwip and a low-lying area of Netrakona Centre are very vulnerable to the disasters like cyclone and flood respectively. Besides, water logging in the working area of Dhaka Centre creates much trouble among the poor slum dwellers specially on women and child. However, fortunately the year 2000 was a bit better and Bangladesh did not experience any devastating disaster in that year. Though there was an unexpected flood in the western parts of the country and farmers of that areas lost their one crops, yet that flood did not have much negative effect on the overall agricultural production of the country. BNPS extended its support among the flood-affected people who had to move in the urban area of Jessore district by distributing emergency medicine and water purifier.

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SAMATA

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Chief Executive

Zabarang Kalyan Samity

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Chairperson

Khagrapur Mohila Kalyan Samity

Khagrapur, Khagrachori
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Chairperson

Jumbi Mohila Kalyan Samity

South Kalindipur, Rangamati
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Chairperson

Garjantoli Mohila Kalyan Samity

Garjantoli, Rangamati
Contact Person : Ms Shagarika Roaja
Chairperson

Cultural Program

Cultural program of BNPS played a catalyst role in ensuring successful implementation of other programs of the organization specially Development Education and Advocacy and Lobbying. From the wider cultural arena of Bangladesh, only two media have been carefully included in this program and those are Song and Theatre from the performing arts.

Major objective of the program is to ensure effective communication of the awareness issues among the mass, and development of folk culture, which contribute in strengthening the perception of local culture among the community people.

The program follows participatory process in designing any event. First of all it identifies the local problems e.g. dowry, illegal divorce, hilla marriage, religious fundamentalism, fatwabaji etc. Then the cultural team along with the local singers and or theatre performers design the theme for future event. The Song historically played significant roles in motivating the mass upsurge in Bangladesh, and BNPS consciously use the indigenous form of song, which is folk based, through which it was able to draw attention and response of the mass people. The form of theatre which BNPS used is called Alternative Theatre and it is very much people centered where the audience could participate in a dialogue session on the issues raised through the event. Through this, people could realize and analyse their problems in the real life situation. A process of transformation of the society towards gender justice and democracy is initiated through this conscientization approach.

Last year BNPS celebrated seven significant National and International days through which group members and common people of the working area came to know about the importance of those days. Discussion session, rally, procession, cultural program etc. were organized during day observation. Besides, prior to the observation of any day, analytical discussions were organized at the group level with the facilitation of grassroots level staff of the organization.

In each of its centre area, BNPS formed cultural groups consisting of local youths and children of group members. Capacity of these groups developed through rehearsals and workshops on theatre and song. One of the main feature of this capacity building process is to develop capability on ensuring interactive participation of audience

Major events carried out under the Cultural Program of BNPS in 2000

- * Observed significant National and International Days at the central and local levels
- * Organized Workshops on Theatre and Song at the centre levels
- * Performed a total of 98 Song and Alternative Theatre shows
- * Organized workshop with the Children and Juvenile on Theatre
- * Carried out a total of 6 Street Corner Meetings and Cultural Shows
- * Exhibited theatre show on Democracy Education
- * Organized a Folk Cultural Festival
- * Collected and Wrote Songs on Women Issues

specially in the alternative theatres. Other than the regular staff of the Cultural Cell, external resource persons also facilitated these rehearsals and workshops.

A folk cultural festival was organized during 14-15 November 2000 in Netrakona. There were cultural shows and discussion sessions on folk culture and its effects on creating secular social environment. Each day the program was started at 6 pm and continued till 4 am. Different form of folk culture i.e. Jarigan, women issue based Palagan, Jhakhamara dance, Baulgan, Maljora Baulgan, Kische Pala, and Tamshagan were preformed by the folk cultural activists. More than five thousand audience enjoyed the program each night.

Collection of women issue based folk songs and writing song on women issue is a continuous initiative of BNPS. In 2000, total five songs had been collected and, the staff of the Cultural Cell had written five new songs. These songs were sung by the cultural groups of the organization in different occasions. Sometimes other development agencies also collected women issue based songs from BNPS to utilize in their awareness program.

So far, it had been observed that cultural program of BNPS was quite successful in attaining its major objective. Sometimes it is more effective than the regular discussion session at the group level on awareness issues. Group members were found able to mention their opinion against fatwa, hilla marriage, illegal divorce, corruption etc. and on legal rights of women, which was created through observing cultural programs of BNPS. Besides, these programs are also a kind of recreation for the group members specially at the interior rural areas.

Understanding the strength of this effective means of communication, BNPS has provided much importance on intensification of cultural program. Number of cultural activities increased in 2000 than previous years and initiative has been taken to make it an integral part of the new project of the organization.



Institutional Capacity Building

BNPS always provides major focus on the capacity building of staff and program partners, which contributes in strengthening the organizational setup. Regular updating training modules of the group members, and arranging training course for staff and program partners are the key initiatives of this program. Besides, exchange visits also organized for the staff in each year through which opportunity created to learn insights of other development agencies. Furthermore, learning through practical experience emphasized quite importantly which has no alternatives.

Following two tables portrays the quantitative information of staff development training in 2000.

Staff Development Training Courses Organized by BNPS

Sl.	Title of the Course	Number of Course	Number of Participant	Duration of Each Course
01.	Training of Trainers	01	19	7 Days
02.	Training Course on Program Planning and Management	01	25	5 Days
03.	Training Course on Gender and Development	03	70	5 Days
04.	Training Course on Report Writing and Accounts Management	01	25	3 Days
05.	Training Course on Primary Health Care	01	25	3 Days
06.	ToT on Democracy, Women Empowerment and Local Government	01	25	5 Days
07.	Training Course on Development Management	01	26	5 Days
08.	Training Course on Legal Rights and Family Law	01	25	5 Days
09.	ToT on Group Facilitation	01	27	5 Days
10.	Training Course on Women and Development	01	15	5 Days
11.	Training Course on Credit Management	01	19	3 Days

Training Course Participated by the Staff of BNPS in Other NGOs

Sl.	Title of the Course	Number of Participant	Organized by
01.	Training Course on Environment and Environmental Law	03	BELA
02.	Training Course on Gender and Sustainable Development	04	Proshika
03.	Training Course on Advocacy & Lobbying for Sustainable Development	01	Proshika
04.	ToT on Local Government	01	NILG
05.	Training Course on Development Communication	01	Independent University
06.	Monitoring and Evaluation	01	CARE
07.	Training of Trainers course on Improving Training Quality and Facilitation Skills	01	CARE

Most of the staff development courses organized at the central training centre in Dhaka where senior program staffs of the central office facilitate different sessions. In some causes resource persons from various reputed organizations are invited to contribute to BNPS training programs.

Each centre office of BNPS used as the training centre to organize in-house courses for group members and orientation sessions of TBAs and school teachers also organized regularly in those places.

Overall activities of the Institutional Capacity Building program implemented by the direct supervision of the Training Coordinator who gets necessary cooperation from other senior staffs and trainers of the centre offices.

Organized training courses in 2000 so far were quite effective in developing the skills of staffs at different level to implement various program activities. The centre management expressed that micro and broader federating groups were better organized and group members/leaders were capable of articulating different aspects of women's rights more specifically. Other capacity of staff i.e. preparing different reports, handling micro-credit, and maintaining effective liaison with the members of the civil society etc. also developed considerably.



Documentation and Publication

Proper documentation of different initiatives of the organization and providing supports in publishing communication materials are the prime objectives of the Documentation and Publication Cell of BNPS. During 2000, reports of all the major activities had been prepared and a number of communication materials published and distributed among the stakeholders. The publication list of 2000 is as below:

Sl.	Kind of Materials	Subject/Title
01.	Poster	Upholding the demand to alleviate discrimination of wage between man and women in the hill tract areas
02.	Poster	On the demands of the overall development of the situation of garments workers women
03.	Poster	Resisting violence against women
04.	Poster	On involvement of women in various formal and informal sectors
05.	Booklet	Society and Culture: The Indigenous People of Bangladesh
06.	Booklet	Women representation in the local government bodies
07.	Booklet	Political empowerment of women.
08.	Leaflet	On the demand of specification of responsibilities of women representatives of the Union Parishad
09.	Leaflet	Situation of women workers in the informal sectors
10.	Book	Women in the Union Parishad, A Changing Trend
11.	Calendar	On Bangla Year 1407
12.	Newsletter	Nari Progati Barta (Bangla newsletter of the organization published 2 issues)
13.	Report	Initiatives of BNPS in 2000 against cruelty on women
14.	Report	Workshops and sharing meetings organized on Empowerment of Women in Bangladesh
15.	Report	On Divisional and central Conferences of the Elected Women Member in the reserved seats of the UP, 1999-2000
16.	Report	Annual Report 1999

The Documentation and Publication Cell maintain a library at the Central Office in Dhaka, which is so far open to the staff of the organization only. However, there is a plan to develop the capacity of this library and make it open to the member of other development agencies and like-minded individuals. There is a small library in each centre office of BNPS also that are regularly supported by the central office. Besides, Documentation and Publication Cell maintain the responsibility of selling publication materials of BNPS, which has good demand among the development practitioners and researchers.

Monitoring and Evaluation

BNPS followed a simple monitoring and evaluation system, which has major focus on collection of minimum but most important information necessary for successful operation of program activities and management decision making. A set of indicators formulated according to the objectives of different programs to assess the outputs, effects and impacts of different interventions of the organization.

A three steps self-evaluation process has been adopted by BNPS to come up with a solid base of information concerning the field and national level programs implemented. The steps include (a) workshop with focus group members community member at field level; (b) workshop with field level staff, group leaders at centre office level; and (c) workshop with central office staff, and field staff representatives.

Analysis of monitoring data is done at several levels, with the first and higher priority level of analysis is done in community with group leaders, field workers and their supervisors at centre level and with senior staff of implementation level at central office.

Monitoring and Evaluation Cell gets supports from centre trainers working in different field areas to collect primary data. Senior and mid level staff of field operation cell, who participate in all field activities are directly responsible for process monitoring.

Monitoring and Evaluation activities include orientation meetings, document review and interview with staff, as well as visits to the working areas. Qualitative information collected through case studies, special studies and evaluation workshops. Monitoring and Evaluation cell also produces quarterly reports for management use. Six monthly reports prepared for donors and GoB. More over an annual report published every year for sharing experiences with other organizations and persons.

Brief description of major activities of the M&E cell in 2000 mentioned under following headings:

Internal Evaluation Workshops

Annual Internal Evaluation Workshop 1999 was held during 18-21 January 2000 and Six-monthly Internal Evaluation Workshop 2000 was held during 25-27 July 2000 at the central office of BNPS. All the program staff of the central office and senior staff of all the centre offices participated in these workshops. Main objective of these workshops was to assess the performance of the organization and review centre and cell wise activity plan.

Earlier to the central level workshops, each centre office organized workshops with the participation of group members and group leaders, community leaders, middle class women, and staff of the organization. According to the findings of those workshops, centre offices prepared their reports and presented that at the central level workshop.



External Evaluation of BNPS

During 1-29 October 2000 a three-member team conducted an external evaluation of BNPS where effective supports were provided by the M&E cell of the organization. Objectives of the evaluation was to asses the impacts and effectiveness of the strategies, methodologies, programs and activities undertaken by BNPS both for goals and objectives of the projects and long-term goals of the organization which would be adopted in future planning of BNPS.

The evaluation team visited Dhaka, Chittagong, Sandwip, Netrakona, and Mymensing centre of BNPS and studied different policy documents of the organization. Discussion sessions also held between the evaluators and staff of the organization at centre and central level and also with the executive committee members. After getting feedback from BNPS on the draft report, it was finalised in November 2000.

Major recommendations of the external evaluation

- ▲ Further improvement of Development and Political Education Program
- ▲ Political education can be integrated with development education
- ▲ Resource constraints should be minimized in order to improve the scope of political education at the field level
- ▲ The balance between education and collection of savings and credit should be continued
- ▲ Increased contacts with male members of the beneficiaries as well as middle class women
- ▲ Development of a separate education materials for middle class women with special emphasis on gender issues
- ▲ Area committees should be better organized with its roles and responsibilities clearly defined for strengthening people's organization
- ▲ A planned and consistent gender training program should be further developed and continuously provided for the staff, especially for the field workers along with followup training
- ▲ Independent status should be given to the cultural programs in the organizational structure

Periodical Reports

Throughout the year 2000 five periodical reports prepared for donors and the Bureau of NGO Affairs. Besides, the annual report 1999 was also prepared by the M&E cell, which portrayed the insights of all the program activities of the organization gathered during the year.

National level workshop was on 'Initiatives to be taken for the Development of the Oppressed Women and Children in the CHT' held in Dhaka on 16 May 2000. Total number of participants was 58 in this workshop and different national dailies provided significant coverage on the output of that workshop and elaborately described the oppression of military forces on women in the CHT, which was mentioned in the workshop. Participants of the workshop recommended that special measures have to be taken by the government for the well being of women and children in the CHT. Besides, recommendations made in local and national level workshops provided to ADAB and NGO Bureau and it had been expected that those recommendations would contribute in developing policies for NGOs working in the CHT.

Some specific effects of different initiatives in the CHT identified through field visits and periodical reports of the partner organizations are as follows:

- ❖ Opportunity created for the group members to discuss on the women issues
- ❖ Group members becoming interested to learn reading and writing as they have to maintain and sign on the group meeting resolution
- ❖ Interest to the joint initiatives increased among the group members
- ❖ Savings attitude developed among the group members and they were interested to increase the level of their family income through IGAs
- ❖ At the local level a network was built up among the member of the civil society groups on the CHT
- ❖ Micro groups were more organized
- ❖ Leaders of micro groups were more active to their responsibilities
- ❖ Accounts of different expenses kept updated by the partners

Bangladesh Nari Progati Sangha

CONSOLIDATED FINANCIAL STATEMENT OF THE ORGANIZATION

Period : 01 January to 31 December 2000

SL	Name of Project	Name of Donor	Opening Balance	Amount Received	Total Amount	Expenditure	Balance
1	Strengthening the Women's Empowerment Process in Bangladesh	ICCO, Netherlands and EZE, Germany	43,76,344	1,13,38,962	1,57,15,306	1,49,93,738	7,21,568
2	Socio-Economic and Political Empowerment of Women in Bangladesh	HBF, Germany	9,07,506	1,23,31,403	1,32,38,909	1,31,51,969	86,940
3	Promoting Responsive Governance and Gender Justice	SDC, Dhaka	3,67,343	61,40,533	65,07,876	65,07,876	-
4	Strengthening the Women's Movement in Bangladesh	NORAD, Dhaka	1,30,877	-	1,30,877	-	1,30,877
5	Democracy Education for Effective Local Elected Bodies	TAF, Dhaka	4,52,366	22,38,877	26,91,243	26,91,243	-
6	Empowerment of Women Through Greater Access To National Resource	BFF, Dhaka	-	3,01,886	3,01,886	1,84,544	1,17,342
	Total Taka		62,34,436	3,23,51,661	3,85,86,097	3,75,29,370	10,56,727

Executive Committee Members of BNPS

Sl.	Name	Designation	Address
01.	Ms Rahima Chowdhurani	Chairperson	23, Chamelibug, Shantinagar, Dhaka-1217 Tel : 9342592 (Home), 9333543 (Office)
02.	Ms Nurjahan Murshid	Vice Chairperson	765, Sat Masjid Road, Dhaka Tel : 329245 (Home)
03.	Ms Kazi Madina	Vice Chairperson	8/12, Tajmahal Road, Block-C Mohammadpur, Dhaka – 1207 Tel : 8110591
04.	Ms Rebeka Shirin	Treasurer	29, Sohrawardi Avenue, Baridhara, Dhaka Tel : 011807879
05.	Ms Nasimun Ara Haque Minu	Member	92, Jogi Nagar, Dhaka-1203 Tel : 7118131 (Home), 9347790 (Office)
06.	Ms Selina Hossain	Member	House # 16/A, Road # 2, Shaymoli Dhaka-1207, Tel : 9131765
07.	Ms Shaymoli Nasrin Chowdhury	Member	House # 66, Road # 7/A Dhanmondi, Dhaka-1209 Tel : 8116646, 9117625
08.	Ms Syeda Shamima Siddiki	Member	Flat # 1F, Mahua Apartment 167 Madhubazar, Road # 19 (old) West Dhanmondi, Dhaka – 1209 Tel : 8113292
09.	Ms Laila Hassan	Member	86, Bara Magbazar, Dhaka Tel : 9331930
10.	Ms Setara Musa	Member	5/2, Iqbal Road, Mohammadpu, Dhaka-1207 Tel : 9117021, 9115672
11.	Ms Laila Arjumand Banu	Member	58, Prabal Housing, Road # 4, Ring Road Mohammadpur, Dhaka-1207 Tel : 9127640
12.	Ms Rokeya Kabir	Member Secretary	Mayurakhi Apartment, Flat # B8, House # 7 Road # 6, Dhanmondi, Dhaka – 1209 Tel : 8619088 (Home) 8111323. 8124899 (Office)

