



**Convention on the Elimination
of All Forms of Discrimination
against Women**

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**Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination
against Women**

**Concluding observations on the combined sixth and seventh
periodic reports of Bangladesh**

Addendum

**Information provided by Bangladesh on the follow-up to the
concluding observations of the Committee***

[23 September 2013]

* In accordance with the information transmitted to States parties regarding the processing of their reports, the present document has not been formally edited.

12. Recalling its previous recommendation (CEDAW/C/BGD/CO/5, para. 236), the Committee urges the State party to expedite its efforts towards the withdrawal of its reservations to articles 2 and 16, paragraph 1(c) within a concrete timeframe”, and

- Withdrawal of the reservations relating to article 2 and article 16 (1) (c) is under consideration. Despite the reservations, the Government has taken several positive steps that may be considered to be in conformity with withdrawal of the reservations.

Article 16: Equality in Marriage and Family Law

- Enactment of the Child Marriage Restraint Act is under consideration of the Government. Withdrawal of Article 16 (1) (c) is also under consideration of the Government.

20. The Committee urges the State party to give priority attention to combating violence against women and girls and to adopt comprehensive measures such as a national action plan to address all forms of violence against women and girls, in accordance with its general recommendation NO. 19 (1992)

- Ministry of Women and Children Affairs takes coordinating role to make a national action plan on violence against women and children. It will show how to coordinate prioritize and make strategies for the most effective forms of action in short, mid and long term and to measure progress. The national action plan will be focused on legal arrangements, social awareness and mental transformation, advancement of socio-economic status, protective services, curative and rehabilitation services and Inter-sectoral cooperation. National, Divisional, District and Sub-district level consultations meeting with various stakeholders are being undertaken in order to wider recommendations for developing the National Action Plan on Violence against Women and Children.

a) Ensure that all forms of violence against women and girls, including domestic violence and all forms of sexual abuse are criminalized, that perpetrators are prosecuted and punished and that the women and girls who are victims of violence have access to immediate means of redress, rehabilitation and protection;

- Regarding good practices to address gender based violence in Bangladesh; there are various supports and services for the women and girls of violence:

i) One-Stop Crisis Centre (OCC)

Eight OCCs are being run in Bangladesh of which seven are at divisional level medical college hospitals and one at district level medical college hospital under the Multi-Sectoral Programme on Violence Against Women of the Ministry of Women and Children Affairs. The main objective of the OCC is to provide all required services for women and children victims of violence in one place. The OCC provides health care, police assistance, DNA test, social services, legal assistance and psychosocial counseling. Women and Children victims of violence with a history of physical, sexual and burn assaults are referred to the OCCs.

The OCC is physically located close to the emergency department of the hospital and have enough space that includes one special ward of 8-10 beds. Each OCC team is composed of 4 Doctors (Senior Doctor is the functional coordinator of the OCC), 2 Sub-Inspectors of Police, 2 Constables of Police, Six Nurses, Social Welfare Officer, Lawyer, Counselor, Computer Operator and four Messengers cum Cleaners.

Up to August 2013 the OCCs provided various services to a total of 17584 women and children victims of violence who stayed in the OCC wards for a particular period. Among the clients 13018 were the victims of physical assaults, 4211 were the victims of sexual assaults, and 355 were the victims of burns (that also includes acid burn). A total of 3969 clients filed criminal cases where 614 judgments were pronounced and in 90 cases punishment with various degrees were sanctioned.

For the rehabilitation and reintegration of the OCC clients into the society, 660 were given life skill training and provided a various productive assets.

ii) One –Stop Crisis Cell (OCC)

A total of 60 One-Stop Crisis Cells were established at districts and upazila hospitals for mobilizing the various services within and outside the hospitals for women and children victims of violence. The main objective of the One-Stop Crisis Cells is to provide information to the women and children survivors of violence regarding various services i.e. health care, police assistant, legal advice, psychosocial counseling, rehabilitation, reintegration etc and refer them to the relevant organizations. The activities of One-Stop Crisis Cells were started from December 2012. During December 2012-August 2013 a total of 2670 women and children victims received various services from these cells. Among them 2164 were the victims of physical assault, 485 were sexually abused, 15 were burnt.

iii) Victim Support Centre

Bangladesh police has established two victim support centers to provide various services in collaboration with 10 NGOs. They also promote community policing to sensitize the community people to end VAW. The primary role of victim support is to comfort and assist victims in the aftermath of the crime from which they have suffered, to advise them of the remedial processes and to guide them through the ensuing prosecution of the person accused of the crime. In order to provide appropriate, professional and timely assistance to victims of crime, all staff at the VSC have been provided with specialized training to enhance their capacity to deal with victims and to facilitate and coordinate a support network, engaging health care professionals, social workers, lawyers and different NGO personnel. The NGOs are working in full cooperation with the VSC and are available to provide assistance and support on a 24 hour basis. The VSC is operated by female police officers. VSC also maintains a database of cases reported to the centre.

As part of expansion of services and ensuring comprehensive services, Women Support & Investigation Division of Dhaka Metropolitan Police (DMP) includes Victim Support Centre (VSC), Investigation Unit, and Quick Response Team/Support Unit (QRT) is one step forward for repressed women and children in June 2011. The 2nd VSC started to provide services in Rangamati Hill District in January 2012. Beside these, newly constructed 5 VSCs located in Rajshahi, Rangpur, Chittagong, Khulna, Sylhet will start to provide services on 01 October 2013 and the VSC Barisal will start to provide services on 15 December 2013. A total of 2200 victim children and women received services from 2(two) VSCs located in Dhaka and Rangamati.

iv) DNA Laboratories

The first National Forensic DNA Profiling Laboratory, with most modern and advanced technological facilities has been established in Dhaka Medical

College Campus under the Multi-Sectoral Programme on Violence against Women of the Ministry of Women and Children Affairs. Besides, seven Divisional DNA Screening Laboratories have been established. This Laboratory extends assistance to track down perpetrators of various heinous and despicable crimes such as rape, murder etc. and paternity, maternity and in identifying defaced corpse and continue to provide support to the activities of various Law enforcing agencies. Till August 2013 a total of 2290 DNA test have been conducted consists of 8145 samples.

v) Helpline for Violence Against Women and Children

• **National Helpline (10921) Centre for Violence Against Women and Children:**

A National Helpline Centre for Violence Against Women and Children has been established in 2012 under the Multi-Sectoral Programme on Violence Against Women of the Ministry of Women and Children Affairs. The women and children victims of violence and other stakeholders can get necessary information, suggestions about available services by calling at the helpline number 10921. This helpline maintains confidentiality in all aspects. Service providers of the Helpline Centre always try to get the information about the violence from the victims and their relatives and provide necessary services according to their needs without delay. A total of 11046 call were received in this centre upto August 2013 for information services, psychosocial counseling, legal help etc. This Helpline Centre has taken effective step to prevent early marriage, sexual harassment and rescue the women and child victims of violence. The women and child victim of violence who do not have access to the service centers of both of the government and non-government sectors can get various supports on health, legal, rehabilitation, psychosocial counseling and other services from this Helpline Centre.

• **Child Help line 1098**

Child help line has been established in, Dhaka under Ministry of Social Welfare. This service was activated in 17 April 2011. This helpline provides quick services to the child victims of violence in limited area of Dhaka city.

vi) Prevention Cell for Women Victims

Prevention Cell for Violence against Women for the tortured women have been set up in order to render support to vulnerable, destitute women who have the victims of torture at the divisional level of the Department of Women Affairs and Jatiyo Mahila Sangstha. The prevention cell receives complains of the victims, mediates conflict resolution through counseling, settlement of amount of money pledged to the paid to bride by bridegroom, maintenance of wide and children, etc. In addition, legal aid for the women seeking legal support is being provided to women,

vii) Central Cell to Prevent Violence Against Women and Children

The Ministry of Women and Children Affairs runs the central cell with a view of fostering the opportunities to render all kinds of support to the women and children who have been victims of torture, ensure coordination of activities for preventing violence against women and children and monitoring of these programme. District Committee for Prevention of violence against Women, the Department of Women Affairs, Jatiya Mohila Sangstha, Police Headquarters, Multi-Sectoral Programme on Violence against Women and various non-government organization send periodic reports regularly to this cell. These reports contain the details and illustrate the situation of the violence against women. Reports are presented to the Inter-Ministerial Coordination Committee on national programme for preventing violence against women and children abuse and dowry.

viii) Prevention on Violence against Women Cell at Police Headquarters

There is also prevention on Violence against Women Cell under the Ministry of Home Affairs at Bangladesh Police Headquarters which compiles the reports of filing criminal cases against the abuser under different Police stations

viii) Shelter Home

There are 7 safe custodies for women, girls and adolescents under the department of social services, one such safe custody under the department of women affairs (DWA), 7 women support centers under the department of women affairs. In these safe custodies and shelters the women and children victims can stay up to 6 months where they get legal support, psychosocial counseling and life skill training. During their stay in center, medicine, food and other essentials are supplied free of cost.

b) Remove any impediment faced by women in gaining access to justice and ensure that shalish decisions do not violate laws and do not lead to extrajudicial penalties:

- Sensitization of the stakeholders is being done to enhance the process and procedures for improving access to justice of the women. Moreover, advocacy on the legal provisions and directives of the High Courts for not misusing the shalish is done by the government departments, non-government organizations and citizen's group.

(c) Take effective measures to ensure the implementation of the existing legal framework including enactment of legislation on sexual harassment and organize training and awareness –raising programme for the judiciary and public officials, in particular law enforcement and health service personnel, in order to ensure that they are sensitized to all forms of violence against women and can provide adequate gender-sensitive support to victims;

i) Government of Bangladesh enacted various laws to prevent and redress violence against women and children that include the Women and Children Repression prevention act 2000, the Dowry prohibition act 1980, the Acid Control Act 2002, the Domestic Violence (Prevention and Protection) act 2010, the Birth and Death Registration Act 2004, the Human Trafficking Act 2012. The Village Court Act 2006, Domestic Violence (Prevention and Protection) Rules 2013.

The Domestic Violence (prevention and protection) act 2010 was passed on 5 October, 2010 and went into force on 30 December, 2010. This act is a major attempt by the Government to protect women from violence occurring inside the home. As of March 2013, 102 cases have been filed under this Act.

Provision has been incorporated in the Mobile Court Act 2009 to prevent sexual harassment. Special provisions have been incorporated in the National Women Development Policy 2011 and National Children Policy 2011 to prevent violence against women and children and to emphasize for various supports for the victims.

In recent years, the High Court has given some landmark judgments and directives to prevent sexual harassment both at working places and in educational institutes, prevent corporal punishment of the children, prevent harassment of the victims in the name of religious verdict, and protect domestic workers. The Principal Secretary of the Prime Minister's Office on 15 April 2010 sent a Demi-Official letter to the Deputy Commissioners for taking special efforts to prevent sexual harassment in the educational institutes.

There are special courts and tribunals to punish the perpetrators of the VAW, provide safe custody and shelters to the victims, and resolve the family disputes and ensure custodial arrangement for the minors. The national legal aid organization of the M/o Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs provides legal support to the poor

victims free of cost. The Government recently decided to observe the 28th April of every year as national legal aid day.

There are various networks and forums of NGOs and CSOs who work closely with the various departments of the government to address gender violence. The committees at various levels include members of both NGOs and CSOs. At national level there is a national initiative to end domestic violence and there are durbar network and we cam campaign to mobilize the professionals and stakeholders to prevent violence against women and children. Moreover, there is a close collaboration among the government departments, development partners, NGOs and CSOs to promote advocacy, observed various days, weeks, and fortnights on various national and international occasions.

For awareness about the services and other provisions massive awareness and information campaigns on VAW & children have been launched. Various IEC materials are developed and distributed widely among the government offices, and non-government organizations, and development partners and agencies. Besides TV serials and spots on VAW have been developed and broadcast. International Women's Day, International Day to eliminate VAW day and 16 days campaign are being observed every year.

A number of training programme have been organized to sensitize the Doctors, Polices, Judges, Magistrates, Teachers, Members of Local Government Institutions, Religious Leaders, Lawyers. Besides, officials of different organizations who work on gender based violence and teachers of public and private Schools, Colleges participated in the Supportive Counseling Training Programmes.

d) Establish counseling services and sufficient number of shelters for victims of violence in all parts of the country, including in rural areas:

i) National Trauma Counseling Centre:

For strengthening psychosocial counseling for the women and children victims of violence, the National Trauma Counseling Center (NTCC) was established under the Multi-Sectoral Programme on Violence Against Women of the Ministry of Women and Children Affairs. This centre National Trauma Counseling Centre provides psychosocial counseling support to the oppressed women and children who come from VAW cell, safe home, shelter home and One- Stop Crisis Centre. NTCC provides individual therapy, couple or marital therapy to the oppressed women and children which depends on the nature of their problem. From October 2009 to August 2013, a total of 898 of women and children victims of violence received psychosocial counseling from this centre.

A total of 2237 including Officers of VAW cell, OCC, DNA , District Women Affairs Officers, NGO representatives, teachers of school and college of whole Bangladesh received basic and supportive Counseling training course. Counseling services are available in Divisional, District and Upazila level which is given by the Non-Government Organizations.

It is expected that these kind of training will be helpful to change the mindset of the people towards victim of violence and their need for psychosocial support. This centre is the only government set up which is providing psychosocial counseling support to oppressed women and children of violence victim. It is playing a vital role in decreasing psychological problems among violence victim, which ultimately leads them to healthy life.

ii) Shelters for victims:

There are 7safe custodies for women, girls and adolescents under the department of social services, one such safe custody under the department of women affairs

(DWA), 7 women support centers under the department of women affairs. In these safe custodies and shelters the women and children victims can stay up to 6 months where they get legal support, psychosocial counseling and life skill training. During their stay in center, medicine, food and other essentials are supplies free of cost.

Besides, The Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) like Bangladesh National Women Lawyer's Association, Dhaka Ahsania Mission, Bangladesh Mahila Parishad, Association for Community Development and Aparajeo Bangladesh are operating shelters, drop in centers and halfway homes at the different parts of the country where the medical, legal and psychological services are available.

e) Establish a database to collect data and information on the implementation of the laws and policies in place to deal with all forms of violence against women and girls and on the impact of such measures;

i) Multi-Sectoral Programme on Violence Against Women (MSPVAW) of the Ministry of Women and children Affairs established National VAW&C Database on July 2009 . This Database collected VAW related data and information from various sources. The objectives of the database is: a) To collect and preserve VAW related data, b) To Compare and share data and information with other organizations to prevent and combat violence against women and children.

Activities of the Database: a) Collect VAW Data from Different Source, b) Maintain VAW Data, c) Report Preparation d) Follow-up & Feedback e) Conduct VAW Research

Sources of Data: a) One-Stop Crisis Centre; b) One-Stop Crisis Cell; c) DNA Laboratories

d) National Trauma Counseling Centre e) National Helpline Centre for Violence Against Women; f) Police Headquarters; g) 24 National Daily Newspapers; h) VAW cell of Department of Women Affairs and Jatiyo Mahila Sangstha.

f) Undertake studies and /or surveys on the extent of such violence and its root causes;

- Baseline survey on Violence against women and Children 2008 by Multi-Sectoral programme on Violence Against Women, Ministry of Women and Children Affairs
- Violence against Women and Children 2011 by Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics
- Child Marriage in Bangladesh by Plan International Bangladesh.