

# **Dismantling Supremacy Syndrome: Advancing Equal Citizenship**



## **Biannual Report 2018-2019**



**Bangladesh Nari Progati Sangha (BNPS)**

**Dismantling Supremacy Syndrome: Advancing Equal Citizenship**  
Biannual Report 2018-2019

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## Abbreviation

BftW	Bread for the World
BNPS	Bangladesh Nari Progati Sangha
CBOs	Community Based Organizations
CC	Cluster Committee
CCC	Chittagong City Corporation
CEFM	Child, Early and Forced Marriage
CF	Community Forum
CHT	Chittagong Hill Tracts
CLTS	Community Lead Total Sanitation
CSE	Comprehensive Sexuality Education
CSOs	Civil Society Organizations
DRR	Disaster Risk Reduction
DTE	Directorate of Technical Education
EBP	Evidence Based Programing
EC	Executive Committee
EKN	Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands
GB	General Body
GBV	Gender Based Violence
GWLP	Gender Women Leadership Program
HIV/AIDS	Human Immunodeficiency Virus/ Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
ILO	International Labour Organization
MHM	Menstrual Hygiene Management
MMW	Me & My World
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
MR	Menstrual Regularization
NCTB	National Curriculum and Text Book Board
NRM	Natural Resource Management
PAC/D&C	Premature Atrial contraction/Dilation and Curettage
PCVA	Participatory Capacity and Vulnerability Analysis
PVE	Preventing Violent Extremism
SDLG	Strengthening Democratic Local Governance
SMC	School Management Committee
SMT	Senior Management Team
SRHR	Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights
STI/RTI	Sexually Transmitted Infection/Reproductive Tract Infection
TVET	Technical and Vocational Education and Training
TWL	Transformative Women's Leadership
UBR	Unite for Body Rights
UDMC	Union/Upazila Disaster Management Committee
VAW/G	Violence Against Women/Girls
WACC	World Association for Christian Communication
WATSAN	Water, Sanitation and Hygiene
WPC	Women Peace and Security
YFS	Youth Friendly Services

## Foreword

BNPS is a pioneer and specialized women organization, has been working since 1986 towards a society where supremacy is dismantled and women, men– as well as individuals belonging to minority communities– live in peace, enjoy equal rights and opportunities in a secular democratic environment. To this end, BNPS has been implementing a number of programs/projects in different parts of the country.

The annual report of 2018-2019 offers a glimpse of BNPS programs on Gender Equality, SRHR, Prevention of violent Extremism, Women’s Agency development, Socioeconomic and political Empowerment of women, Health and Rights, Youth Activism and advocacy activities together with achievements, challenges and way forward. The organization works with the government ministries and local government institutions, CBOs, CSOs to raise awareness, establish and support sustainable service delivery for marginalized people specifically for women and Girls.

BNPS programs focus on policy changes, facilitate policy implementation, link right holders with duty bearers through dialogue, bi-lateral meetings, workshops, training and engagement of media has resulted positive result even though more need to be done for sustainable impact.

Year 2018-2019 was challenging for us in terms of program implementation and global funding scenario. However, BNPS’s determination to take forwards the development agenda with persistent support from its partners and other stakeholders worked as driving force to brave through many of the challenges.

From March 2020, COVID-19 pandemic started in Bangladesh, affecting life and livelihood of the poor and marginalized people where women and girls are the first and worse hit of the crisis. BNPS stand beside the people to raise preventive awareness, distribute food and nonfood items, address GBV, work with the local government and other NGOs. It was really challenging to finalize this biannual report in this pandemic situation but our colleagues worked together to accomplish the task. BNPS has been adapting its working strategies maintaining staff and stakeholder’s safety to keep the program activities on going. In the coming years, BNPS needs to provide support to the people to adjust with new normal, rebuild livelihood options, use the learning aroused from COVID-19 to design its activities on gender equality responsive to the changing needs.

We wish to express sincere thanks to BNPS General Committee, Executive Committee, staff, volunteers, all partners at the grassroots and at the national level, concerned government officials, development partners, media and all other stakeholders those have cooperated with us in our effort to achieve the objectives.

We believe BNPS has made significant contribution to realize social, political and economic rights of ethnic and religious minorities, women, and other excluded groups through its work. With the help of our supporters, we expect to continue to improve and develop the work to ensure that we can make our vision a reality.



Rokeya Kabir  
Executive Director

## About BNPS

BNPS is an activist women organization, founded in 1986, working to establish equality for women and marginalized ethnic and religious minority. We strive to develop women agency at the grass-roots and contribute bringing their voices to national, regional and international levels through a variety of program interventions and research. Combining with grassroots experience and research outcome, we organize civic actions for policy reform at the national level.

BNPS follows a bottom-up right based approach linking community for facilitating and mobilizing concerted efforts of different CBOs/CSOs to promote nondiscriminatory principles not only for empowering women but also for transforming disabling environment to an enabling environment so that women, minority and other marginalized groups can enjoy and exercise their constitutional rights.

The congenial working environment, culture of cooperation and team work, non-hierarchical management with activist orientation are unique features and strengths of BNPS. BNPS not only have the expertise and wisdom of working with women towards social, economic and political empowerment but also have the activist tenacity to take firm stand in the face of conservative lobbies, challenge extremist activities for the cause of women rights. Experienced and competent staff committed to BNPS's principles and values, guided by an executive committee composed of scholarly women from multi-disciplinary background, is the strength of BNPS. While interacting with communities, partners and authorities our staff is respectful, trustworthy, and responsible.

BNPS is member of a number of national, regional and international networks working on women issues and has special membership status in the UN Economic and Social Council, ECOSOC. BNPS is registered at the Directorate of Women Affairs (1986) and at the NGO Affairs Bureau (1988) of the government of Bangladesh.

### **Vision:**

A society free from all sorts of discrimination, where nobody is left behind.

### **Mission:**

Engaging women to discover their potential as change agent and driving force for social transformation.

BNPS accomplishes its mission through four focus areas:

- Developing women's agency<sup>1</sup>, we aim at their socioeconomic and political **empowerment**;
- Making **education** gender sensitive, we aim at shaping generation's mindset;
- Advocating and researching for **policy reforms**, we aim at women's emancipation, including ethnic and religious minorities;

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<sup>1</sup>The principle that autonomous beings, agents, are capable of acting by themselves.

- Engaging in **civic actions**, we advance policy reforms and act on gender-based violence and violent extremism.

#### **Strategic goals:**

- Promote women's interactions with local governments aiming at their **empowerment**, ensuring that their needs and rights are respected and increase their participation in local governance.

Promoting women's access to public resources and economic activities for the sustainability of their income-generating activities.

- Contribute to the national discourse on **education** promoting an enabling environment for women's emancipation and a culture of diversity.

Deepen the contacts with the public and private education sectors and network among organizations to encourage SRHR and gender sensitive education.

- Grasp opportunities to support **policy reforms** and participate in the planning process, favoring women's equal rights, emancipation and their participation in public decision-making.

- Organize **civic actions** that aim at strengthening women's movement advocating for their rights and at restraining gender-based violence and violent extremism.

Increase engagement with trade unions to make workers movement gender sensitive.

Building bridges among like-minded organizations to strengthen the movement advancing women's empowerment.

#### **Guiding Principles:**

BNPS believes in the principle of non-discrimination, diversity and secularism.

#### **Stakeholders:**

BNPS works with women, ethnic and religious minority, and youth. Extended stakeholders are women and men in general, CSOs, CBOs, networks, local government institutions and policy makers.

#### **Coverage:**

BNPS has been working directly through implementation of different projects in 11 districts (Dhaka, Chottogram, Mymensingh, Netrakona, Gazipur, Narshingdi, Kishoregonj, Hobigonj, Rangamati, Bandarban, Khagrachari). At the same time, BNPS has been working in other parts of the country through different networks and forums.

## Women's Agency Development

BNPS dreams a society free from all sorts of discrimination where nobody is left behind. Aiming to this, the basic strategy has been engaging women to discover their potential as change agent and become driving force for social transformation. Aiming this, BNPS is working to mobilize grassroots women and develop women agency and contribute bringing their voices from local to national levels to assert their rights.

From its inception, BNPS has been working with marginalized people that includes grassroots women, ethnic and religious minorities to claim their rights aiming at women's emancipation through socioeconomic and political empowerment. Under the facilitation of BNPS, women's own personal experiences have sensitized them to organize themselves against discrimination and injustice they face in family and in the society. Their organization has enabled them developing confidence and skills to face the challenges. BNPS's role is to engage grassroots women in discussion about their status in family and society and make them aware about their rights enshrined in the constitution and human rights instruments.

Over the period BNPS's program strategies crafted from its long-term association with the grassroots women groups in addition to its experience working in different national, regional and international forums analyzing the purview to address issues related to women's liberty. BNPS has been an articulate and influential advocate of gender equality in the society and governance where women will be treated as human being with dignity based on democratic values. BNPS unites with others for fostering civic actions for policy reform and social change.

Women agency development refers to formation of primary groups of women in the villages and 5-6 primary group representatives' forms Cluster Committees (CC). The views of primary groups and CC members are also taken into account for program designing, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation for program outcome and impact assessment to measure changes in their life and livelihood.

On the other hand, Community Forums (CF) are formed with the members of local power corridors such as community leaders, teachers, lawyers, doctors, journalists and the representatives of CC. The CF members understand the practical need and challenges of grassroots women and how they overcome them through this forum. At the same times grassroots women understand the roles and responsibilities of the local power holder. The cross-learning and sensitization activities help the CF members to work together to address the local challenges for dismantling male supremacy. In addition, the CF work as a supportive group to enhance access of grassroots women to the public services.

Overall, BNPS aims at women's emancipation through developing women leadership at all level of the society together with economic, social and political empowerment. BNPS mobilizes grassroots women and organize interactions with local government to ensure women's needs and rights are respected, to claim their rights share at economic spaces and to increase women's participation in local governance. Grassroots organizations are linked with public and private service providers for skill development and financial services, facilitating women's access to economic activities at community level for income-generation.



As of December 2019, BNPS has been working with 660 primary groups, 145 Cluster Committees (CCs) and 35 Community Forums (CFs).

- All primary group, CC and CF had their annual planning meeting to develop plan of action of the year apart from organizing regular monthly, quarterly and half yearly meetings;
- Group leaders visited and had meeting with different service providers and stakeholders. Interacted with public service providers such as departments of social welfare and women & child affairs, health centers, department of agriculture, livestock, fisheries, youth development, school management committees, Union Parishad (UP) and municipality. Particular stakeholders they met were Mayor, Union and Upazila Chairman, UNO, office bearers of various departments, teachers, marriage registrars, religious and social leaders, Ward Commissioners, elected women representatives at the UP and member of standing committees of UP and market committees.
- Organized and actively participated either independently or jointly with local government administration to celebrate various national days including international women's day in the form of rally, human chain, sports, cultural and discussion session.
- Organized public hearing and advocacy sessions with elected representatives, duty bearers and opinion leaders to share their experiences and challenges in accessing public services services.
- Group leaders and members attended training on gender, human rights, leadership and skills development organized by BNPS and other agencies.



*Social mapping workshop of youth groups on VAW/G*

## Socioeconomic and political empowerment of women: The status of enjoying entitlements

*“Poor people are denied dignity and choice. Their words are misinterpreted and used against them. Complain is seen as non-cooperation, protest as aggression, explanation as making excuses”*

M.R, who has practical experience of extreme poverty

Bangladesh government targeted to reduce poverty rate at 18.6 percent by 2020 (as per the 7th Five Years Plan 2016-2020) and want to achieve poverty and hunger related targets of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by reducing poverty rate at 9.7 percent and malnutrition rate less than 10 percent within 2030.

However, COVID-19 pandemic has been affecting lives and livelihoods of the poor specially the women from every spear of life negatively. Unemployment of women, gender based violence, limited or no access to women friendly information and services from the public and non-government entities, negative coping strategies through accessing loans with high interest from traditional money lenders, spending savings whatever small amount they have to avoid hunger, no access to market and widespread discrimination resulted in increased number of women under poverty line, experiencing extreme vulnerability to manage their basic needs of food and health. Child marriage is a main challenges in the country and it is going to be worsened.

To bring efficiency and effectiveness of social safety net programs, Bangladesh follows the life cycle approach for which it has already formulated ‘National Social Security Strategy (NSSS)’. However, many programs formulated to balance economic growth and social wellbeing have not produced expected results. The qualitative assessments shows one side of the coin that, economic growth is increasing, on the other side shows income and gender inequality are rising leaving behind a huge number of people, mostly marginalized and women that means half of the population. Despite increase of GDP, women remain most at risk, exposed to poverty, exploitation and physical and emotional violence. Women are also most affected in case of natural disaster, lack necessary resources for prevention and recovery. They are victims of rights violation due to hostile socio-political conditions. Under this situation, Bangladesh will not be able to meet the SDGs unless specific obstacles faced by women, girls and marginalized communities are addressed.

As an activist women organization supporting human rights and women’s emancipation through women agency building, promoting equal citizenship through dismantling men supremacy and good governance, BNPS gather evidence to highlight their socio-economic and human rights situation and take up them to the attention of the policy-makers, development partners and general public to influence policy formulation, planning and implementation. To achieve the objectives BNPS organizes dialogue with general economic division of Ministry of Planning, Parliamentary Standing Committees, Ministry of Women and Children Affairs; writes articles in newspapers, attends TV talk shows and lobby with individuals of national power corridor.

During this reporting period, BNPS implemented 3 major socio-economic and political empowerment programs through women group and through a number of projects.

**1. Advancing Equality of Women and Marginalized People (AWAM)** development of grass-roots women leadership and youth to facilitate dialogue with duty bearers, enabling them to raise their voices to claim their rights and access to services. The project targeted both the urban and rural context and implemented in the slums of Dhaka City and in the *Haor* (wetland) areas under Netrakona district.

The AWAM program carried out context-specific power analysis to understand gender dimensions, marginalization and gender relations with respect to women leadership in the working areas. Based on findings and BNPS's long standing understanding of power dynamics and how these influence the practices of women leadership has helped to design and implement the program. The advocacy team were active to use evidence from the ground to link grassroots voices with the policy makers for women's rights at the national level. Local level advocacy focuses on engaging men with women to raise their voices to the duty bearers to realize their rights.

The women group leaders in association with the CF members protested 12 sexual harassment incidents and 42 VAW cases. In this reporting period, 4582 women were linked and received support under the government safety net program (VGD, old age allowance, widow allowance, Lactating Mother allowance, Disability allowance). Women are also aware about and access to the non-government services in their respective areas.

Activist women leaders have taken part in different social issues to resolving them and protesting violence. The women groups took part in 149 arbitrations of family disputes and violence to ensure justice for the victims.

**2. Promoting Rights through Mobilization and Empowerment (PRiME)** promotes activism of grass-roots women and youth through improved conceptual clarity on gender equality, better analytical and negotiation skills and leadership capacity to gain equal space like men in the society, influencing local policy makers and duty bearers for better accountability. Besides Chattogram City, Patiya and Sandwip areas this project also implemented in Chittagong Hill Tracts targeting ethnic and religious minorities aiming to strengthen capacity of indigenous organization and traditional leaders to take action on women empowerment through making customary law gender sensitive. Support indigenous women and women led organizations to form women activist forum advocating for gender equality, ending VAWG and increasing women's participation at the local government and administration

Headman and Karbaris are men dominated positions in traditional structure in Chittagong hill tracks. BNPS together with PNGOs work with the (traditional) king and other leaders of the hill districts to accommodate women with the structure so that women voices can be heard to address their needs effectively. As a result, breaking the deep rooted structural and cultural and traditional norms, women are coming to the positions of Headman and Karbari and the ethnic community are keeping trust on them.

BNPS has been carrying out training for income generating activities, linking women with financial service providers to get access to micro loan and encouraging them to operate their own income earning activities. As a result, average monthly income of women who took part in the Income-Generating Activities has increased by 15%.

## Suma got back to school

Suma Akter, a 13 years old girl and a student of class seven from Moinpur village under Netrakona district. Her father is a local carpenter, earn a little that is insufficient to run a



family of seven. Suma is the second born of the five children in the family went to school with a dream to complete higher level of study but her father faced challenges to manage the cost of her education. He decided to married off Suma, accordingly the groom's family from neighboring Uluati village came to visit Suma's home and fixed the date of the ceremony. Suma denied to get married rather wanted to go to school. Her mother was initially agreed to married her off but when she noticed Suma is not ready to marry than she supported Suma. She spoke to Suma's father

but he was not ready to accept her suggestion rather asked Suma to stop schooling. By this time Community Cluster member of Moinour heard the message and the president of the cluster alone with a number of members mobilized youth members to talk to Suma's father to stop the marriage. They talked to Suma's father Nizamuddin but he denied to change his decision. Later on, the members of the cluster and youth group said if Nizamuddin does not listen to them they will inform the local administration including police to stop the marriage. Finally, Nizamuddin agreed on to cancel the marriage. Suma was happy, she said, I know, my father was upset but I am happy to come back to school and thankful to the cluster members and youth group for their support. Suma is now a student of class nine.

Cluster committee and community forum members are engaged with project activities, change makers are linked with different platforms and with the local government officials and the youth are engaged with taking action against GBV, sexual harassment, child marriage, drug abuse. A midterm evaluation is planned for this project in 2020 to understand the effectiveness, challenges and gaps to improve the program.

Sl.	Indicators	Achievements		
		2018	2019	Total
1.	Community Based Organization (CBO) formed	36	0	36
2.	Resilience training provided to women	451	25	476
3.	Set up market place for women only	2	0	2
4.	Women sold their products in women only market	207	234	441
5.	Linked up women entrepreneurs with market	508	0	508
6.	Set up food bank	36	0	36
7.	Women got membership of school, temple and community clinic management committees	67	68	135
8.	Resolved family conflict	244	15	359
9.	VAW/G cases handled	116	123	239
10.	Addressed sexual harassment cases	10	2	12
11.	Ensured fair wage of women workers	120	35	155
12.	Drop out children re-admitted to schools	213	32	245
13.	Disability inclusion (training, meeting)	0	10	10

Following social mapping process BNPS formed CBOs in the communities with 4,062 households in two Unions of Mohangonj Upazila. The CBO members received appropriate services to improve their coping strategies during disaster. Resilience training received by women to cope with natural hazards, village protection wall constructed in *Haor* with the support of Union and Upazila Parishad and set up two market places only for women to create space for women producers to sale their products. Moreover, CBOs introduced 'Food Bank' where the women saved 2016 kgs of rice and mobilized savings of BDT. 10,80,560 in the bank to address emergency needs during natural calamities.

BNPS worked on to linking grass-roots women entrepreneurs with the market committees. Women members included in the school management committee (SMC), Temple management committee, ward development committee and community clinic management committee. Ten elected women in the local government election have supported agency members to get access to duty bearers and mobilize services. Women and youth groups jointly protected child marriages and cases on VAWG, resolved huge number of family conflict, sexual harassment cases and cases on fair wage for women workers and worked on re-admitting dropped out children into the formal schools. BNPS encouraged cluster committees and they planned for 83 activities of community concerns.

A total of 280 youth received training to build capacity contributing to create an enabling environment for women's and girls' empowerment and increase participation in society. Eight interested youths enrolled themselves into six months long training course on Clearing & Forwarding of Shipments from the Department of Youths.

BNPS reached out to 30 trade unions, aiming at making them more gender sensitive, especially, related to safer workplace for women workers and minimum wages for decent living.

BNPS organized national and local level dialogues addressing issues of VAWG, explicitly harassment of school girls, and sensitizing and mobilizing CSOs on gender issues of the customary laws. In presence of two Circle Chiefs (Raja), the Ministry of CHT and relevant authorities a national consultation organized where relevant authorities committed to involve more women in the customary system. Further, Circle Chiefs started filling up vacant positions of karbaris by women, already appointed 35 indigenous women as Karbari (traditional administration), to improve women's participation in traditional system. Besides, a special committee had been formed at Bandarban to review the customary law for making it gender sensitive.

**Sensitization workshops on 'Haor Master Plan' at UP, Upazila and District Level:** Bangladesh Government under the leadership of Ministry of Water Resources and Bangladesh *Haor* and Wetland Development Board developed a Master Plan of *Haor* Area in 2012. The 20-year Master Plan is a framework, which suppose be implemented in short, medium- and long-term basis. This 'integrated development plan' spells out the means for optimizing available resources of the area for future development by considering all relevant social and environmental impact.

During the meeting of the RECALL Project with DC and UNO, it was felt that the Master Plan of *Haor* Area, 2012 was not well-known to the local government officials. Upon request from DC, BNPS organized a learning sharing workshop to share the Master Plan of *Haor* Area, attended by Upazila level government officials, NGOs in Netrakona district, 6 UP Chairman, Upazila Vice Chairman, Social Welfare Officer, Education Officer, representative of Press Club and CBO leaders.

## Munni, standing against the torture

Munni is a member of Poschim Maloni group under Netrakona Pouroshova, she is 22 years old. Due to lack of financial solvency of her family she did not continue her study after class 5. She was married off at the age of 17 years. After few days of marriage her husband and father in law pressurized her to bring dowry from her father and started physical and mental torture. Her husband already lost huge sum of money to go to Oman as he had to come back to the country because of fake job offer got from the agent.

When harsh behavior and physical torture became regular, Munni tried to make her husband understand about the poor state of economic solvency of her father and requested not to torture but her appeal went in veil. Beside her husband, her father and mother in laws also jointly tortured her. By this time Munni got pregnant and gave birth to a baby boy. She thought her husband might change now by looking at the baby but reality was different. Munni became physically and mentally weak day by day due to torture. She could not understand what should she do but eventually she had to get back to her father's home.



Her husband filed a case against Munni's father narrating that his father in law locked up his wife. After getting the legal notice from the court Munni's parents were disappointed and they requested suggestions from BNPS organized cluster group. Munni's parents along with cluster leader visited BNPS office for assistance. Instantly respective staff of BNPS communicated with women affairs office of Netrakona and asked for assistance. After listening, women affairs office communicated with Munni's husband and his parents but they did not respond positively. When women affairs office

understood that they were not interested for mutual solution, they contacted district legal aid office to file a case at the court. Legal aid office filed a case under violence against women and children act and sent legal notice to her father in law. After getting the legal notice Munni's father in law came to her father's home along with respective counselor to minimize the issue. The counselor suggested both the families to go to district legal office to mutually withdraw the case. Legal aid office arranged a meeting and Munni's husband accepted to withdraw the fake case against Munni's father, mother and Munni. Beside this her father in law promised to provide some gold ornaments and a piece of land to Munni and brought her back to their home. After withdrawing the case Munni's husband promised, he will never torture his wife and continue living happily.

**3. Resilience through Economic Empowerment, Climate Adaptation, Livelihood and Leadership (REE-CALL 2021)** focuses on coping mechanism of women and men at risk of disaster and climate change in the *Haor* areas of Netrakona district. The objectives are to strengthen locally formed CBOs and local government institutions to anticipate possible impact of climate change, to create sustainable income and employment options for women and men at risk and to address the legal framework to ensure rights and access to services, natural resources and markets.



*Duck cultivation by women*



*Protecting wave erosion by community initiatives*

In this reporting period, the major planned activities of the program were:

1. Transformative leadership training and facilitation for development of annual plan;
2. Dialogues, consultations with government departments & institutions to link up for claiming services;
3. Public hearing sessions with the institutions for removing barriers in accessing public services;
4. Capacity building of youth volunteers to work in support of women groups;
5. Skills and business development training for women for income generation and market extension;
6. Social mapping processes for CBOs capacity enhancement to prepare coping plans and mobilizing local resources and access to appropriate services to improve their coping strategies during disaster.

Sl.	Indicators	Achievements		
		2018	2019	Total
1.	Women received safety net support	2253	2329	4582
2.	Secured birth certificate	322	115	437
3.	Women received skill training from the government agency	280	452	732
4.	Women engaged with income generating activities (IGA)	611	510	1121
5.	Increased of income of group members	12%	18%	15% (Average)
6.	Received Joyeeta award	3	1	4
7.	Women worked outside homes due to BNPS intervention	543	549	1092
8.	Women got involve with family level decision making	1176	1419	2595
9.	Women involved with social issues	1339	1732	3071
10.	Women linked with financial institution	2293	2998	5291
11.	Community Forum (CF) and members active on lobbying with the local government	218	248	466
12.	Social issues handled by the CFs and youth groups	64	85	149

Women group members received safety-net program support and birth certificates from LGIs. Further, women received skills training from the Department of Youth Development and Women Affair, trained women actively engaged themselves with income generating activities. Considering outstanding entrepreneurship skill and generating employment for others, BNPS group members awarded “Joyeeta” in three categories by the government. Eight consultation with duty bearers resulted to setup three IPM *Krishak Math* School (Agriculture Field School) where women group members get adequate information and knowledge about different techniques on farming. Women group members participated in development fairs arranged by district authority. They also get access to free vaccination for poultry and livestock.

## **Health and Rights**

Health as a human right creates legal obligation on states to ensure that health policy and programs must prioritize the needs of those furthest behind towards greater equity, a principle that has been echoed in the recently adopted 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and Universal Health Coverage. The right to health, as with other rights, includes both freedoms and entitlements. Freedoms include the right to control own health and body (for example, sexual and reproductive rights) and to be free from interference (for example, free from torture and non-consensual medical treatment and experimentation). Entitlements include the right to a system of health protection that gives everyone an equal opportunity to enjoy the highest level of health services.

Structural improvement is the first step for improving basic health. The national constitution of Bangladesh committed for ensuring access to basic health care (Article 15 & 18).

According to Universal Declaration on Human Rights, Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR) are basic human rights. Bangladesh is committed to meet basic human rights, including SRHR by ratifying several international instruments, such as Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD). However, long way to go to achieve SRHR for all the citizens in Bangladesh.

Since inception, BNPS has been working on gender and women rights to eliminate all forms of discriminations from women’s life. To ensure rights; BNPS believes that women empowerment is important to increase decision making power. BNPS observed, if people are well informed about right or wrong then they can decide what to do. There was a time when SRHR and MH were considered as private issue, not to be discussed in public. Situation have changed in our project areas and now SRHR and MH issues can be discussed in family, school and at the community. Stigma, taboos and myths around SRHR and MH are reducing gradually. Real life example/fact-based information helps parents, teachers and also community people to understand and realize the importance of the issue. It actually helps to increase knowledge on MH and they understand that it is not related with social stigma or taboo rather it is absolutely natural thing.



*“The SRHR information is helping us to break the taboos and myths regarding the issue which actually increasing closeness of our relationship among mother and daughter.”*

Fatema Akhter, a house wife from BNPS working area

In this reporting period, BNPS has implemented several projects on health and rights issues. The projects are **RITU, Unite for Body Rights (UBR) and MHM**, all these projects are related to sexual and reproductive health and rights. UBR is working towards a healthy society where all girls and boys are able to make safe and informed decisions on SRHR irrespective of their ethnic, cultural and religious background. The aim of RITU project is to improve menstrual health (MH) of girls, to increase their social and economic participation and thereby both directly and indirectly improve their health and wellbeing. On the other hand, AmplifyChange funded MHM project are being implemented through 20 member organizations of MH Platform to strengthen their capacity and engagement of NGOs, CBOs, private sector and the government departments in order to ensure improved menstrual health for girls and women in Bangladesh.

Sl.	Indicators	Achievements		
		2018	2019	Total
1.	STI/RTI services, psychological support, family planning referral, legal and counselling services to adolescents and parents	30,000	44,326	74326
2.	Training provided to improve Knowledge on MMW/SRHR among the secondary school students	11,417	7500	18917 (G-9680, B-9237)
3.	MMW (Comprehensive Sexuality Education) to out of school adolescents	793	797	1590
4.	Developed MH and SRHR & counseling facilitation skill of secondary and primary school teachers	1120	96	1216 (F-411, M-805)
5.	SRHR knowledge & facilitation skills improved of youth at the community level	1600	440	2040 (G-1020, B-1020)
6.	Young people outside of school received information on SRHR issues	0	11423	11423 (F-6853, M-4569)
7.	Volunteers worked on UBR at community level	40	40	40 (F-20, M-20)
8.	Set up SRHR corner at schools	30	30	30
9.	Set up YFS corners in govt. health facilities	0	6	6
10.	Health Camp in secondary schools and madrasas & community level	200	100	300
11.	Community leaders and parents have increased awareness on SRHR	0	3881	3881 (F-2353, M-1376)
12.	Sensitization meeting with government officials	0	57	57 (F-22, M-35)
13.	Participants in joint events on various National Day Celebrations with Government Medical and Family Planning Offices	2338	2043	4381
14.	MH related WASH facilities set up in schools	60	0	60
15.	Community people worked as change agent on SRHR	9230	0	9230 (F-4615, M-4615)
16.	Sanitary Napkin distributed	4867	0	4867
17.	Number of schools BNPS worked with	134	134	134

18.	Schools taught MHM in the classrooms	66	66	66
19.	Schools where sexual harassment was stopped	12	26	38

In this reporting period, BNPS provided services to adolescents and their parents which includes liking to get STI/RTI treatment, psychosocial support, family planning services, PAC services, selected pathology services, referral for legal counseling (GBV related) and distributed sanitary pad.

### **At last Jaynab got rid from her pain**

This is the story of a family who lives in a village Ranakao, under Kalmakanda sub district. The village was selected by the Ritu project as Clean village to conduct community sessions. Nuruzzaman Shekh and Jaynab Akter live in the Ranakao community. Nuruzzaman Shekh is a farmer and Jaynab Akter works at a rice mill as day labor.



Before starting community session, the Ritu team informed the parents about the session topics through the community leaders aiming to avoid any misunderstanding as the issue is very sensitive and many parents might not like to discuss menstrual issues openly. Nuruzzaman Shekh and Jaynab Akter family was completely against to attend any meeting where according to them, an indecent and profane topic like “Menstruation” would be discussed. On the session day, when the Ritu facilitators went to the community, they found this family was very reluctant to attend the session.

It was a rainy day and the family could not go out for their daily work. This was the scope and the Ritu team took some time, they talked to them and requested them just to watch the session. As the mothers’ session was the first session, so Jaynab Akter became agree to join. The Ritu team started their facilitation with some fact-based information sharing. Surprisingly, when the discussion on hazardous part of unhygienic practice and its effect during menstruation was about to end, the facilitator found Jaynab Akter was crying. When they asked her the reason, she said having regular pain in her abdominal part. It was an unexpected but not shocking for the Ritu team (as they have knowledge on the hygienic practice and health care sense of the village women in Bangladesh). The team spent some time with her to talk about the problem and referred her to BNPS-Barhatta office to get free consultation from a doctor.

After some days, Jaynab Akter came to BNPS-Barhatta office; the doctor suspected, she has infection in her uterus. The doctor referred her to Netrakona Sadar hospital with a reference slip so that she can get treatment with minimum fee. Now she is completely cured and the family is grateful to BNPS. Later on, this family helped BNPS team in every activity in the Ranakao community.

In 2018 secondary school students received MMW/SRHR session where knowledge and skills on SRHR increased and adolescents are empowered to take decision by their own regarding sexual health. Teachers trained on MH and SRHR facilitation skills and 34, 835 school girls (16997) and boys (17838) participated in interactive MHM sessions, which enhanced their knowledge

regarding menstrual health. At the community level adolescents attended SRHR sessions facilitated by community educators. Youth organizers worked as volunteers under UBR project. Secondary schools/madrassa are covered by RITU and UBR program through different interventions; like health camp, SRHR session, exhibition, day observation and schools provided space for youth corner where SRHR related books and journal are displayed. Intervention schools have established MH friendly WASH facilities.

During 2018-2019, community people received awareness sessions on SRHR to make community understand the importance of adolescents' health and they now become active player for



creating enabling environment in the society. BNPS distributed sanitary napkins among the young women through youth friendly service centers and health camps in schools and communities.

On the other hand, **AmplifyChange funded project** work with MH platform where NGOs are involved and provided capacity building training to the MH platform member organizations. Platform member organizations conducted MH awareness session at the community level reaching to the parents and community leaders. In addition, BNPS also distributed SBCC materials, leaflets and posters in project areas during different day observation and other events. BNPS effort to enhance capacity of MH platform members help them to carry out local level advocacy for mobilizing support from government institutions to sustain their efforts.

Sl.	Indicators	Achievements		
		2018	2019	Total
1.	Worked with MH platform of NGOs	20	20	40
2.	Trained platform NGO staff	60	-	60
3.	District covered by MHM Platform members	17	19	19
4.	Provided orientation to community people	6000		6000
5.	SBCC materials and leaflet developed and distributed	12,000	0	12,000
6.	Arranged advocacy meeting with local government authority in 18 districts	0	80	80
7.	Developed documentary on MH issue	0	2	2
8.	Conduct research on MHM	0	2	2
9.	Publication on MHM	0	4	4
10.	Organized round table discussion with government officials and CSO representatives	0	2	2
11.	Provided orientation on MHM handbook to the 20 MHM platform member organizations	0	1	1

All these projects also work with different government institutions on changing policies and regulations as well as implementing existing laws relating to health and rights. BNPS has been carrying out advocacy with the Ministry of Education for inclusion of more descriptive SRHR topic including Menstrual Hygiene in text-book and for the inclusion of CSE in the Teacher Training manual for improving effective classroom session. Comprehensive Sexuality Education (CSE) helps students to protect VAW/G, early/child and forced marriage.

In the health sector, we are advocating with Ministry of Health and Family Welfare to implement improved youth friendly SRHR Services at the government health centers. As an outcome of the project, young people have become aware about the necessity of such services and accessing SRHR services from the government health centers which help them to reduce sexual and reproductive health related infection and diseases.

BNPS has also advocated with the Ministry of Finance for increasing budgetary allocation on sanitation and to improve WASH facilities at schools. At the same time, BNPS also lobbied with business sector to produce low cost sanitary products as part of corporate social responsibilities ensuring comfort and quality.

*"We have to sustain this initiative through government support otherwise it will be difficult to achieve targets of SDG goals 3 and 5."*

Bajlur Rahman, UP member, Netrakona

## Youth Activism

Youth involvement in development initiatives is now getting lot of priorities. The UN system encourages countries globally to invest public resources in children and youth and extending support to the government in formulating and implementing appropriate policies.

Today, many efforts still need to be taken towards a society where elimination of violence against women. Towards such efforts, in partnership with UN agencies, BNPS continue to contribute in the global initiative for revitalizing the principle of non-violence against women and promoting gender equality amongst young people. Engaging youths would also be an opportunity to consider how to accelerate the Agenda 2030, building momentum for achieving Sustainable Development Goals, especially goal number 5: Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls; and goal number 4: Ensure inclusive and quality education for all and promote lifelong learning. BNPS involve young women and men in its programs/projects to unveil their true potential and participate in decision-making processes to eliminate violence against women.

BNPS emphasizes changing mind-set and capacity building of young people towards gender equality and positive changes in the society. Students are mobilized as activist in schools and universities and youth are mobilized at the communities through 82 institutional and community groups.

Of the total ongoing programs, almost all the programs are dedicated to engaging youth, some has component on youth engagement where some are distinctly youth focused. Youth attending schools and universities and youth at the community level are engaged with SRHR, PVE and transformative leadership development to prevent GBV.

In 2018-2019, 50,000 adolescent and youth (10-25 years) from schools, universities and the communities got involve with different activities of BNPS and received a number of capacity building support for combating religious and gender-based discrimination, promoting pluralistic mindsets and valuing diversity and preventing VAW/G in the society through inclusion and harmony. Moreover, BNPS has been taking the agenda of addressing religious supremacy over constitution through dialogue, round table discussion, and TV talk show with the policy makers.

Sl.	Indicators	Achievement		
		2018	2019	Total
1.	Number of public universities covered	5	5	5
2.	Student trained on leadership to promote diversity, peace and tolerance	125	0	125 (F-61, M-64)
3.	Discourse sessions provided on preventing violent extremism	10	0	10
4.	Provided orientation to the university student on Preventing Violent Extremism	2484	0	2484 (F-1183, M-1301)
5.	Formed partnership with women headed CSOs	21	0	21
6.	Partner CSOs organized youth group to prevent terrorism and violent extremism and prevent child marriage	42	0	42
7.	Involved local leaders and influential people through 18 community forum meetings	0	360	360
8.	Engaged folk artists and street theatre activists and performed folk song and street theatre shows	0	60	60
9.	Raised awareness of community people through 54 folk song and street theatre shows	0	10000	10000
10.	Aware people through TV talk show on promoting diversity, peace, tolerance and preventing violent extremism	0	3000	3000
11.	Aware people through round-table discussion on promoting diversity, peace, tolerance and preventing violent extremism	0	1000	1000

**To promote diversity, peace and tolerance to counter violent religious extremism**, BNPS has worked with public universities (Dhaka University, Chattogram University, Jahangirnagar University, Jagannath University and Jatiya Kabi Kazi Nazrul Islam University) to instill principles of diversity, peace and prosperity. The university student received leadership training on 'promoting values of diversity, peace and tolerance and resisting violent extremism. BNPS organized 2 discourse sessions on PVE in each university, where university student got orientation on the crucial issues and discuss about their roles and responsibilities.

BNPS developed a network of women organizations to de-radicalization and social cohesion in 21 districts, one organization from each district, through them has mobilized youth groups for preventing terrorism and violent extremism. Young people are also playing active role in preventing child marriage as well. BNPS developed capacity of network organizations who in turn conducted awareness session in the communities. BNPS act as secretariat of networks and organized 2 consultation workshops at the national level with key government institutions, academics, CSOs and development partners.

**Creating Spaces to Take Action on Violence Against Women and Girls:** The aim of the project was to reduce violence against women and girls (VAW/G) and stop child/ Early and Forced Marriage (CEFM) implemented through three strategic pillars: i) Engaging key community actors to support and promote positive gender norms; ii) Supporting women and girls who have experienced violence; iii) Building knowledge and capacity of institutions and alliances to influence change. In the reporting period, local leaders, UP chairman/member, religious leader, teachers, lawyers, journalists, *Kazi* (marriage registrar), local/political leader youth members attended exchange visit to expose them to services rendered/required to victims by other organizations.



*The rally was a part of 16 days campaign*

Community youths provided skills training on how to deal with VAW/G cases and women and girls provided with Leadership and Human Rights training to play supportive roles in the community for preventing VAW/G and CEFM. Ten youth groups formed and the members were trained to work as change agent at communities to reduce CEFM and VAW/G. They stopped early marriages through using hotline number of local government official (UNO) and Union Parishad and referred VAW/G cases to legal aid offices.

Sl.	Indicators	Achievement		
		2018	2019	Total
1.	Exposed local leaders on the problems of VAW/G and services required	27	23	50
2.	Provided skill training to the youth	121	0	121 (F-77, M-44)
3.	Provided leadership and human rights training to social leaders	131	54	185 (F-147, M-38)
4.	Developed young change agent	300	300	300 (F-150, M-150)
5.	Change agent stopped early marriage	63	59	122
6.	Change agent handled VAWG cases	5	6	11

The **Power of Self Defence and Motivation to Prevent VAW/G** project aimed to prevent VAW/G, working with 10 secondary schools provided self-defence (Martial Arts Training) skills to 400 girls, established 10 knowledge centres and trained 20 teachers on counselling services at schools, formed youth group uniting girls and boys both from school and out of school under each school to work at the community level to prevent VAW/G.

Under Advancing Equality of Women and Marginalized People (AWAM) and Promoting Rights through Mobilization and Empowerment (PRiME) programs, BNPS has also been working with



*Participants of capacity building workshop for youth club*

secondary schools to develop 200 youth as change agent to eliminate VAW/G.

The multi-country project (Bangladesh, Indonesia and Pakistan), **I am One, I am Many:** The project aimed to combat discrimination on the basis of religious identities and beliefs through engaging youth for addressing religious and gender based discrimination,

promoting pluralistic mindsets and valuing diversity in the society through inclusion and harmony. Youth are oriented and trained to work with CSOs, CBOs, communities and institutions to promote diversity and inclusion and prevent discriminatory laws by generating positive public opinion.

Through these supports and involvement of young people, they have started playing active role in the society and getting involve with decision making processes.

*"I'll get married off once I complete my study and stand on my own income"*

Jhumur, a young entrepreneur

## New Projects Started in 2019

### Our Lives, Our Health, Our Futures

BNPS started this five-year project from January 2019 to enable and support young women and adolescent girls from indigenous groups in CHT districts (Bandarban, Rangamati and Khagrachari) to transition into adult womanhood with dignity and sexual autonomy, without violence, coercion and/or discrimination. The specific objectives of this initiative are: 1) Local CSOs have strengthened their technical, methodological, financial and administrative capacity to effectively respond to the SRHR needs of young women and adolescent girls and foster their rights to live free from violence, coercion and discrimination; and 2) Young women and adolescent girls from indigenous communities are empowered to make free and informed decisions about SRHR, live free from violence and discrimination. Under this project, BNPS has been providing support to 10 local CSOs led by indigenous people to strengthen their capacity to address the needs and rights of young women and adolescent girls in relation to SRHR and GBV.



*Launching event held in Rangamati*

Sl.	Indicators	Achievement in 2019
1.	Capacity building of local CSOs on project proposal development	24
2.	Involved local CSOs of CHT as implementing partner	10
3.	Trained local CSO staffs on financial management, program management and administrative practices	20 (F-4, M-16)
4.	Trained local CSO staffs on SRHR-GBV	10 (F-9, M-1)
5.	Built capacity of local CSO staffs on Impact-oriented and Women Centered Programming	13 (F-2, M-11)
6.	Trained local CSO staffs on M&E Framework and Tools	10 (F-2, M-8)
7.	Involved relevant stakeholders at national and at the CHT through launching & inception event and discussion meetings	369 (F-101, M-268)
8.	Capacity building of local CSO staffs on networking and communication	20 (F-6, M-14)



## Upholding Rights of Minority

Upholding Rights of Minorities beyond Borders – South Asia (URBB) is a 3 years long multi-country (Bangladesh, India, Nepal and Sri Lanka) project which has started in Bangladesh from May 2019.

The overall objective of the project is to promote, enhance and sustain civil society action in South Asia reinforcing principles of pluralism and multi-culturalism respecting freedom of religion and belief based on principles of dignity, equality, non-discrimination and democratic rights. It has been working on reinforcing capacities and skills of organizations and networks in combating discrimination, intolerance and violence on the grounds of religion and belief and producing status report of religious minorities.



*Press Conference for dissemination of the finding of Fact Finding Mission*

Till December 2019 a task force composed of HRDs and prominent personalities in this field formed Advisory Team and have regular meetings. A fact-finding mission went at the village of repressed Kora minority community at Birol Upazila of Dinajpur District followed by a press conference at Dinajpur Press Club. Under this project, it has prepared “Annual Report Card on minority situation in Bangladesh”. As the major objective of the project is to reinforce capacity of Human Rights Defenders (HRDs), the project developed a master trainer’s training curriculum and six different training manuals for the same number of groups (university students, journalists, NGO workers, professionals of judiciary, police and political activists). Training courses will be organized in the following years.

Sl.	Indicators	Achievement in 2019
1.	Formation and meeting of the Task Force	4
2.	Operate Fact Finding Mission	1
3.	Organize press conference	1
4.	Annual Report Card Preparation	1
5.	Developed Master trainer’s Training Curriculum	1
6.	Prepared Training Manuals	6

## Improve Opportunities for Workers Mobility

In September 2019, BNPS started a new initiative to provide support to the work-age women those want to have overseas employment. The project is called “Free Movement of Women: Improving Opportunities for Workers Mobility”, supported by International Labor Organization (ILO) and the working areas are Kaliakoir of Gazipur; Shilmandhi and Meherpara of Norshindi; Sadar upazila of Kishoreganj; Sadar upazila and Madhobpur of Habiganj and Chattogram EPZ.



*Court yard meeting*

The project intends to provide support directly to 6000 women of 18-35 years old so that they can take informed decision about migration. The project has set up community-based women and girls centers, called ‘*Narider Adda*’, in six areas from where work-age women and girls get information regarding jobs, awareness and education on safe migration, social protection, arbitration process, rights and freedom issues, rules & regulations under migration and employment laws. These centers are being used as recreational center for work-age women and girls to have safe space for themselves to share their aspirations, extending support to women factory workers, to report sexual harassment, and engaging with employers/owners of the factories to mitigate negative consequences.

Sl.	Indicators	Achievement in 2019
1.	Door to door data collection from women of six Upazila	2334 (F)
2.	Attended in 45 door to door & 11 court yard meeting	3000 (F)
3.	Participants at project orientation at central level	27 (F-22, M-5)
4.	Consultation meeting with relevant stakeholders in Gazipur Sadar & Kaliakoir Upazila	79 (F-46, M-33)
5.	Number of staff coordination meeting held	18
6.	Attendance at women led sessions	213 (F)

## National Discourse and Advocacy

### Policy Dialogue and Advocacy

#### Contribution of Policies for the Development and Empowerment of Women and Way-out

A national seminar organised on 3rd June 2018 based on a study ‘Policy and Legislation on women development and empowerment’ sponsored by BNPS conducted by Professor Dr. Salahuddin M Aminuzzaman where the findings were presented. The panel discussants were Dr. Sayma Hoque Bidisha, Dhaka University, Professor Shormind Nilormi, Jahangirnagar University, Economist and Researcher Dr. Pratima Paul-Majumder, Dr. Naznin Ahmed of BIDS. Apart from civil society representatives’ other speakers were Ms Najma Mobarak, Joint Secretary of Ministry of finance, Mr. Pradip Kumar Mahottom, Deputy Chief of Planning Commission, Ms Ayesha Siddiqui Nargis, Women Affairs Officer, Dhaka District and Ms Fatema Akhter Dolly, Women Councilor, Dhaka South City Corporation. Speakers and discussants opined for necessary policy reform to improve the status of women in the society.

#### National Consultation on Women’s Participation in Customary Institutes of CHT held

Bangladesh Nari Progati Sangha (BNPS), Kapaeeng Foundation, Bangladesh Adibasi Nari Network, Women Headman-Karbari Network and CHT Women Activist Forum jointly organized the consultation on “Participation of Indigenous Women in Customary Institutions of CHT: Current Status and Way Forward” on 22nd June 2018.



Total 98 participants from different sectors like leaders of customary institutions, representatives of National Human Rights Commission of Bangladesh (NHRCB) and the Ministry of Chittagong Hill Tracts, Headman-Karbaris, indigenous leaders and women activists attended the consultation. Ms. Rama Rani Roy, Additional Secretary of the Ministry of Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) attended as guest of honor. Member of NHRCB Ms. Banchita Chakma, Professor of Anthropology Department of Jahangirnagar University Dr. Ainoon Naher and Former Member of

NHRCB Ms. Nirupa Dewan were present as panel discussants. King Saching Pru Chowdhury, the Mong Circle Chief was the special guest and Raja Barrister Debashish Roy, the Chakma Circle Chief was the chief guest. This consultation moderated by freedom fighter and women activist Rokeya Kabir, the Executive Director of BNPS while Advocate Sushmita Chakma presented the keynote paper. Speakers said that all traditional laws must be updated. More women need to be appointed in Headman and Karbari positions and marriage registration should be introduced. Circle Chiefs to send the proposals with relevant information to the Ministry for reformation of the policy.

### **Consultative Meeting: Importance of Menstrual Health Education**

BNPS has assisted UBR alliance partners and secretariat to organize different event of advocacy with National Curriculum and Textbook Board (NCTB) and Teachers Training Centre (TTC), Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS) and Directorate General of Family Planning (DGFP) along with different networks like NEARS, MHM Platform, INGOs and UN bodies to push the advocacy agenda of inclusion SRHR and MHM with the school curriculum. BNPS has been lobbying with the Ministry of Education and Directorate of Secondary and Higher Education (DSHE) to approve SRM for all schools and include in teachers guide book.



To that end, BNPS organized national level consultative meeting on Importance of Menstrual Health Education. The Ministry of Education, TTC, and NCTB's national and INGO representatives attended the event. Dr. Golam Faruk, DG, Directorate of Secondary and Higher Education was the chief guest chaired by Ms. Rokeya Kabir, the Executive Director of BNPS and the Chairperson of MHM platform. Other guests were Mr. Iqbal Hossain, Education Specialist, UNICEF; Ms. Sharmin Fahad Ubaid, Program Coordinator, UBR Alliance; Mr. Mahfooz Ali, Specialist, NCTB; Professor Kaniz Syeda Binte Sabah, Principal, Teachers Training College (TTC) and Ms. Mushfiqua Zaman Satiar, Senior Policy Adviser, SRHR and Gender, Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands (EKN) and Ms. Mahbuba Haque Kumkum, Program Manager, Simavi. The speakers recommended to include SRHR, Gender and Menstrual Health topic not only for girls, but also for the boys as a part of improving knowledge about human body. As such, it should be included in relevant textbooks with appropriate teacher's manual. BNPS published two position papers: 1. MH and whole school approach and 2. Inclusion of MH in National Textbook and Teachers

Training Curriculum. BNPS also produced a policy brief to incorporate MH issues in textbook and to ensure health and hygiene management at educational institutions with safety and dignity.

### **CSOs response to the UNSCR 1325 in bringing recommendations to the development of NAP WPS in Bangladesh**

Under the UN Women supported project 'Empowered Women, Peaceful Communities' BNPS with the support of local women organization and CSO partners organized 29 consultations (21 at district level, 7 at divisional level and 1 at national level) on UN Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1325 that resulted bringing more than 150 grassroots recommendations about Women' rights, Peace and Security (WPS) and Violent Extremism (VE), which was submitted to the core committee of National Action Plan (NAP) of WPS. Around 900 participants including representatives of CSOs, women organizations, teachers, student, housewives, lawyers, cultural activists, journalist, civil society members, elected representatives and government officials of relevant departments attended the event.



Dr. Shirin Sharmin Choudhury, Honorable Speaker of Bangladesh Parliament was the Chief Guest at the national consultation. Ms. Sanjida Khanam, Member of the Parliament, Ms. Shoko Ishikawa, Country Representative of UN Women Bangladesh and Prof. Meghna Guhathakurta, Member of Human Rights Commission, Bangladesh and the lead consultant for the development of the National Action Plan WPS were present as special guests. Chief Guest and Special Guest conveyed sincere thanks to the grassroots communities particularly women for bringing quality and meaningful recommendations and expected that the core committee of NAP would consider it with special care.

### **A National Women Network Launched to Address the Need of Women, Peace and Security in Bangladesh**

BNPS facilitated to form a national women network called 'Women for Peace, Bangladesh' involving 21 women organizations from 21 districts in Bangladesh with a view to develop joint agenda and advocacy strategies to influence government organizations working on counter-

radicalization and counter-terrorism particularly on WPS. The network organized a press conference at Dhaka and shared concerns and voices in connection with consolidated recommendations of districts, divisional and national level workshops on WPS and PVE among the representatives of print and electronic media.



### Civic Action

BNPS from its inception has been building bridges between like-minded organizations to strengthen national engagement for women's rights, restrain gender-based violence and violent extremism. BNPS has experience in promoting youths in social development by engaging them with the stakeholders in social movements and activism work in its program areas. In social and economic development program, engagement of youth can help them to get involve with local communities and effect real changes.

- BNPS attended open air program on “16 days observation” to End Violence Against Women and Girls which was funded and organized by UN Women. The selected performer, Barsha Akter, came from Netrakona. Moreover, BNPS organized “Duli” team for the same program.
- BNPS Barhatta Centre organized a rally to observe “16 days observation 2018”. Local women, young girls walked through the main roads of the town and made a human chain in solidarity with *#MeToo Movement* to strengthen and push forward the movement against sexual harassment and gender-based violence.
- BNPS together with Social Action Committee (platform of 73 women, human rights and development organizations) organized event to observe International Women's Day at *Sadhinota Chattar*, Dhaka University, a rally and gathering demanded direct election of the reserve seats for women at the parliament.
- BNPS Barhatta Centre organized a human chain and discussion meeting at Kalmakanda, Barhatta to celebrate International Women's Day. Local MP Mr. Chobi Biswas, attended as chief guest.

- Social Action Committee protested the decision of the cabinet on reserve seat at the parliament for women and demanded introduction of direct election. They also expressed concern about the current changes in the educational curriculum which is against the ideas of gender equality and women rights. The rally was also concerned about increased incidences of VAW/G and raised voices for social resistance.
- BNPS submitted memorandum with the demand on behalf of women in Bangladesh to secure a level playing field for all citizens on the eve of 11<sup>th</sup> national parliamentary election held in 2018.
- BNPS attended “Bangladesh Social Security Conference 2018” and gave a presentation on its social security activities and decorated a stall where promotional materials displayed.
- BNPS, Bangladesh Mahila Parishad and Bangladesh Nari Shangbadik Kendra organized assembly to show respect to freedom fighter Taramon Bibi.
- BNPS worked to uphold Indigenous Rights: Bangladesh Indigenous Women’s Network, Hill Women’s Federation and BNPS jointly organized a human chain to protest victims of rape of a Tripura girl and killing of a Marma girl. The human chain was presided over by Falguni Tripura, Coordinator of Bangladesh Indigenous Women’s Network and moderated by Manira Tripura, President of Hill Women’s Federation. From the human chain BNPS demanded exemplary punishment for those involved in killing of ethnic minority girl after rape and gang rape of another girl in Khagrachari district. The rally placed four-point demands.
- BNPS attended a Public Hearing on “violence against indigenous women” organized by Bangladesh Indigenous women’s Network on rape and murder case of indigenous girl.

## Challenges and Lessons Learned

### *Challenges*

- BNPS believes in the change theory that secular and gender friendly education, grass-roots women agency development and awareness raising, supplemented by civic actions that support advocacy at national level will contribute to change people's mindset, resulting in enabling environment for women's empowerment.

With the rise of religious extremist, a reverse trend sat in where women's rights, including SRHR are undermined by the traditional patriarchal mindset boosted by radical religious ideas. Even though the constitution dictates equal rights for women and men, the majority has difficulties in accepting that women's rights are equal to men, and they believe supremacy of religion over the constitution when question of women's equal rights raised.

- The impact of reckless politics globally have been creating anger and agitation. Forces opposed to a liberal and secular society took advantage of the general sentiment of frustration, especially addressing youths, radicalizing and involving them in religious extremism, inspired by the propaganda of radical and terrorist groups from home and abroad. Moreover, fluctuating and subcontracting mood of donors funding strategies contribute to weaken NGOs presence at grass-roots, leaving open space for radical propaganda.
- The rural-urban and overseas migration resulted increased number of women headed households. Oversees migration of women workers are setting a range of new challenges dominated by sexual violence at the destined countries. At the same time, internal migration increased women's unpaid domestic and income generating workload at the rural settings.
- The trade union movement is not gender sensitive towards women workers strategic and practical needs because the movement primarily focuses on issues related to workers remuneration. Employers and decision makers still perceive that men are the bread winner; therefore, any pay to women workers is just good enough. Workers, who are outspoken, raising voices for claiming their rights are marked and punished, terminated from their jobs and are vulnerable to get another job because the recruiters through intermediaries marked them as activists.
- Very little presence of women in power holding positions limits inclusion of women's perspective in decision-making. Widespread abuse and availability of cheap recreational drugs and negative use of social media undermine youth's education and leads them into the activities against the marginalized, especially women.
- BNPS has been facing challenges to document good practices, project results and learning. Moreover, staff get dropout to join INGOs and UN agencies with higher salary. This "Skill Drain" sometimes become challenging to find appropriate candidates to replace. However, the dropout staff use their skills and learning from BNPS to work in the same field in other organizations which is beneficial for the country.



## *Lessons Learned*

- Access to local government services can be improved through community awareness supported by advocacy and community action. Providing information about due services, developing communication and negotiation skills to approach duty bearers and through improving delivery of basic services to the right holders.
- The level of poverty, risk and deprivation of women varies from region to region, among the communities and ethnicities. Thus, promoting women's rights and emancipation requires context specific approaches and wide-ranging long-term programs to be able to provide equal access to economic, social and political spaces.
- Traditional perception of gender roles, social taboos and misconceptions, make difficulties for young people to access information and services on SRHR and MHM. As a consequence, they suffer physically and mentally, and cannot fully enjoy their sexual and reproductive rights.
- Engaging youth in developing secular vision for a society that respects diversity and equal rights, could have transformative and long-lasting impact in the society. Learning to analyze situations, internalizing the principle of diversity, non-discrimination and secularism can help them to understand that hate and intolerance are used to instigate violent behavior and oppression.
- Recent donors funding modalities towards project approach opting for short-term projects, makes it difficult for NGOs to contribute with their local knowledge and retaining experienced staff. This shift is negatively affecting the transformation process and social change towards a just society where equal rights for women and men are established and respected.
- Effective involvement with policy makers and regular follow-up can have better impact in shaping the policy towards gender equality but it requires longer term engagement with the key people.
- Expansion of work with youth (boys and girls) can have sustainable impact in changing attitude and behavior to change restrictive and patriarchal cultural norms that limits women from realizing their potential.

## Management

BNPS follows open and flexible bottom up management approach led by the Executive Director who in cooperation with the Senior Management Team (SMT) oversees the macro-management affairs of the organization and its donor's communication. Individual programs are headed by respective Coordinators at BNPS Central Office. The field operations are managed through Centre offices headed by the Centre Manager supported by respective Project Managers/Coordinators with technical guidance and administrative support from Director/Deputy Directors. The SMT consists of Director, Deputy Directors and all Unit Heads/Coordinators and play key roles for guiding program/projects in planning, implementation, monitoring and reporting. The ED acts to keep organizational strategic link with the programs and policies.

The Internal Audit works under the supervision of the ED. The Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation (PME) Unit carry put its activities under the guidance of the Executive Director but closely works with the program units. These two units collectively ensure program implementation with quality, transparency, accuracy and accountability. The unique feature of BNPS is to have absolute (100%) representation of women in the General Body (GB) and the Executive Committee (EC). The General Body (GB) is the highest authority to approve policies where the Executive Committee (EC) ensures the application of policies in operations through ED. The ED herself widely known as national women leader and freedom fighter.

Weekly senior management team meeting, monthly coordination meeting, half yearly program review meeting and annual planning workshop are major regular forums of coordination between Central and Centre offices. Competent staff and computerized accounting system are major strengths of BNPS.

People from multidisciplinary background constitute the workforce of BNPS, contributes to effective implementation of programs considering the context-specific development approach. BNPS follows the policy of Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) and Affirmative Action (AA) in case of women and indigenous people during talent acquisition.

## Capacity Building

Capacity enhancement is a continuous effort in BNPS. With the expansion and diversity of the program activities, BNPS has been working paralleled to improve the systems and human resource development. Series of activities have been undertaken during the reporting period to building capacity of staff on program management, financial management, internal audit including internal control system, procurement system, monitoring, management information system, and gender mainstreaming align with BNPS's strategic priorities. Staff attended training courses aiming to develop technical skills that covered wide range of areas pertinent to the on-going projects including Health and Rights, SRHR, PVE, Gender, Diversity, Labor Rights and Climate Change intervention.

To ensuring organizational effectiveness and developing capacity of staff, BNPS organized training, workshop and exposure visit under various projects and got supports from external organizations both at home and abroad.



*An image of a staff capacity building training on monitoring framework development*

**Staff Training:** A total of 165 staff attended training courses/workshops internally organized by BNPS. The courses were: Outcome and Impact Orientation (OIO), Workshop on Project Orientation & Monitoring Framework Development, Transformative Leadership, TOT on Community Awareness Raising, Training on Women Empowerment, Peace and Security, and Refresher on Menstrual Health (MH). A Program Organizer of BNPS attended training course on 'People Led Approach' organized by Caritas Development Institute, two staff have attended training workshop on 'Gender Sensitization, Non-discrimination and Inclusion'. BNPS organized training on 'Women and Youth for Promoting Peace and Social Harmony' for 43 staff from 21 women network /partner organizations.

**Volunteers Training:** In addition to the staff, equal emphasis is given to develop capacity of volunteers/change agents at the communities. In this reporting period, BNPS had been working

with 300 volunteers to implement programs and projects. They were given social analytical, communication and negotiation skills development training including information on public services available for women and youth.

**Teachers Training:** A total of 1216 teachers (411 female and 805 male teachers) received ToT on SRHR & MH to teach SRHR lessons and counseling facilitation skills in the schools.

**Training to the Student:** Organized “Leadership Training on “Promoting Values of Diversity, Peace and Tolerance and Resisting Violent Extremism” for 125 university student (female 61, Male 64) from 5 public universities (Dhaka University, Chattogram University. Jagannath University, Jahangirnagar University, and Jatiya Kabi Kazi Nazrul Islam University).

**Youth Training:** 40 youth organizers (Female 20 Male 20) received ToT on “ME & MY WORLD” (MMW), a web based Comprehensive Sexuality Education (CSE). The youth later on conducted 5200 community sessions attended by 1590 boys and girls.

**Adolescent Training:** 11423 adolescent from out of schools have received information of SRHR issues. 18987 adolescent from secondary schools received session on SRHR.

**Community Awareness Raising Training:** 60 batches of Community Awareness Training on Women, Peace and Security attended by 1210 (Female 875, Male 335) participants. 3881 community leader and parents have received awareness session on SRHR. Knowledge and facilitation skills of 2040 youth on SRHR have been increased.

## Partnership

BNPS invested resources to develop capacity of local CBOs and CSOs active in their own localities. In addition, BNPS organized grassroots women and develop women agencies and build their capacity so that they can eventually take charge of their own affairs. In partnership with indigenous organizations in CHT, BNPS has been working to make Customary Law gender sensitive. Unite for Body Rights (UBR) project is being implemented through a consortium of eleven national and international organizations where BNPS is an implementing partner. AmplifyChange supported project has also been implemented through 20 MH platform member organizations under direct guidance and support from BNPS. RITU project is being implemented with three other development partners. OLHF project is being implemented with 10 indigenous CSOs based in CHT. All other programs are implemented in cooperation with the community, schools, LGIs and government line Ministries and project specific donors.

## List of Projects during 2018-2019

Sl.	Project Name	Name of Donors
1.	Promoting Rights through Mobilization and Empowerment (PRiME)	Bread for the World (BftW)
2.	Advancing Equality of Women and Marginalized People (AWAM)	Misereor
3.	Resilience through Economic Empowerment, Climate Adaptation, Livelihood and Leadership (REE-CALL) 2021	OXFAM in Bangladesh
4.	Creating Spaces to Take Action on Violence against Women and Girls	OXFAM in Bangladesh
5.	I am One, I am Many: Combating discrimination on the basis of religious identities and beliefs	OXFAM in Bangladesh
6.	Power of Self Defense and Motivation to Prevent Violence Against Women & Girls	Women's World Day of Prayer (WWDP)
7.	Advancing Girls Power and Participation in School Sports and Outdoor Activities	WWDP
8.	Empowering Women for Building Social Cohesion	UN Women
9.	Empowered Women, Peaceful Communities	UN Women
10.	Unite for Body Rights 2 Programme (UBR-2)	The Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands (EKN)
11.	RITU: Menstrual Hygiene Management	Simavi/EKN
12.	Countering Religious Extremism in Bangladesh	UN Democracy Fund (UNDEF)
13.	Collective initiatives to improve Menstrual Health (MH) situation in Bangladesh by engaging NGOs, civil society and private sector.	AmplifyChange
14.	Our Lives, Our Health, Our Future: empowering adolescent girls and young women in Chittagong Hill Tracts to live with dignity and without violence.	EU, Simavi
15.	Upholding Rights of Minorities beyond Borders – South Asia	European Union (EU), International Movement Against all forms of Discrimination and Racism – Asia Committee (IMDAR – AC)
16.	Free Movement of Women: Improving Opportunities for Worker's Mobility	International Labour Organization (ILO)

**BANGLADESH NARI PROGATI SANGHA**

**Statement of Consolidated Financial Position**

As at June 30, 2019

**PROPERTY AND ASSETS**

**FIXED ASSETS**

INVESTMENT-FDR ACCOUNT

**CURRENT ASSETS:**

SECURITY DEPOSIT-T&T(As per last Account)

LOAN & ADVANCE/PREPAID ACCOUNT

**CLOSING BALANCE**

Cash in hand

Cash at bank

**TOTAL**

Note	Amount in Taka	
	2018-2019	2017-2018
Note-1	14,714,701	10,489,341
Note-2	1,806,544	1,703,668
	15,000	15,000
Note-3	375,100	57,000
Note-4	121,655	98,632
Note-5	22,789,739	15,940,810
	<b>39,822,739</b>	<b>28,304,451</b>

**FUND AND LIABILITIES**

**EQUITY/FUND ACCOUNT**

Restricted Fund

Unrestricted Fund-GFP

**ASSETS FUND ACCOUNT**

**SHORT TERM LIABILITIES :**

STAFF WELFARE FUND

LOAN ACCOUNT-PAYABLE


OUTSTANDING LIABILITIES


**TOTAL**

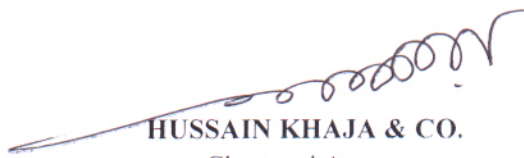
Note	Amount in Taka	
	2018-2019	2017-2018
Note-6	22,024,086	13,712,451
Note-7	1,945,369	1,875,795
Note-8	14,714,701	10,489,342
Note-9	91,237	99,789
Note-10	549,500	988,411
Note-11	497,846	1,138,663
	<b>39,822,739</b>	<b>28,304,451</b>

The annexed Schedules 1 to 23 from an intergral part of these financial statements.

Signed in terms of our separate report of even date

✓   
Executive Director **Shahnaz Begum Sumi**  
BNPS Deputy Director  
Bangladesh Nari Progati Sangha  
Dated: Dhaka, 31st October, 2019.

  
Accounts Officer  
BNPS

  
**HUSSAIN KHAJA & CO.**  
Chartered Accountants



BANGLADESH NARI PROGATI SANGHA

Consolidated Notes to the Accounts

As at June 30, 2019

No. Particulars

Amount in Taka

6. Restricted fund

Name of Fund	Opening Balance	Fund Received	Local Contribution/Loan	Fund utilization during the Period	Excess of income over Exp.	Transferred to Capitalized/ Adjustment	Closing Balance
1 Promoting Rights through Mobilization & Empowerment (PRiME) 3rd phase	(799,772)	469,491	-	345	-	-	(330,626)
2 Promoting Rights through Mobilization & Empowerment (PRiME) 3rd phase	-	26,136,790	150,000	20,658,810	148,189	3,207,692	2,568,477
3 Advancing Equality of Women and Marginalized People (AWAM) 1st phase	(1,145,731)	1,146,421	-	690	-	-	0
4 Advancing Equality of Women and Marginalized People (AWAM) 2nd phase	-	16,450,046	200,000	15,367,219	46,372	733,402	595,797
5 REE-CALL 2021	338,582	5,203,736	-	3,880,751	12,806	-	1,674,373
6 Empowered Women, Peacefull Community	1,103,902	3,214,119	-	4,328,692	10,671	-	-
7 Campaign on Sexual and Reproductive Health Rights-SAAPE	14,995	247,707	-	252,707	-	-	9,995
8 Unite for Body Rights -2 (UBR-2)	1,261,190	19,709,784	-	16,571,894	93,306	-	4,492,386
9 I am One, I am Many: Combating discrimination on the basis of religious identities and beliefs	1,241,746	791,000	-	1,826,773	15,407	-	221,380
10 Ritu	6,290,389	15,875,118	500,000	22,356,452	51,107	-	360,162
11 Power of Self Defense and Motivation to Prevent Violence Against Women & Girls	563,969	-	-	566,538	2,569	-	-
12 Creating Spaces to take Action on Violence against Women and Girls	1,427,447	2,167,343	216,734	3,713,120	19,123	12,390	105,137
13 Countering Religious Extremism in Bangladesh	3,415,734	5,321,077	-	7,476,968	57,281	145,800	1,171,324
14 Collective initiatives to improve Menstrual Health (MH) situation in Bangladesh by engaging NGOs, civil society and private sector. discrimination on the basis of religious	-	18,457,412	(235,200)	9,116,647	189,443	819,759	8,475,250
15 Our lives, our health, our futures:	-	3,395,495	-	1,813,192	10,754	530,598	1,062,460
16 Upholding Rights of Minorities Beyond Borders- South Asia	-	-	49,500	35,838	3	-	13,666
17 Advancing Girls Power and Participation in School Sports and Outdoor Activities	-	2,535,544	-	776,106	16,987	172,120	1,604,305
<b>Total :</b>	<b>13,712,451</b>	<b>121,121,084</b>	<b>881,034</b>	<b>108,742,740</b>	<b>674,018</b>	<b>5,621,761</b>	<b>22,024,086</b>

