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BANGLADESH NARI PROGATI SANGHA

**Annual Report 2001**

Bangladesh Nari Progati Sangha

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## ***BNPS: At a Glance***

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<b>Date of Establishment</b>	:	<b>24 June 1986</b>
<b>Geographical Coverage</b>		
District	:	06
Thana	:	18
Rural Union & Urban Ward	:	59
Village & Para	:	258
<b>Number of Micro Groups</b>	:	<b>1312</b>
<b>Micro Group Members</b>	:	<b>18132</b>
<b>Number of Area Committee</b>	:	<b>173</b>
<b>Number of Union/Ward Committee</b>	:	<b>08</b>
<b>Total Number of People Directly Involved with BNPS since Inception</b>	:	<b>80,000 (approximately)</b>
<b>Education Support</b>		
Number of School	:	24
Number of Students	:	1140
Teacher	:	24
<b>Cumulative Information on Savings and Credit Support</b>		
Group Savings Generated (Tk.)	:	9,390,662
Credit Disbursed (Tk.)	:	82,193,596
Number of People Received Credit Support	:	22209
Rate of Credit Recovery	:	97.01%
<b>Number of Staff</b>	:	Female: 130      Male: 60

### **Projects Implemented in 2001**

- Strengthening the Women's Empowerment Process in Bangladesh (Funded by ICCO and EED)
- Socio-economic and Political Empowerment of Women in Bangladesh (Funded by HBF)
- Election Observation from Gender Perspective (Funded by TAF)
- Promoting Responsive Governance and Gender Justice (Funded by SDC)
- Empowerment of Women through Greater Access to National Resources (Funded by BFF)

### **Legal Status of the Organisation**

BNPS is registered with Women Affairs Directorate, No. MBP-465/86 dated 24.06.86, and with the Department of Social Service, No. DSS/FDO/R-271 dated 27.09.88

## *Foreword*

BNPS is an ideology-based organisation. It considers its role as facilitating the social transformation process. The focus of the initiatives of BNPS is women at the grassroots level but it targets the society as a whole. Empowerment of women in social, political and economic arenas is the mission of the organisation. For this, BNPS acts at local, national and international level. On the one hand it implements programmes at the local level for bringing change in the life of the target women on the other hand it tries to influence the policies at the national and international level to make an impact on the life of women. Experience at the local level contributes to identifying issues for advocacy and BNPS develops research based information for undertaking advocacy.

The Annual Report 2001 of BNPS portrays the work of BNPS in the last calendar year and the results achieved through its operation. BNPS takes the pleasure to present the Annual Report to its valued stakeholders, and the supporter. We hope that the organisations and individuals with similar objectives and future generations of development activists will also be able to find some information from the experience of BNPS.

We express our gratitude and appreciation to our generous donors for their support. We are also thankful to the people at different levels including cultural activists, students, community leaders and other member of the civil society groups who participated in our programmes and contributed their thoughts and energies towards achieving the objectives of the organisation.

We urge the like-minded organisations, groups and individuals to extend their co-operation to the organisation to keep it moving towards building a platform for the women to fight for their rights.



**Rokeya Kabir**  
Executive Director

# Working Area of BNPS



## I. Preface

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*Position of women is the barometer of social justice.*

French Socialist Charles Fourier

While women are trying to come out from the patriarchal restrictions imposed upon them, the world is still of too much male biased. The stratagem of the world order - its systems, its policies and the principles - for every specific bit of life is made on the footing of male chauvinism. Bangladesh, a country with predominantly Muslim population, is not a strange one. Though the country became independent from its long colonial and undemocratic political past, the basic instruments of exploitation are still sharp enough to be in power – can it be in the state or in a family. The democratic practices could not flourish its floral beauty in this land too like many other countries on the globe. Absence of democracy for a significant period has imprinted a huge dent on the process of development of the country as well as empowerment of women.

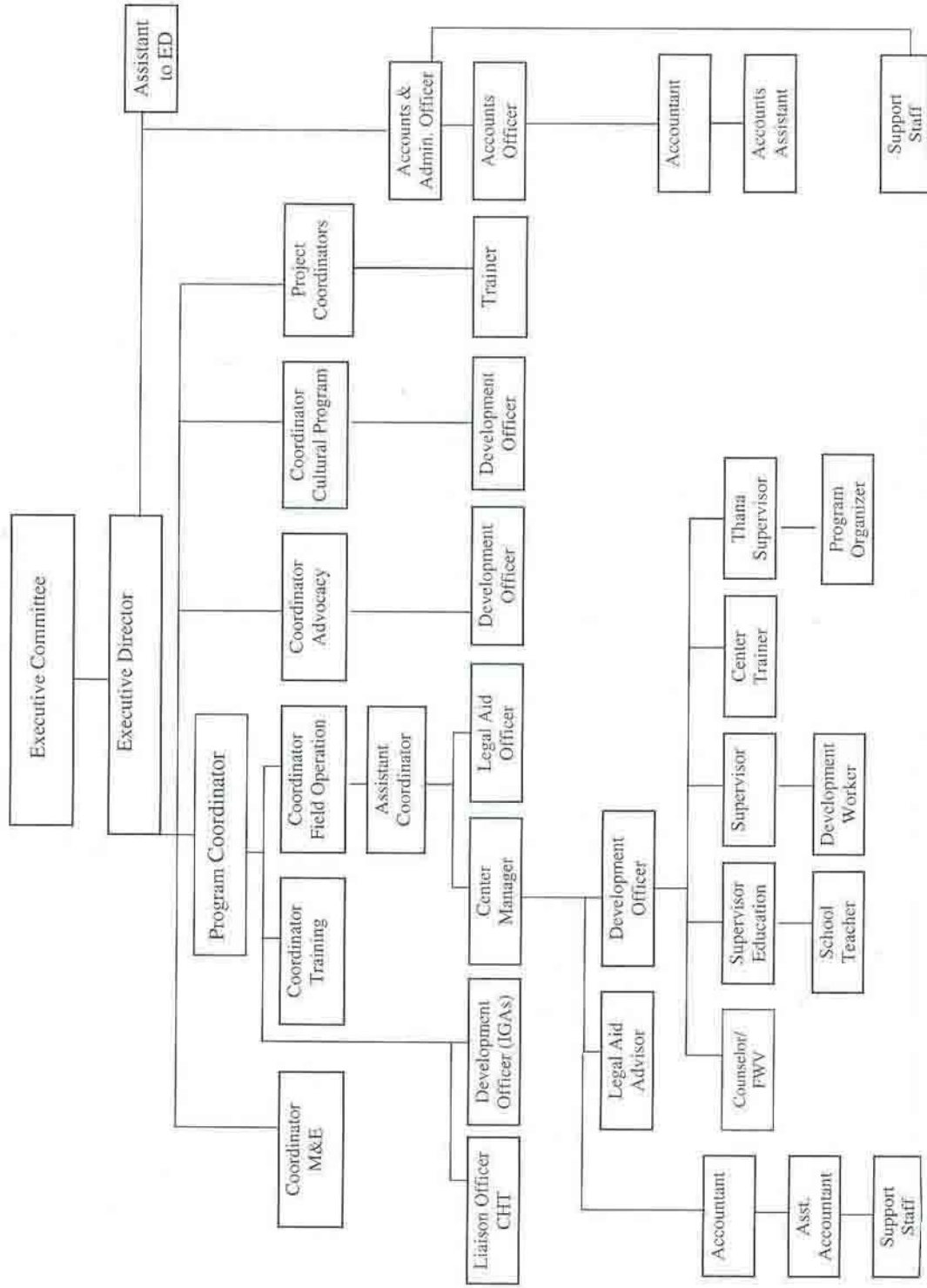
Bangladesh Nari Progati Sangha (BNPS) came into being in the aforementioned scenario to make a difference in the Bangladesh society, to bring a change in the way of life particularly in the life of women. It might be recognised by all that this is not an easy task. Therefore, for the last fifteen years the organisation has been toiling with some initiatives to change the life of women towards gender equality and empowerment.

A society has many facets and they are not isolated. The spheres in the society are intermingled and one has effect on the other. Therefore, the initiative in the one single dimension can not make much difference; it needs integrated initiatives to make a synchronised impact on the society. BNPS hence opted for a coherent approach that allows different programmes undertaken by it to be integrated and contributing to systemic change in the social transformation process.

The programmes in BNPS are designed with a view to facilitate the local level initiatives by the target people. Locally initiated programmes are identified, planned, implemented and assessed by the programme partners. Technical assistance, training and other support services are provided from the part of the organisation.

This report portrays the programmes and processes implemented by BNPS during the last calendar year, the results achieved and the failures and lessons learnt from the experience of operation. This report will also put light on the past of the organisation to make the readers not familiar with BNPS can also get an over view of the organisation. Financial features of the last fiscal year will also make a part of the report.

# Organogram





## II. Introduction to BNPS

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Bangladesh Nari Progati Sangha (BNPS) is a non-governmental voluntary development organisation established in 1986. A group of women activists came together to form this organisation to contribute in the women's movement. At present, BNPS has been operating integrated women empowerment programmes through its seven centres in six districts and in collaboration with sixteen partner organisations in ten more districts.

### ***Vision***

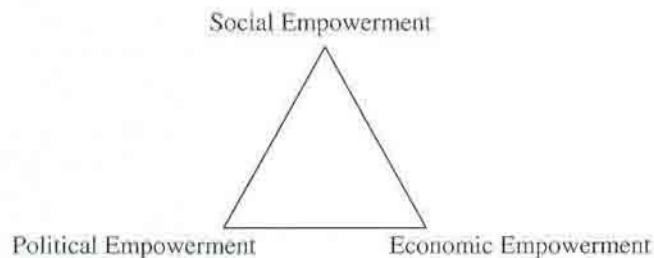
*The vision of BNPS is a society, which is free from all sorts of discrimination against women and where women enjoy equal rights and status in all spheres of life from family to state.*

### ***Mission***

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

### **Core Programmes**

The programmes in BNPS are encircled around three main empowerment areas:



### ***Social Empowerment***

- Institution Building
- Development Education
- Legal Aid
- Education for children and adolescent girls
- Disaster Management and Environment Development

### ***Economic Empowerment:***

- Savings Generation
- Micro Credit Support
- IGA Management training
- Skills Development Training

### *Political Empowerment*

- Local Government and Good Governance
- Election Observation
- Electoral Reform

### *Strategic Segments*

- Advocacy and Lobbying
- Cultural Programme
- Debate

### *Support Programmes*

- Training
- Monitoring and Evaluation
- Policy Research, Documentation and Publication

### **Core Values**

The organisation has an ideological base with some core values. These are considered as guiding factors that contribute as essential elements in developing all the programmes implemented by the organisation. BNPS is neither an organisation for subcontracting development projects nor an agency for supplying services to the customers. To be more precise, it believes development as intervention for social transformation. The followings are the core values of the organisation:

- Gender equality
- Secularism
- Anti-racism
- Practice of democracy at all levels
- Social justice
- Sensitive to the rights of ethnic and religious minorities

### *Address of Centre Offices*

#### **BNPS Dhaka Centre**

223 Uttar Goran  
Shipahibug, Dhaka - 1219  
Phone: 7217787

Contact Person: Ms Ferdousi Sultana  
Centre Manager

#### **BNPS Cittagong Centre**

1385, CDA Avenue  
East Nasirabad, Cittagong - 4000  
Phone: 657631, 017877021

Contact Person: Mr Ferdous Ahmed  
Centre Manager

#### **BNPS Jessore Centre**

100, Jail Road, Ghop  
Jessore - 7400

Contact Person: Ms Rabeya Begum  
Development Officer

#### **BNPS Khulna Centre**

40, Cimetri Road  
Khulna - 9100

Contact Person: Ms Farida Yasmin  
Development Officer

#### **BNPS Mymensingh Centre**

82, Sarada Gosh Road  
Mymensingh - 2200

Contact Person: Ms Kaniz Gofrani  
Quraishy  
Development Officer

#### **BNPS Netrakona Centre**

East Katli, Netrokona - 2400  
Phone: 0951-338

Contact Person: Mr. Ali Amzad Khan  
Centre Manager

#### **BNPS Sandwip Centre**

PO. Siberhat, Thana - Sandwip  
Chittagong  
Phone: 017877022

Contact Person: Mr. Ferdous Ahmed  
Centre Manager

### III. Evolution of BNPS

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In the eighties, quite a good number of women organisations started working while most of them were engaged in maternal and child health care, family planning and micro credit operation. There were a few exceptions that were working as activists involved in women's movement and mainly from middle class educated section of the society. Some others were doing research on different women's issues. Therefore, the organisations can be categorised into two main types. One group who was working with the women at the grassroots treated them as passive beneficiaries of their services i.e., right-based approaches were absent, and the other was working with middle class women. The major gap identified at that time was non-involvement of the huge number of grassroots women in the women's movement. It was realised that without involving the women from the grassroots in the women movement the rights of women can never be established. To fill in this gap was the main purpose of establishing a new organisation called Bangladesh Nari Progati Sangha (BNPS).

A group of women who contributed in the war of independence and building the nation afterwards in different sectors came together to form the institution. During 1984-85 they met several times to discuss the issues and formulate the goal and objectives of the organisation. In 1986, the organisation started working with a view to eliminating the discrimination against women in the society involving the main sufferers. As the organisation was instituted during the period of autocracy many ideals of the organisation could not be spelt out, which were in the back of their mind. However, it was clearly narrated in their document that they will work to realise the rights of women that are recommended by the UN declarations and all other human rights charters. At that time, the major task of the organisation was to develop

the programmes and the strategies with the women at the grassroots level.

At the beginning, BNPS was trying to bring in the issues of equal rights of women. They were trying to discuss with the grassroots women about specific areas of discrimination against them. But it was not so easy at the field level. They were striving to identify the measures to be taken for eradication of disparity in a bottom up approach. On the contrary, their economic struggle surfaced through the discussion with the target groups. They did not prioritise the issues of their rights.

BNPS started its work with IGA activities as identified with the women at the grassroots level. Interestingly it was found though the women were not interested about their rights through their work the issues of their rights came up. There were demands from the women for skills development training, micro credit support. At the same time, BNPS also discussed how to utilise the credit to make profit out of it. Then the question came how to manage the credit and how to deal with the business. For example they found that there was no space for women in the market to run their business. When they came out of their home, they could understand it clearly that they are not treated equally as men. They are in many ways discriminated in the society. That was the point where BNPS got the entry to talk about the issues of their rights. They could feel the need for change in the society. From that realisation, they started forming groups, training in leadership development and formation of federations of groups and women small traders committees.

In the year 1987, BNPS first received foreign donations. It was a very small amount. As per the needs identified from the field, BNPS

expanded its programmes geographically and programmatically. Since 1989 BNPS has grown up from a small organisation to a medium size organisation, step by step.

The issue of political empowerment of women also came in the same manner. Women were demanding bigger loan from BNPS. At that time, BNPS was not in a position to provide such support and that was also not the intention. They asked the women to go to bank. Then they could understand that as women they can not get bank loan. Then BNPS raised the question how to change the rules for bank loan. They discussed and realised that the policy makers of the state are the persons who can change the rules. It was in 1990 that BNPS started political empowerment programmes. Women at the grassroots level started discussion on voters' awareness. On the eve of the parliament election, the group leaders decided to organise mass gathering and invited the election candidates in their gatherings to tell the commitments in front of the people.

The women at the grassroots level also observed that to get a bank loan they need collateral. For this they also need property. They then realised that the inheritance law is not in their favour. They are discriminated in the inheritance laws. These are the missing links why they could not understand the exploitation mechanism. As an active part in the social life they understood the need for empowerment of women. In the same way they came to the conclusion that women should take an active part in politics.

Since 1995-1996, BNPS has started a regular programme to enhance women's participation in the political process. The women at the grassroots level became united to increase participation of women in the local government bodies as well as to make the local government bodies more responsive to women. To come to this level of the march towards greater share for

women in the political arena, it took about ten years.

To replicate the experiences of BNPS, it has also developed partnership with 16 organisations in 10 more districts. The major role of BNPS in the partnership programme is to develop the conceptual clarity on genders issues and democracy as well as to provide technical assistance for capacity building.

One significant contribution of BNPS in the NGO sector during nineties is that it has played a prime role in formation of a good number of forums and networks such as Coalition for the Urban Poor (CUP), Women Development Forum, Bangladesh Shishu Adhikar Forum, Sammilito Nari Samaj, Democracy Forum and so on. The office of BNPS was first secretariat for many of this forums and the Executive Director of BNPS was the founder coordinator in most cases. It has also played a remarkable role in sensitising ADAB to gender, secularism and political empowerment issues. It has brought the issue into focus that poverty is linked with the structural problem and political forces.

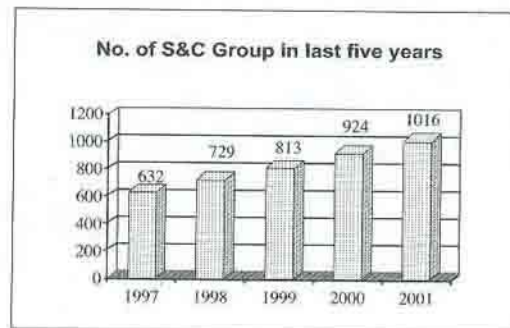
At this stage, BNPS has concentrated more in the area of advocacy for policy reform in favour of women. The issues pursued by BNPS include education policy; inheritance law; increased seats for women in the parliament with provision of direct election; decentralisation and devolution of power to the local government with effective participation of women; electoral process reform; and, universal family law. It also took interventions to attract the attention of donors to increase support to education not for quantity but for quality; promoted issues of rights of ethnic and religious minorities. It has established an advocacy unit to make the programmes more effective. The organisation has turned into a resource centre in terms of advocacy on women's issues and empowerment of the women.

## IV. Ongoing Programmes —

### A. Social Empowerment

#### ■ Institution Building

Measuring poverty is no more a simple calculation of calorie intake today. The understanding of poverty has changed from time to time. The definition has now incorporated 'quality of life' that depends on people's access to and control over commodities which includes tangibles like food, income etc. and less tangible items like education, social status and security. Here control over commodities means influencing decisions on how the commodities will be generated and distributed. Hence powerlessness in the society is an important dimension of poverty. Here lies the mechanism of exploitation by the people in power over the powerless. With this reality in the environment, the large majority of the poor in the Bangladesh society remained powerless and thus exploited. This reality is explicit in all ages in all society. Therefore, a crucially important strategy for resisting the exploitation in the society is to empower the poor. The first step in this direction is organising them to form their own organisations. BNPS put particular emphasis on the process of developing self-help institutions of the target women to make them collectively stronger.



The peoples organisations facilitated by BNPS have three tiers viz. micro group, area/ward committee, and union committee. Awareness Building Groups, Savings and Credit Groups and General Groups are formed at the micro level with individuals from target households. Area committee (rural), or ward committee (urban) are formed with the representatives of the micro groups. At the union level the committees are formed with the representatives from area committees in the rural areas.

During the last calendar year, 131 awareness-building groups were formed consisting of 1842 members in the groups. The groups went through awareness sessions for a period of six months. After that the members were given two options either to stay at the general groups or to form savings and credit groups where they would be given credit support. It was observed that during the period of reporting 2663 members joined 153 savings and credit groups. It was also observed that the groups help the field workers in formation of new groups. Fifteen more area committees and two more union/ward committees are also formed with representatives from the savings and credit groups.

#### ■ Development Education

Awareness is a crucial starting point for empowerment, which has two major levels - (i) psychological that includes knowledge, self-esteem and (ii) political meaning exerting influence over decisions that affect the life. The society in Bangladesh for long kept the poor particularly women marginal from the knowledge and participation in decision-making. Owing to illiteracy, ignorance and superstition, they remained spell bound to the world the dominant section of the society has created for them. They are not

even conscious of the cause of their meagre situation in the society. Women are taught in a manner that they have accepted the situation as their fate. Development education programme initiated by BNPS is meant for breaking the iceberg and makes them prepared for establishing their access to decision making. Awareness sessions on democracy, health and legal issues are integral part of the development education, which are conducted in all the micro groups of the organisation.



Within the scope of this programme, group members participate in a series of field based and in-house training courses. The training courses are organised on awareness building, societal analysis, democracy education and legal education. Training manuals developed are followed in organising those courses, which are aided by effective communication materials and indigenous culture practice such as locally appropriate cultural activities, various visual mediums etc. Other than the

group members at the grassroots level, community leaders, family-based core male members and religious and political leaders, students, and young boys are also integrated in the development education program through various different workshops, sharing meetings, dialogue sessions, debates, rallies and such other initiatives implemented by the organisation.

During the period covered by this report, BNPS organised 141 awareness-building courses for 2108 participants. The courses are conducted at the group level for the new groups where the groups discussed about the poverty situation, their problems and how to overcome the problems. The topics of the courses also include awareness issues like health, education. During the period, 178 Societal Analysis courses were organised where 3124 persons participated the courses. These figures include Step 1 and Step 2 of the training course. The major topics of the societal analysis training course include: cause of poverty; the exploitation mechanism in the society; basic human rights and so on. During the period, 66 Leadership Development training courses were organised for 1106 group leaders. The leadership course has topics like needs for leadership among the poor particularly women, role of a leader in the grassroots groups of women, qualities of a good leader etc. Nineteen courses for 394 participants were organised on democracy education and good governance.

During the last calendar year, 67 legal awareness courses were organised for 974 women from different groups. 358 male members of the families of the organised groups were also invited to participate in the awareness session on various legal rights of women. The women at the grassroots level demanded that their husband and father should also know the topics they discuss among them. The groups also felt the need to have discussion with the community leaders in their society. With this end in view, BNPS organised 37 workshops in their working areas where 987 community leaders participated.

BNPS has also developed training materials for raising awareness of health issues among the target groups. Nutrition education in view of the special nutritional needs of expectant mothers, nursing mothers and adolescent girls is an integral part of it. Besides, BNPS provided training to a good number of Traditional Birth Attendants (TBAs) to help promote safe delivery and child care. Previously BNPS had intensive involvement in providing health services in the remote areas, which has been minimized over the period of time. As a medium size women's

organisation it has been felt by the organization that it is not possible for it to continue providing health services to the programme partners. Efforts are there to link the beneficiaries with government and private health services and to undertake advocacy for sustained public health services.

The development education courses are considered as a significant intervention at the grassroots level for empowerment of women for establishing their rights. It not only contributes to raising awareness among the target population rather it makes the people take actions for their rights.

Course Title	Achievement 2001	
	Course	Person
Awareness Building	141	2108 persons
Societal analysis (1)	130	2163 persons
Societal analysis (2)	48	961 persons
Leadership training (1)	41	568 persons
Leadership training (2)	25	538 persons
Democracy education	19	394 persons
Legal awareness	67	974 persons
Awareness session with men	15	358 persons
Legal workshop/ sharing meeting	37	987 persons

## ■ Legal Aid

Women situation in the society is further aggravated as women are discriminated in the laws of the state particularly in the family law and inheritance law. On the one hand women are discriminated in the laws on the other hand the procedure and the persons dealing with legal issues are not at all friendly to women. Lack of awareness of their rights added to their already miserable situation. To establish social justice for women and promote women rights, BNPS started working in the areas of legal aid programme. With its limited resource and capacity BNPS has undertaken this programme based on the demand from the people it works with.

The activities of the programme include raising, counselling, and facilitation of alternative dispute resolution, legal aid. Organising satellite clinic in the working areas is a regular activity of this program where group members and community people get consultation of lawyers regarding their problems. Legal aid support generally provided among the group members of BNPS, however, in significant cases of women rights violation BNPS also extends its legal support among the people in general irrespective of their target people. Another major focus of this program is to develop the capacity of group leaders on Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) for which BNPS regularly organises training courses.

There were growing demands from the target women for legal aid support. Their position in the society put them in such a disadvantaged state that they do not get social justice and are oppressed in many ways. BNPS provides support to only a few cases so that it can create an example for the future with a view to reduce violence against women. Last year the lawyers at the field filed 67 court cases in favour of some disadvantaged women. BNPS also organised 228 satellite clinics for counselling and also awareness raising for the community people.

## ■ Education for Children and Adolescent Girls

The working areas of BNPS include some very remote villages and backward places within the mainland and in an island. To make the education opportunities available to the children from the disadvantaged families in those areas BNPS has established non-formal primary education programme. This effort mainly aims at reintegration of the left-out and dropout children to be in the formal education.

In view of the past successes and increased coverage by government schools, BNPS plans a gradual phase-out from school program. However, so long as the schools remain, better-trained teachers and supervisors are involved to maintain the quality of this program. Moreover, BNPS integrates guardians and community in the supervision some of the activities. Annual sports programme and study tours to culturally significant places occur as additional event in each year.

BNPS has been running 24 non-formal primary schools in its working areas for the 900 children from the disadvantaged families. The teachers participated in 12 refreshers training one in each month to discuss the courses for the next month and the problems encountered during the last month. BNPS also conducts education programme for the adolescent girls through this programme. The programmes include learning simple reading and writing and calculation. Besides, the course also organises awareness sessions on gender issues and practical issues relating to life of adolescent girls.

## ■ Disaster Management and Environment Development

Two of the working areas of BNPS are very remote in terms of their geographical locations and isolated from the mainstream support system of the government and non-government agencies. Barhatta Thana of Netrakona and Sandwip, an offshore island in the Bay of Bengal are very much vulnerable to natural calamities. Due to this reality, BNPS has to organise some programmes from time to time to mitigate disaster and provide relief and rehabilitation support to the people of the areas. Besides it also provided disaster preparedness training to the young and able persons of the areas. In the training module of development education prepared by BNPS, the issue of the environment and disaster management are included. Training courses on disaster management are organised regularly among the group members especially in Sandwip and in Netrakona, which enabled them to be involved effectively in mitigation, preparedness, emergency response, and post disaster rehabilitation activities specifically after flood and cyclone. In Sandwip and Netrakona BNPS provides saplings among the group members and encourage them to generate own emergency funds for disaster management. Furthermore, through different networks BNPS is involved with the national level advocacy regarding environmental issues.





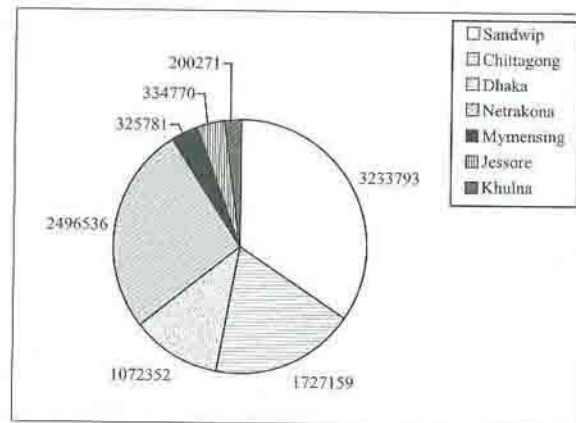
## B. Economic Empowerment

From the experience of BNPS it was realised that the economic empowerment is essential for social and political empowerment of women. Economic Empowerment programme is an integral part of the overall empowerment initiatives of BNPS. This in turn contributes to achieving the basic rights of women. Women at the grassroots level have little access to formal credit and they are dependent to informal sources like traditional money lenders for credit to meet their consumption and investment needs and have to pay a heavy rate of interest. Economic Empowerment programme of BNPS played a significant role in toning down such hindrance of the grassroots poor through encouraging savings generation, providing micro credit support, skills development training and Income Generation Activities (IGA) management training. The experience of BNPS revealed that women have potentials for becoming important income earners in their families if they are provided with the necessary access to credit, skills and human development training.

### ■ Savings Generation

From the beginning of Economic Empowerment program, BNPS has been encouraging the members of micro groups to save a little amount of money in every week regularly, which could provide them support in raising capital for IGA as well as meet-up the emergency need whenever necessary. BNPS also encouraged utilisation of savings fund of the groups to ensure availability of safe water and proper sanitation facilities among the group members. It was observed over the period of time that group members were very much enthusiastic to regular weekly savings, as practically they do not have any other option to save money. However, amount of weekly instalment decided by the members of respective groups and it varies from Tk. 10 to 20. The total savings amount of each centre of BNPS kept in the bank account, which operated jointly by the respective Centre Manager and two representatives of the micro groups. At the end of the year 2001 cumulative total savings of group members was Tk.13,379,441 out of which Tk.3,988,779 was refunded to the members in different times, and net savings was Tk.9,390,662.

Centre wise net savings by the end of December 2001



### ■ Micro Credit Support

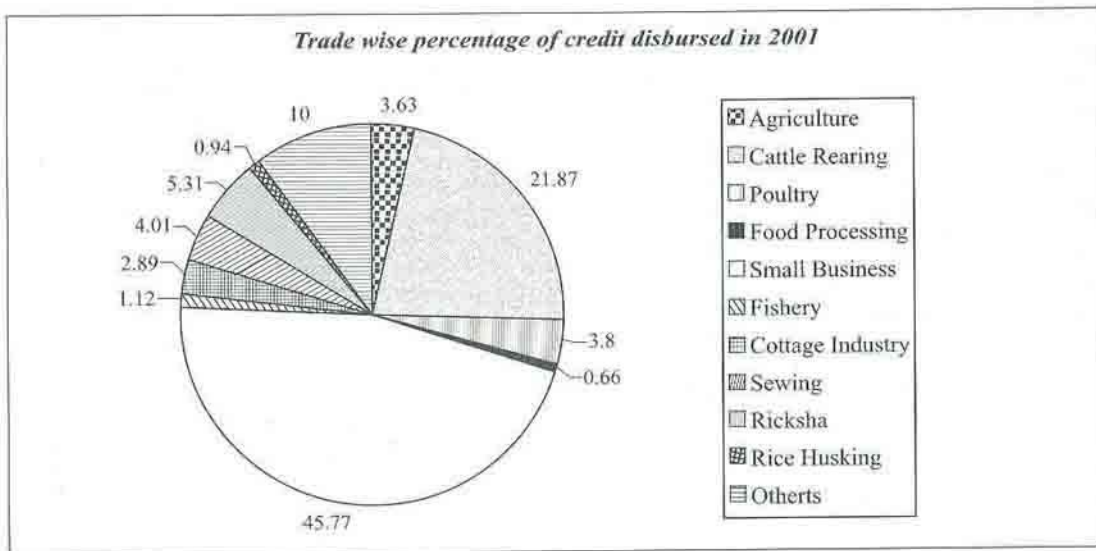
BNPS has the policy to provide credit support within six months of formation of the Savings and Credit group, and range of individual credit amount is Tk.3000 to 15000. However, group members have to meet-up some preconditions i.e. presence in 80% weekly meeting of the group, completion of IGA.

**The main features of the BNPS credit Support:**

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

management course, capable of signing the name, completion of Savings and Accounts Management training by the group leaders etc. Besides, grassroots level staff of BNPS assess the credit proposals of the group members beforehand and made necessary recommendations. Accordingly the centre management finalise the credit proposals and generally provide credit support, which is reimbursable in 50 equal weekly instalments within a year. However, considering the socio-economic situation, credit amount could be reimbursed in monthly instalments also in some areas. After providing the credit support among the group members, necessary follow-up is ensured by the centre level staff to oversee the mode of use of credit for given purposes and prepare instalment schedules. Bigger amount of loan is provided to the identified potentials entrepreneurs, where participating in the training course on entrepreneurship is a pre-condition.

During the year 2001 total Tk.27,180,000 has been provided among 5508 of women as credit support in different trades. Following chart shows the trade wise percentage of amount disbursed.



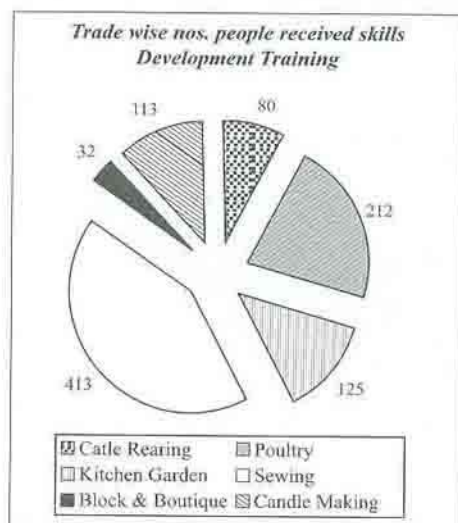
**■ IGA Management Training**

The members who want to receive credit support from BNPS have to go through a three days long training courses on IGA management which is called Income Generation Activities Selection Planning and Management. Direct partners of the Economic Empowerment program of BNPS are the grassroots level poor women and generally they lack necessary skills and experiences to implement IGAs with the credit support. To overcome such limitation of the

group members, the course has developed in a way that they get analytical discussion on essential factors of utilising credit amount successfully. Some of the major topics of this course are: ways of selecting a profitable business, ways of analysing the profit, ways of preparing a total plan, ways of reimbursing credit, and ways of handling the risks etc. Other than this training course, the IGA of group members has been supported by another initiative of BNPS i.e. Savings and Accounts Management Training. Three leaders of each micro group receive this two days long training, which help them to maintain the accounts of group properly as well as facilitate other members of the group to generate savings and maintain updated accounts of their IGAs and credit reimbursement. Besides, group leaders get acquainted of the procedure of bank and become capable of handling their own accounts there. Total 1571 women were participated in the IGA management training in 2001 from BNPS and 685 group leaders participated in Savings and Accounts Management training at the same period.

### ■ Skills Development Training

This is from the very beginning of BNPS work with women that the target women have identified skills development training as one of the most important programme for their uplift. They understood from their experience that only through their employment and income generation they would be able to reduce dependence on the male members of their family. Income can contribute to elevating their status in the family. This is precisely realised by the women at the grassroots level that their social and political empowerment is achievable only when they become active income earners. They could imagine that this would help them come out of the domestic four walls. They demanded this service from BNPS when BNPS had lofty ideas of socio-political empowerment of women through organising movements.



Major thrust of the programme is to improve necessary skills to implement different IGAs successfully. Usually BNPS provides skills development training to the women in various trade like dress making, block-boutique, embroidery, food processing, candle making, homestead gardening, nursery, livestock rearing, poultry rearing and so on. The training courses include short courses for improvement of existing skills, long courses for professional skill development and refreshers courses for improving the quality of their work. Generally center level trainers and senior staff facilitated different sessions of skills development courses, however sometimes local level external resource person from different government departments also hired for particular training courses. In 2001 BNPS provided skills development training among 975 women on different trades.

## C. Political Empowerment

### ■ Local Government and Good Governance

Although the national flag of the new-born state was hoisted with an aim to establish a democratic society, the subsequent rules in the country crumbled the hope of the people. The state born with a most democratic constitution became a state of military and autocratic rule. The rule of law was demolished under the boots of the military and autocratic rules. The people of the country came up with their zeal and thrown out the military regime in 1990. This people's upsurge paved the way to democratisation of the society. In this context, BNPS come up with a spirit to consolidate the outcome of the people's movement and take the benefit of the momentum.

With a view to promoting democratic practices and establishing gender justice at the local level, BNPS undertook the programme on local governance. The major outcomes of the programmes include awareness democratic and human rights, access to services of local elected bodies and accountability of the elected representatives. Activities of the local governance program are implemented simultaneously at the local and national level, BNPS in collaboration with the partner organisations implement the national level activities.

#### *Activities at the national level:*

- Training for the UP Chairman
- Networking of Women UP members
- Exchange visit for the staff of BNPS and partners
- Training module and material development

#### *Activities at the local level:*

- Rallies for human rights
- Cultural show on democracy issues
- Organise social watch groups
- Women participation in the standing committees
- Dialogue between LEBs and voters
- Promote birth, marriage and death registration
- Training for the elected representatives



Besides, preliminary activities and overall planning of national level activities are organised with the partners. Representatives of partner organisations also participate in the national level activities. Other network members i.e. members of ADAB and Democracy Forum involve in the national level advocacy.

At the local level the activities of this program implement in two fields - one in BNPS's field and another in partner organisations' field. BNPS provides all necessary support to these organisations for implementation. Ten potential local NGOs in different geographical locations are involved as partners in implementing the activities of this program. Organisations involved in implementing the program activities form network among them for undertaking co-ordinated effort on the program. Participatory program review and co-ordination meetings are organised annually with the partners for sharing experience, progress review and re-planning. During implementation, BNPS provides monitoring, follow-up and technical support. An interim evaluation planned to assess and understand change process among the targeted beneficiaries of the project by external consultants. Findings would be shared to draw a future plan.

### **Delivery of justice within legal framework**

The name of the village is Congakhata, which is under Gorla union of Thakurgaon sadar Thana. Five years back Shaheda of another village called Pokati from Nargun union of the same Thana got married with Ibrahim of Chongakhata. Last five years they were maintaining their family quite well.

Recently the husband was not behaving well with Shaheda. He was also not maintaining the expenditures of the family. With her two daughters Shaheda went to her parents house with one of her cousin. Ibrahim did not like it. He called her back to his house. When she came back the husband tortured her brutally and at a certain stage of quarrel he divorced her orally. Ibrahim went out of the house and came back after a couple of days. Knowing the incident, the villagers sat together and decided that she became divorced and she had to go back to her father's house. However, Ibrahim was repentant and he wanted to take his wife back as before. But his neighbours were so angry that they did not allow him to live with her.

The social watch committee organised by Manab Kallyan Parishad came to know it and took initiative to solve the matter. The members of the committee set together with the elected representatives of the two union parishads and the villages who earlier decided to send Shahida back. They made the people understand that there was a Salish Parishad under the UP and if any one wanted to divorce his wife he had to give a notice to the Salish Parishad. Without this no oral divorce will be effective. They also warned Ibrahim not to torture his wife anymore otherwise they will take action against him. Ibrahim promised not to do so.

## **NETRAKONA: WHERE VOICE OF WOMEN IS HEARD**

Have you ever heard of a place where the poor particularly women can raise their voice against injustice? If this question is asked, most people may say, no we haven't. But the people at the grassroots level in Netrakona Sadar and Barhatta Thana will think for a little while and will say, yes. The speaker can be a woman as well. The women in the areas are neither isolated as before and nor alone in their struggle for their rights. They are organised and conscious of their rights. No injustice against women can go unchallenged if come to their notice.

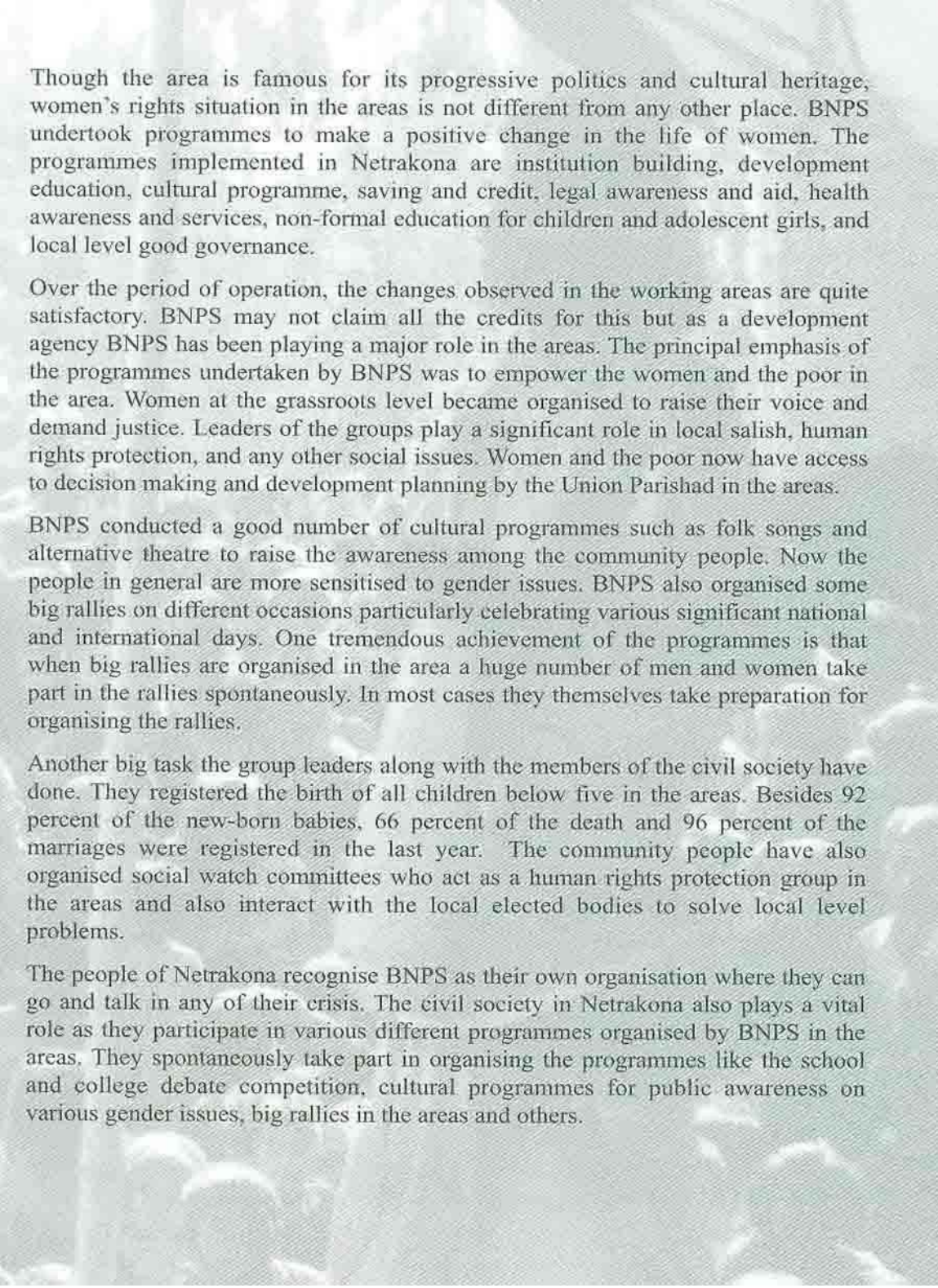
This is one of the 64 districts of the country, which earlier was a part of Mymensingh district. In 1984, Netrakona was announced a district. The old name of Netrakona is Kaliganj. Still the elderly people like to call it Kaligonj instead of Netrakona. The district is rich for its cultural and political heritage. Situated by the side of Garo Hill the scenic beauty of the district lies in wide spread Hawar, the big water body.

Many celebrated literary and cultural personalities make the name of Netrakona glowing. Some of them include, Chandra Kumar Dey, who is famous for collecting the Moymonsingha Gitika (lyrics), Mansur Boiaty, writer of Dewan Madina, eminent poet and literary personality Sirazuddin Kashimpuri, renowned artist Sailozaranjan Majumder, Poet Nirmalendu Goon, Essayist and Researcher Jatin Sarker, Lyricist Modon Acharja, Humayun Ahmed, well known playwright and novelist. Some eminent political personalities also born in this place such as Comrad Moni Singha, Revolutionary Hannan Moulavi, Justice Shahabuddin Ahmed and so on. Two eminent women activists, Ayesha Khanom and Rokeya Kabir also come from this place.

Netrakona is also recognised for the people's revolt against the Tonko system created by the Jaminder. People of the area are still proud of holding of the all-Indian farmers conference and the role of their people played during the war of liberation in 1971.

According to the government source, 847,400 female and 883,535 male forms the total population 1,730,935 of whom 80 percent are dependent on agriculture, 10 percent on service and the rest 10 percent on different other professions. People are engaged in many professions like, agricultural labourer, workers in small industries, potters, blacksmith, fisherman, trader, barber, and many other professions. Though Muslims dominate the area there live Hindus, Buddhists, Christians and also some ethnic minorities like, Garo, Hazang, Coach, Banai, and Rajbanshi. All these people live peacefully in the district.

The district consists of 10 Upazilla, 4 municipalities, 85 unions, 2299 villages. There are 58 non-governmental organisations working for the development of the poor. BNPS is one of the biggest one working in the district since 1993. In the beginning, it started working in the Barhatta thana and later in 1996 BNPS started its operation in the Netrakona Sadar Upazilla. Netrakona Municipal Area and Kendua Upazilla.



Though the area is famous for its progressive politics and cultural heritage, women's rights situation in the areas is not different from any other place. BNPS undertook programmes to make a positive change in the life of women. The programmes implemented in Netrakona are institution building, development education, cultural programme, saving and credit, legal awareness and aid, health awareness and services, non-formal education for children and adolescent girls, and local level good governance.

Over the period of operation, the changes observed in the working areas are quite satisfactory. BNPS may not claim all the credits for this but as a development agency BNPS has been playing a major role in the areas. The principal emphasis of the programmes undertaken by BNPS was to empower the women and the poor in the area. Women at the grassroots level became organised to raise their voice and demand justice. Leaders of the groups play a significant role in local salish, human rights protection, and any other social issues. Women and the poor now have access to decision making and development planning by the Union Parishad in the areas.

BNPS conducted a good number of cultural programmes such as folk songs and alternative theatre to raise the awareness among the community people. Now the people in general are more sensitised to gender issues. BNPS also organised some big rallies on different occasions particularly celebrating various significant national and international days. One tremendous achievement of the programmes is that when big rallies are organised in the area a huge number of men and women take part in the rallies spontaneously. In most cases they themselves take preparation for organising the rallies.

Another big task the group leaders along with the members of the civil society have done. They registered the birth of all children below five in the areas. Besides 92 percent of the new-born babies, 66 percent of the death and 96 percent of the marriages were registered in the last year. The community people have also organised social watch committees who act as a human rights protection group in the areas and also interact with the local elected bodies to solve local level problems.

The people of Netrakona recognise BNPS as their own organisation where they can go and talk in any of their crisis. The civil society in Netrakona also plays a vital role as they participate in various different programmes organised by BNPS in the areas. They spontaneously take part in organising the programmes like the school and college debate competition, cultural programmes for public awareness on various gender issues, big rallies in the areas and others.

Quantitative achievements of the initiative on local government and good governance during 2001 has been mentioned in following table.

Activities	Achievement	
	No of events	Participants
<b>National Level</b>		
Organize orientation on project for partner organization field staff	2	48 persons
Training modules development & review and flipchart	2	-
Organize ToT for the field level staff	1	23 persons
Training course for UP Secretary on Gender-Friendly Management	1	22 persons
Organize program planning and management training	1	25 persons
Organize gender and development training for PO senior staff	1	23 persons
Organize exchange visit to partners field and exposure trip	1	-
Develop and print poster	1	-
Develop and print leaflet	1	-
Develop and print booklet	1	-
Develop monitoring tools for program and finance	2	-
Prepare periodic reports and documents	2	-
Organize networking meeting with women UP members at district level	50	-
Organize program review and re-planning meeting	1	25 persons
<b>Field level</b>		
Organize debate with school and college level	15	498 persons
Organize rallies on human and democratic rights	15	15400 persons
Organize sharing meeting with LEBs, group & community leaders	50	1301 persons
Organize cultural show at village level	65	24860 persons
Organize meeting of social watch group	148	4212 persons
Organize dialogue session for LEBs and voters	40	3878 persons
Organize sharing meeting on birth, death & marriage registration	84	1747 persons
Organize need assessment workshop with civil society, PO groups and community leaders.	70	2116 persons
Organize sharing meeting with LEBs on need assessment findings	35	1051 persons
Organize training for elected LEBs	18	368 persons
Organize planning workshop with LEBs and community leaders	35	1015 persons
Organize sharing meeting and petition for women UP members roles and responsibilities	16	941 persons
Organize democracy awareness session	13523	



## ■ Election Observation

Since the beginning of 1990s, BNPS has entered into the political arena with a view to promoting democratic culture. A good number of NGOs later has been involved in the process. BNPS has taken the initiative to promote political awareness of the people, strengthening local governance and enhancing women's participation in politics. BNPS believes that if the democratic practices enhanced at the grassroots level, it will continue to democratisation at the national level. This initiative has become a longer-term program now and BNPS is implementing this in collaboration with the NGOs in different districts.

On the occasion of the 8<sup>th</sup> National Parliament Election, 2001, BNPS decided to monitor the Election in collaboration with its NGO partners and the civil society. To undertake this action in an efficient manner a network, namely, Vote Observation for Transparency and Empowerment (VOTE) was established. The members of the network include twenty-four NGOs from different parts of the country and some eminent personalities from different groups of the civil society. Other than those, more than 200 NGOs and hundreds of the members of the civil society at the local level were involved with the network in monitoring the National Parliament Election 2001. The network was committed to uphold the spirit of the Bangladesh Constitution of 1972 as a guiding principle in its work of election observation.

BNPS observed the National Parliament Election 2001 in 161 constituencies throughout the country with a view to promoting a free, fair and transparent election and thus enhancing democratic practices in the country. The major focus of the election observation was on participation of women, ethnic and religious minorities and the working people.

BNPS undertook the initiative from the perspective of gender and democracy. Democracy and empowerment of women are mutually complementary to each other. Therefore, there is no democracy where women are discriminated against men. The goal of the undertaking was to enhance good governance and practices of democracy based on gender equity. It was designed with a view to promoting a free and fair election in the country with congenial environment for active participation of women and the ethnic and religious minorities.

The election observation tools and methods are developed in consultation with the persons with good experience in observing polls at home and abroad. A manual was developed for proper implementation of the programme. The members of the network in a huge number of polling stations observed election and prepared reports of their findings using the methodologies developed.

To maintain proper co-ordination of the work in all over the country committees were formed at union, thana, constituency, district and national level. The committees were composed of both female and male members. The committees were responsible for supervising and controlling the monitoring activities at the field level and

### **The specific objectives of the election observation program were to:**

- *ensure transparency and accountability of the election process through unrestrained participation of men and women;*
- *encourage institutionalisation of democracy through practice of democratic political culture;*
- *creating enabling environment for women, and religious and ethnic minorities at all levels of election and politics; and,*
- *promote good governance at local and national level.*

reporting to the higher level co-ordination committees. Moreover, co-ordination was also maintained with the agencies observing election in the same districts and also at the national level.

Training of trainers (ToT) was provided to the constituency co-ordinators and the district co-ordinators. The participants of the ToT courses along with resource persons from the central level organised orientation courses for the monitors at the field level.

A huge work force was involved in observing the election. The volunteers were mobilised from the field as per the standard criteria for election observation and particular emphasis was given on involving women. These volunteers were responsible for observing the election at the polling centres and reporting to their respective constituency co-ordinator through union co-ordination. The co-ordination committees were responsible for supervising the work of the volunteers and compiling the formats from the field and reporting to the central committee. The central committee prepared a primary report and the final report from the information received from the field.

BNPS as an organisation working for empowerment of women believes that effective participation of women in politics is an imperative for empowerment of women. BNPS along with its partners of VOTE network monitored the whole election process including the pre-poll environment and the post poll environment. It has also undertaken the initiative for in-depth analysis of the situation from gender perspective and also the right of ethnic and religious minorities. The major objectives was to identify the loopholes of the election process, quality of women's participation and holding free and fair election for enhancing the democratisation process in the country.

## ■ Electoral Reform

Last few elections in Bangladesh made it clear to all that the election administering process in the country is not flawless. There can be scope for allegations and controversy from any of the contesting sides. The process is not up to the expectations of the people of the country. This should be changed to an extent that it becomes transparent to all quarters and can not be questioned. If the systemic problems can be removed, the results of the election will be more acceptable to the voters and the candidates. Another major drawback of the election process is that it does not consider regarding the environment for participation of the weaker section of people from the society.

BNPS observed the last few elections at the local and national level in a good number of constituencies. It has assessed the whole process of election to understand the quality of election with particular emphasis on participation of women, ethnic and religious minorities. During the parliament election in 2001, BNPS monitored the election at the polling centre level on the election-day and also studied the whole election process from the date of declaration of the election schedule to publication of result and even few days more after that. BNPS came to the conclusion that there should be concerted efforts from the civil society, political parties and the NGOs to advocate for improvement in the election process leading towards institutionalisation of democracy.

## D. Strategic Segments

### ■ Advocacy and Lobbying

The NGOs in Bangladesh have realised over the period of operation at the grassroots level that the development interventions only at the micro level are not sufficient to make a positive change in the life of the target people and in the society as a whole. Patriarchal society like ours left little scope for women to be in a state to enjoy equal rights in the society. The policy and legal environment in the state and the prevailing power structure in the society made women subordinate to men. Therefore, it is obvious that to make a clear and positive change there should be a change in the system.



Nevertheless, the initiatives of NGOs at the macro level differ from work at the micro level. At the macro level, the focus is on influencing the people in power and the systems to bring in a change. Therefore advocacy and lobbying are the main development strategies for intervention at the

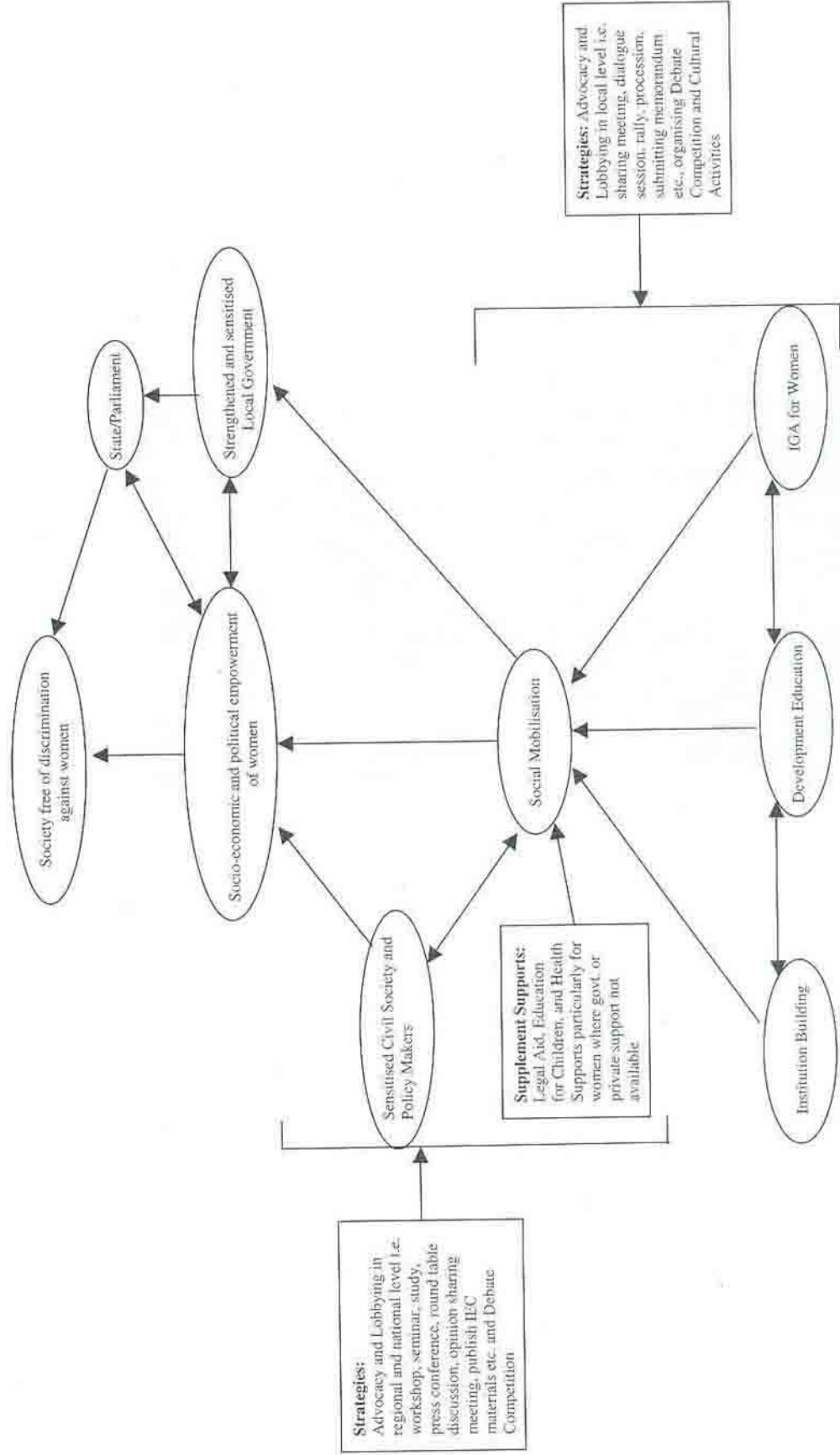
macro level. This includes public awareness, policy advocacy, lobbying, mobilisation of people, and so on. BNPS endeavours to bring in a sustainable change in the mindset of the people particularly the major social and policy actors. Besides it also mobilises the mass people at the grassroots level to create a pressure on the different actors of the society and at the policy making level. The ultimate goal is to make a positive change in the life of grassroots people particularly women. It has therefore taken up programmes both at micro and macro levels. Its work at the grassroots level also has clear relation with the macro initiatives. Policy analysis and assessment of impact on the life of grassroots people are source of information to be used in public awareness, and policy advocacy and lobbying.

A series of workshops, sharing meetings, seminars and dialogues are organised at local and national level with the civil society, media persons, lawyers, students, policy makers and other relevant groups on different policy issues.

#### Some of the major advocacy initiatives of BNPS in 2001

Divisional level workshop	6
Seminar	2
National level workshop	4
Sharing meeting	2
Workshop at local level	28
Press conference	2
Workshop of middle class women	132
Rally	4
Study	3
Poster	5
Leaflet	2
Newsletter	4

## Transformational Affect of BNPS's Interventions



Networking is also established with the organisations particularly with the women organisation based on the common agenda to be pursued. To strengthen women's movement, middle class women are also involved in different programs.



Efforts are there through regular meetings and workshops of middle class women in establishing and strengthening of 'Nari-Mancha' in all project areas clarifying the dual objectives of organising middle class women (personal + social benefit). Awareness campaign is initiated among them on diversified issues.

Materials like poster, leaflet and booklet newsletter etc. are also published to raise mass awareness on women's issues and distributed all over Bangladesh. Articles are also published in different national dailies.

## ■ Cultural Programme

Cultural media has a significant role in organising various movements and policy change and change in the mindset of the people. The cultural programme was found as one of the most effective intervention for creating public opinion on different policy issues and raising mass awareness on various gender issues. Different cultural media like alternative forms of drama and different

folk forms of music are used as vehicles for conveying the messages to the audience. The performances are done by cultural groups developed at the community level. The young and adolescent girls and boys

**Achievements of Cultural Programme in 2001**

<i>Activities</i>	<i>Achievement</i>
Observation of national and international day	12
Organise workshop on theatre at central level	01
Organise workshop on theatre at centre level	07
Organise workshop on song at central level	05
Organise alternative theatre show	86
Compose song	05
Organise street corner meeting and cultural show	22
Follow-up of rehearsal on theatre & song	01
Special Theatre Show in <i>poush mela</i>	01
Organize women issue based <i>baul</i> and <i>palagan</i>	06
Organize human chain	03

form these groups. They are provided with training by BNPS where the renowned cultural activists from the national level are involved as facilitators.

The programmes are designed along with the audience through improvisation process. The audience also take part in the performances and discussion on various topics raised through the programmes. Through this interactive process an issue is raised and discussed with the audience to come to a conclusion regarding the injustice against women.

Various significant national and international days are celebrated each year with the participation from the grassroots women, community people and the students from different education institutions. The major objectives of the day observation programmes are to raise public awareness on the issues related to the significance of the days. Moreover the public gathering and different social and cultural programmes organised on those days creates the opportunity for the women to develop solidarity among them and raise their voice against all sorts of injustice still prevailing in our society.

#### **Not only acting taking action too**

Mukta is the youngest sister to Hira. They are from a lower middle class family from Barhatta Thana of Netrakona district. The family of Mukta has arranged her marriage. They were convinced that like the other two sisters they have to provide dowry for her marriage. When they settled the marriage they decided that they would give the bridegroom a set of furniture and an amount of taka thirty thousand in cash.

Hira has been involved with BNPS as a theatre worker for the last two years. He knew the fact that dowry is not legally acceptable. He tried but in his family he could not resist it. Still he was suffering mentally because he was performing the drama where they showed dowry as a social crime. He discussed it with his friends and co-artists.

The group worked together to discuss this with both the families and made them understand that taking dowry is illegal and punishable offence in the eye of law. They also talked to the bridegroom. They stopped the dowry in this particular marriage and Mukta got married last March.



Following significant days celebrated in all the working areas of the organisation.

- Language Martyr Day: 21 February
- International Women's Day: 08 March
- Independence Day: 26 March
- Bangla New Year: 14 April
- May Day: 01 May
- Women Oppression Resistance Day: 24 August
- Begum Rokeya Day: 09 December
- Victory Day: 16 December

Furthermore, a few centres of BNPS celebrated some other significant days i.e. Birth Anniversary of Poet Sufia Kamal, World Environment Day etc.

### ■ Debate

As the information related to gender issues is not yet well disseminated to the people in general the traditional way of thinking about the life of women is still persistent among the youth. To make a change in their mind set, BNPS started working with the students at different level of institutions. At first, the university students were targeted. But gradually it was realised that the process of building awareness and develop sensitivity to gender should be started from rather early stage of life. From this realisation, BNPS started organising debate programmes on various gender issues among the students of schools and colleges. The programme was found very much effective in developing analytical skills of the participants and sensitising the students, their teachers and their parents.

The major issues of debate for the year 2001 were as follows:

- ❖ Strong local government is not possible without equal participation of women and men.
- ❖ Lack of education is the sole cause of child marriage
- ❖ Taking exemplary punishment against the culprit can stop acid throwing
- ❖ No state law but social awareness can stop dowry
- ❖ Poverty alleviation is not possible without equal participation of women in development activities.
- ❖ Economic emancipation is the main condition of the empowerment of women
- ❖ Cruelty on women could be thwarted only through equal rights on resources
- ❖ Proper education can stop dowry
- ❖ Hooliganism and fundamentalism are the main obstacles to ensure rights of women
- ❖ Direct election in the reserved seats of the National Parliament is the base of the empowerment of women

## E. Support Programmes

### ■ Training

BNPS has learnt over the period of its operation that development is not a linear process rather it is a complex one that can only be pursued when the actors can learn and act according to the needs of the target audience. The facilitators of the process should be well equipped to manage the change. Staffs of BNPS are the vital force in this change process. That's why BNPS keeps on training the staff with updated information and skills needed for development change process. Necessary materials are also developed for the systematised education process. A unit is working for this round the year, identifying needs and taking necessary initiatives, including formal training, on the job coaching, study circle and exchange visit

#### *Training courses and exposure organised by BNPS in 2001*

Name of the Course	Nos. of Course	For whom	Nos. of participants
Training on Gender & Development	4	Staff of BNPS and Partners	84
Program Planning and Management	02	Staff of Partners	34
Training of Trainers (ToT)	01	Staff of BNPS and Partners	23
ToT on Group Facilitation	01	Staff of BNPS	13
Planning Monitoring & Evaluation	01	Staff of BNPS	24
Training Workshop of Legal Aid	01	Staff of BNPS	26
Project Orientation Course	02	Representative of partner	49
Exchange Visit in India	01	Staff of BNPS	10

#### *Training course participated by the staff of BNPS*

Course Title	Duration	Participants name	Organised by
Gender and Development	Mar 28 – Apr 06	Ferdousi Sultana	Steps Towards Development
Art of Advocacy	May 28 – Jun 09	Syeda Neegar Banu	IDPAA, Proshika
Participatory Monitoring and Evaluation	Mar 4 – Mar 23	F M Sarwar Hossain	IIRR Philippines
Monitoring and Evaluation	Jan 2001	Saifur Rahman Tarik	CARE Bangladesh
Development Communication	Jan 2001	Saifur Rahman Tarik	Independent University
Advocacy on Gender	Apr 08 – Apr 10	Syeda Neegar Banu Sahana Syed	Proshika
Management and Accounting of Micro- finance program	Sep 10 – Sep 20	Sabina Momtaz	CARE Bangladesh
Women's Struggles for Sustainable Dev. in South Asia: Perspective from the field	Sep 11 – Sep 14	Masuda Rowsha Ayesha Akter Kona	JAGORI, SANGAT and Nepal co-ordination Committee
Foundation training on Disaster Management Project	Mar 19 – Apr 4	Md. Shamsuddin Md. Iqbal Kamal	CARE Bangladesh Management Project
Disaster Management	Jun 5 – Jun 7	Ferdousi Sultana	BIAM
Disaster Management	Nov 5 – Nov 23	Md. Shamsuddin	ADPC Thailand
Management of dev. project	Jul 08 – Jul 12	Md. Shamsuddin	CARE Bangladesh
Financial Management	May 2 – May 3	Md. Shamsuddin Khokon Roy Chow.	CARE Bangladesh



## *Capacity Building Support to CHT NGOs*

The Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT), a hilly region in the south-eastern part of Bangladesh, has experienced ceaseless political disturbance and negative social fall out owing to its disagreement with the then political leaders over the issue of choosing a mode of governance for this region. After having been in a war like situation for over two decades, peace dawned in that region and a 'peace treaty' was signed in 1997 by both the government and the aggrieved indigenous community to work concertedly toward peace and development.



After the treaty was signed BNPS felt the need to support the victims of the situation in the region to uplift their situation. Without being operating its program by itself, BNPS decided to implement some programs collaborating with locally initiated organisations. Taking the uniqueness of culture and values of the region into consideration,

BNPS conceived that activities should be implemented by the indigenous organisations.

BNPS has been implementing a project to support the development initiatives taken by the CHT NGOs for the empowerment of women. The programmes are operated through six local level partner organisations. BNPS plays a facilitating role. The programme activities of each organisation identified through program development workshop and each local partner was financially supported as per their need. To develop the capacity of the partner organisations, staff development training were organised at the central level and necessary follow-up ensured at the field level. Local and national level workshops organised and communication materials published to raise awareness of policy makers and mass regarding CHT issue.

### *Partners of BNPS in the CHT since 1999*

1. Zabarang Kallyan Samity, Khagrachari
2. Khagrapur Mahila Kallyan Samity, Khagrachari
3. Milanpur Mahila Kallyan Samity, Khagrachari
4. PAJURECO, Khagrachari
5. Garjantoli Mahila Kallyan Samity, Rangamati
6. Jummbi Mahila Kallyan Samity, Rangamati

#### *Activities directly implemented by BNPS*

Name of activities	Achievement 2001
Programme development workshop	01
Staff development\ training	02
Workshop at national/ field level	05
Publish Poster	01
Module development	02
Co-ordination meeting	01
Publish booklet	00

#### *Activities implemented by the partner's in CHT*

Name of activities	Achievement 2001
Group formation	27
Day observation	7
Co-ordination meeting	72
Credit Support (Tk.)	345000
Savings Generated (Tk.)	259063
Gathering on women	01
Workshop	01
Sharing meeting	03
Skills Development Training	8
Training course on leadership	16
Meeting with male	02

### ■ **Monitoring and Evaluation**

Monitoring is considered as an essential part of programme management. To ensure the quality of implementation and achieve the planned results, purpose and goal BNPS has developed a system of monitoring and evaluation. BNPS put particular stress on maintaining effective monitoring and also on collection of qualitative as well as quantitative information. Collection of minimum indispensable amount of information makes it effective for implementation of programmes and management decision making. Objectives set in the proposals are considered while setting indicators to assess achievement in terms of the results, effects and impacts of different programmes implemented by the organisation. The monitoring system includes problem identification, application of solution with a mechanism for immediate feedback to the programme.

A unit is responsible for monitoring and evaluation. Field monitoring activities includes orientation meetings, document review and interview with staff, as well as visits to rural / urban communities. The monitoring team consists of co-ordinator M&E, centre trainers working at field areas and key implementing personal who participate in all field activities.

Field workers collect data at community level. Development officers in co-operation with Centre Managers accumulate data and prepare a summary of key data and send them to head office. Monthly activity reports are collected from field offices on a regular basis. On the other hand, every cell of BNPS head office also reports their planned activities on a monthly basis. All these are used as secondary source of information.

Primary data are collected directly by staff of monitoring cell on a sample basis for cross check. The cell works on a minimum number of selective indicators. For collecting fresh information from field the cell has developed a set of tools, which are being continuously updated. Qualitative information is collected through case studies, special studies, observation and evaluation workshops.

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 produces report quarterly for management use. Six monthly reports are prepared for donors and government departments. Moreover an annual report is published every year for sharing experiences with other organisations and persons.



BNPS promotes self-evaluation, one that involves input from all stakeholders. Stakeholders include representatives from group members, community members or members of the civil society and the staffs. A three phase evaluation process has been practised to have an authentic base of information of the programmes implemented at the field and national level. The steps include (a) workshop with focus group members community member at field level; (b) workshop with field level staff, group leaders at center office level; and (c) workshop with central office staff, field staff representatives and representatives from group and community leaders.

### ■ Policy Research, Documentation and Publication

Programmes implemented by BNPS needs research based and highly communicative information, policy advocacy and lobbying materials and materials for public awareness. The Documentation and Publication unit of BNPS provided necessary information and material support for proper implementation of various programmes to the other units. The materials and publications are not only used by BNPS, these are also used by many other development agencies and individuals having similar objectives like BNPS.

In 2001 three studies were conducted by BNPS on different policy issues i.e. Allocation for Women in the National Budget, Impact of Globalisation on Women in Bangladesh, and Greater Participation of Women

in Political Arena. External resource persons from research organisation and university were assigned to conduct the studies where senior staff of BNPS were also involved to implement different activities.

Over the period BNPS has established an information base on gender issues. It also has ensured availability of proper advocacy and awareness materials to the researcher, policy makers, media people and others. Disseminate research findings on different women's issues at national and international level. For this BNPS has published a good number of books, booklets, posters, leaflets and advocacy materials. The organization has network with many other like minded organizations and forums to make the use of the materials it publish.

<i>List of materials published during 2001</i>		
Sl.	Kind of Material	Topics/Title
1	Booklet	a. Madrasah Education: An Enquiry b. Women's Share in the National Budget c. Steps against cruelty on women d. Good governance through effective UP and empowerment of women
2	Poster	a. Women's demands prior to the 8 <sup>th</sup> National Parliament Election b. On International Women's Day c. On effective Union Parishad and demands of UP's women members d. On equal rights of women in all spheres of life
3	Leaflet	a. Women's demands prior to the 8 <sup>th</sup> National Parliament Election b. Against religious fundamentalism c. On good governance d. On the demand of increased allocation for women in the national budget
4	Newsletter	4 issues of Nari Progati Barta (Quarterly Bangla Newsletter of BNPS)
5	Flip Chart	On voters education
6	Training modules	On election observation
7	Calendar	On Bangla Year 1408
8	Report	a. Election Observation from Gender Perspective b. Annual Report 2000

## V. Results of Ongoing Programmes

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- ☐ Women at the grassroots level organised themselves to be an active part of the social transformation process towards better livelihood for them and a just society. They are aware of their situation and can critically analyse the cause of their misery.
- ☐ Women themselves can raise their voice where injustice occurs in their areas. They come forward to take actions for any of their fellows suffers violence or oppression in the family or in the community.
- ☐ Women at the grassroots level in the working areas of BNPS can organise mobilisation and protest rallies and demand their rights to the relevant authorities at the local level. In most cases they don't even need support from BNPS.
- ☐ For about a decade BNPS has been undertaking advocacy and lobbying initiatives on various women's issues. The programmes are supplemented by public awareness and social mobilisation. It has created an impact on the policy makers, groups of the civil society and other relevant national and international policy actors.
- ☐ BNPS is established as a resource organisation in the field of gender, governance and advocacy on various policy issues. The development activists, NGOs and researchers use the information support from the organisation.
- ☐ Savings generated by the savings and credit group members have enhanced the strength of the women at the grassroots level. They could save a sizeable amount of money that can be used in the days they face fund crisis. This also contributed to improving their status in the family.
- ☐ The Elected representatives of Union Parishad are trained and involved in different programmes organised by BNPS and its partner organisation. As a consequence, they are found more supportive to women for their development and they are more sensitised to gender equality.
- ☐ Though voters' awareness, institution building and mobilisation the members of the grassroots organisations gained higher self-esteem and feel collectively stronger to stand against injustice. They collectively interact with the elected representatives of the union parishad when any human rights violation occurs.
- ☐ Social watch committees consisting of the leaders of the groups organised at the grassroots level and the community leaders gained tremendous enthusiasm in undertaking various actions as they became visible in the society. Members of the social watch committees are also acceptable to the society to be involved in different social events particularly salish.
- ☐ Women members of the union parishads all over the country became organised and are able to demand their rights by themselves. The network of women members meets regularly at thana, district, division and national level with certain intervals. They undertaking initiatives for their empowerment and advocating for their rights.

- ☐ The poor women of the ethnic minority families in the CHT are organising themselves to form their self-help institutions. The level of awareness among the hill women increased of their rights and their status in the society. They are also organising rallies on the occasion of celebrating different national and international days.
- ☐ Women and indigenous organisations in the Chittagong Hill Tract are improving the capacity of their organisation. They are capable of undertaking initiatives for empowerment of women in their society. To a small scale they are organising various social development programmes in their areas.
- ☐ Networking capacity of the local level NGOs enhanced to a certain extent. The partners of BNPS for the local governance programme are taking initiative to develop gender network at the local levels for working together with the local NGOs for establishing the rights of women in their areas.
- ☐ Samities of the grassroots women build up their institutions at village and union level to establish them as an organised force in the society. They are now working as a pressure groups at the local level. Grassroots women enhanced their awareness of their rights and their status in the society and established themselves as a organised bargaining force in the society
- ☐ The women at the grassroots level improved their awareness of their economic empowerment. They improved their skills for undertaking income generation activities. The IGAs undertaken by the grassroots women leads to increase in their family income and enhanced their status in the family. Their voices become heard now in their families and also in the society. They are also interacting with the market forces and establishing their space in the traditional market.

## VI. *Lessons Learnt and Future Direction*

It is essentially important for BNPS to organise a critical mass in an area with necessary awareness and mobilisation capacity to make a pressure at the community level for the rights of the disadvantaged particularly women. BNPS should continue to put particular emphasis on its development education programme and social mobilisation.

Social and political awareness of the organised groups in a society is of great importance for strengthening their institutions at the grassroots level. There should also be clear mission and future direction for the individuals and the institutions. There should be action programmes of the groups and BNPS should facilitate their planning process.

Development actors, members of the civil society, media people and the researchers need comprehensive information for their different works. However, this kind of support is inadequate and not research based. BNPS has to put greater emphasis in this regard to enhance the quality of its information base on gender issues and dissemination of information. The use of information should also be followed up.

Situation of the women workers in the formal and informal sector has been worsening gradually. Globalisation also has immense negative impact on the life of women in these sectors. BNPS should establish linkages with representatives of different groups of women from the formal and informal sector and trade unions and network with the NGOs, which deal with labours and women empowerment.

Policy advocacy initiatives in the areas of local governance should be enhanced and improve the position of the women representative in the local elected bodies. In addition, it has to undertake media campaign for sensitising the male members and the community people on equal participation of women in the local government.

It was observed through working with the local government bodies that there are many limitations cordoned around the institutions. There should be strong initiative from the side of the organisation to enhance the campaign for decentralized planning and block allocation for the local government and organize national level lobbying with policy makers for a change.

Inadequate participation of women in the political parties and in the policy making bodies women in general are deprived of a congenial environment to grow and act in favour of women. One of the fundamental issue is women's participation in the parliament. There should be a strong initiative from BNPS to undertake lobbying with policy makers to initiate a bill on provision of reserved seats for women in the National Parliament and organizing direct election in those seats.

Organisations working with similar goal particularly on gender issues need to come closer to learn from each other and become collectively stronger. BNPS should take an initiative to establish a wider gender network with different organizations, activists and groups.

To influence the social transformation towards greater gender equality and justice this is an affirmative that the people as a whole are critically conscious of the different issues related to the rights of women. Cultural medium is an effective tool for the success in building awareness. In the forthcoming days the cultural programme should be given further emphasis to raise public awareness on different women's issues and against communal, racial and fundamentalist ideas.

It was observed during the last few elections that there is scope for questioning the results of the elections. Dialogue with political parties and the policy makers is essential to initiate reform in the electoral process to make the elections more transparent to the citizens and to make election environment more women friendly.

There should be constant media analysis to study the trend of violence and pursue actions on nationally sensitive incidences. It should also take initiative to establish countrywide network for information (collection, dissemination) and action.

BNPS should take the initiative to develop awareness materials for the mass people and development organizations on the issue of ethnic and religious minorities. It should start dialogue with the political parties and create provisions for supports to networks and organizations of the religious and ethnic minorities.

Research based information is to be gathered on different issues of globalisation and disseminated from grassroots to top levels. Networking, advocacy & lobbying with civil society actors and policy makers nationally, regionally and internationally on adverse effects of globalisation is of great importance.





## Address of the Partner Organizations

<p><b>Manab Kallyan Parishad (MKP)</b>          Bus Stand Road, Thakurgaon - 304          Phone: 0561-3659          E-mail: mkp@bdonline.com          Contact Person: Mr Rabiul Azam, Director</p>	<p><b>Association for Social and Environmental Development (ASED)</b>          125/A Raninagar, P.O. Kazla, Rajshahi - 6100          Phone: 0721-750519 (R)          Contact Person: Ms Taiyeba Islam          Executive Director</p>
<p><b>Bangladesh Social Advancement Society (BSAS)</b>          13, Perera Road, Barisal          Contact Person: Ms Bandana Nath, Director</p>	<p><b>Sirajgonj Uttaran Mahila Sangstha (SUMS)</b>          Darga Road, Sirajgonj          Phone: 0751-72422          Contact Person: Ms Shafina Lohani, Director</p>
<p><b>SAMATA</b>          Village : Bishnupur, Post : Dulai, District : Pabna          Contact Person: Md Abdul Kader          Executive Director</p>	<p><b>Milanpur Mohila Samity</b>          Khagrachori          Contact Person: Ms Indira Chakma          Chairperson</p>
<p><b>Rupantar</b>          65 Islampur Road, Santidham More          Khulna - 9100, Phone &amp; Fax: 041-731876          Contact Person: Mr Swapan Guha          Chief Executive</p>	<p><b>Pajuriko</b>          College Para, Khagrachori          Contact Person: Mr Sudhendu Bikash Chakma          Chief Executive</p>
<p><b>CODEC</b>          62/B, Road 3, Chandgaon, Chittagong          Phone: 031-670663, 671405          Contact Person: Dr Khurshid Alam          Executive Director</p>	<p><b>Zabarang Kalyan Samity</b>          Khagrapur, Khagrachori          Contact Person: Mr Shaktipada Tripura          Chairperson</p>
<p><b>Social Association for Rural Advancement (SARA)</b>          23/1, Saradaghose Road, Naumahal (Nandibari)          Post Box: 10, Mymensing - 2200          Phone: 091-54877          Contact Person: Mr Tushar Daring, Director</p>	<p><b>Khagrapur Mohila Kalyan Samity</b>          Khagrapur, Khagrachori          Contact Person: Ms Shefalika Tripura          Chairperson</p>
<p><b>Loka Unnayan Kendra</b>          Kalitola, Dinajpur          Contact Person: Mr Tozammel Haque          Executive Director</p>	<p><b>Jumbi Mohila Kalyan Samity</b>          South Kalindipur, Rangamati          Contact Person: Ms Aparajita Chakma          Chairperson</p>
<p><b>ZIBIKA</b>          Hospital Road, Kurigram          Phone: 0581-891          Contact Person: Mr Manik Chowdhury          Director</p>	<p><b>Garjantoli Mohila Kalyan Samity</b>          Garjantoli, Rangamati          Contact Person: Ms Shagarika Roaja          Chairperson</p>

**Bangladesh Nari Progati Sangha**  
**VII. Consolidated Financial Statement**  
 Period: 01 January to 31 December 2001

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, The Netherlands EED, Germany	721,568	14,459,106	15,180,674	14,003,942	1,176,732
2.	Socio-Economic and Political Empowerment of Women in Bangladesh	HBF, Germany	86,940	15,079,161	15,166,101	14,818,661	347,440
3.	Promoting Responsive Governance and Gender Justice	SDC, Dhaka	00	7,744,354	7,744,354	4,573,678	3,170,676
4.	Empowerment of Women through Greater Access to National Resources	BFF, Dhaka	117,342	603,794	721,136	666,706	54,430
5.	Election Observation from Gender Perspective	TAF, Dhaka	00	19,596,015	19,596,015	19,559,000	37,015
	Total Taka		925,850	57,482,430	58,408,280	53,621,987	4,786,293

## ***Executive Committee Members of BNPS***

<b>Sl.</b>	<b>Name</b>	<b>Portfolio</b>	<b>Personal Background</b>
01.	Ms Rahima Chowdhurani	Chairperson	Social Worker
02.	Ms Nurjahan Murshid	Vice Chairperson	Former MP and Renowned Women Activist
03.	Ms Kazi Madina	Vice Chairperson	Former Professor and Writer
04.	Ms Rebeka Shirin	Treasurer	Business Women
05.	Ms Nasimun Ara Haque Minu	Member	Journalist
06.	Ms Selina Hossain	Member	Renowned Writer
07.	Ms Shaymoli Nasrin Chowdhury	Member	Educationist
08.	Ms Syeda Shamima Siddiki	Member	Social Worker
09.	Ms Laila Hassan	Member	Cultural Activist
10.	Ms Setara Musa	Member	Journalist
11.	Ms Laila Arjumand Banu	Member	Development Activist
12.	Ms Rokeya Kabir	Member Secretary	Freedom Fighter and Activist