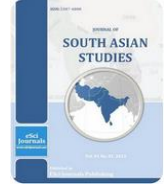




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## PERFORMANCE AND EFFECTIVENESS OF VILLAGE COURT IN BANGLADESH: A COMPARATIVE STUDY IN TWO UNIONS BETWEEN PROJECT AND NON-PROJECT AREA

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### ABSTRACT

The study examined the performance and effectiveness of village court in Bangladesh. It is emphasized on the grass-root level rural administration that is presently known as *Union Parishad* (UP). UP constitutes the most important tier of the rural local government system. A UP consists of 10-20 villages. There are no administrative units at the village level in Bangladesh. The *Gram Adalat* (Village Court) Ordinance 1976 was promulgated in Bangladesh to serve the rural poor from the sufferings and hazards of the formal courts. The formal courts are generally expensive and follow lengthy procedures. Under the new Village Court Act 2006, initially court system was partially effective and the grassroots people had an easy access to justice and the verdict of the court could resolve the local conflicts and disputes. To take grassroots democracy to the doorsteps of the people, UNDP took the initiative village project known as “Activating Village Court Projects” in 2009. Under the project, only 350 village courts are being implemented, but more than 4550 *Union Parishads* is out of the project. The present study analyzed the performances of village court in project and non-project areas.

**Keywords:** Bangladesh, Effectiveness, Performance, Union Parishad, Village Court.

### INTRODUCTION

The Article 27 of Bangladesh constitution states “All citizens are equal before law and are entitled to equal protection of law” and for this equal protection of law, access to justice is required (Constitution of Bangladesh, 2015). The *Gram Adalat* (Village Court) Ordinance 1976 was promulgated in Bangladesh in 1976 to serve the rural poor from the sufferings and hazards of the formal courts (Biswas, 2008). Bangladesh is one of the poorest countries of the world and most of its populations live in the villages. As a result, it is not easy for rural people to go to the formal courts in the district headquarters. The formal courts are generally expensive and follow lengthy procedures. As a result, it is very difficult for them to sue and continue the cases at the formal courts. This results in compelling the villagers to rely on the traditional alternative dispute resolution mechanisms such as *Shalish*. The system *Shalish* has been practiced for centuries. Local leaders, either in groups or

individually provide a forum for discussion and the resolution of local disputes. The strength and popularity of local leaders depend to a large extent on their tact, skill, integrity, fairness and overall ability to resolve local disputes. The more capable a leader provides at settling disputes, the more solid is his power base. But *Shalish* is a very crude form of local judicial practice, which is very much influenced by the people who are the members of rural power structures. There are also dominated by the people of different vested interest groups including the musclemen and local elites or even by the local touts.

At present there are 4,488 *Union Parishads*(UPs) in Bangladesh (BBS, 2010). *Union Parishad* plays a vital role in the economic and socio-cultural life of rural people. As the chairman and members of the UP are elected by the local people, they have greater accountability to them the chiefs of the informal *Shalish* procedure. It is unfortunate and frustrating that though Village Courts ordinance was promulgated more than three decades before, it has not yet achieved a considerable success till now. “Activating Village Courts

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in Bangladesh Project” has been working with the Local Government Division to set up, support and strengthen village courts in 350 *Union Parishads* across the country. It is evident to evaluate and compare the effectiveness of the village court under project and non-project village court in *Union Parishad*.

Very few studies have been conducted in this topic. A study conducted by Hossain (2012) examined that the formal judicial system of Bangladesh is very expensive and follows a lengthy procedure. Poor people living in rural area are rarely able to use this formal legal system to get justice remedies. Poor people therefore prefer to use the traditional justice mechanisms like *Shalish*. But it is evident that *Shalish* is a very informal form of local judicial practice which is very much influenced by the people who belong to the power structure in rural society. Another study conducted by Islam (2015) shows that two thirds of rural disputes do not enter the formal court system in Bangladesh. The extensive use of the *Salish* system by the rural people is in no way to mean that the system is popular, this is because the rural people still have not found any better alternative to the *Salish* system. A UNDP research reveals that the

a)- Complainant	d)- Contestant
b)- UP Member (male & female)	e)- UP Chairman
c)- Journalist	f)- NGO/Project worker

The enumerators collected data from 1<sup>st</sup> November 2014 to 30<sup>th</sup> November 2014, under the close supervision of the researcher. For identification of litigant of village court, at first the enumerator randomly checked the village court records (like as register), then find out a responder by purposively. Then called him for visited and interviewed after obtaining his consent. On the other hand, the researcher also have taken some interpersonal interview by the semi-structured questionnaire as KII. Lastly this study also conducted 2 FGD with Journalist and NGO Workers by maintaining the homogeneity of participants. After data collection, the completed questionnaires were verified by supervisors in the field. Beside the primary data, the study has also collected many secondary data for the purpose of synthesis the study purpose. The Secondary data were collected from multiple sources. Several research papers, journals, articles and online sources also used for secondary information.

**Method of Collecting Data:** The study was mainly based on quantitative method. Structured questionnaire

*Salish* system is used to resolve 60-70% of local disputes in rural areas.

In light of the above, the present study examined the performance and effectiveness of village court project “Activating Village Courts in Bangladesh”. The study aimed to investigate the necessity of Village Court project and their roles and functions in Bangladesh. Specifically aims to –

- Examine the effectiveness of judgment by the village court ins and outs of the project;
- Investigate the challenges of village court and the project;
- Identify the inconsistencies between the village court act and real practices;
- Suggest in potential areas for the effectiveness of village court in Bangladesh.

#### STUDY MATERIALS AND RESEARCH METHOD

**Data Sources:** In order to accomplish the research work, the present study have designed to fixed the primary data source from the survey techniques, where the responders are considered as primary sources of data. Data were collected from several types of primary respondents. They are as follows:

The Primary data Sources by categories of respondents

survey is usually ensuring the requirement of methodological instruments. To justify the validity of survey data, the study also triangulate some qualitative techniques like as Focus Group Discussion (FGD) and Key Informant Interview (KII). The study area was pre-determined and it was adjacent to Dhaka district. Two districts have been selected for this study a) Kishorgonj (project area) and b) Tangail (non-project area). Respondents were selected from in and out of the project “Activating Village Courts in Bangladesh.” The project *Union* is Mosua under *KatiadiUpazila* of Kishorgonj district. The population of the *Union* is around 11,000; it is twelve kilometer ahead of the *Katiadi Thana Sadar*. The non project *Union* is Delduar under *DelduarUpazila*, the population is around 13,000 and it is 15 kilometer ahead of Tangail district headquarters. The sample of this study is mainly primary respondents. Sample size of this study was pre-determined and it was 192. Of these, 104 were collected from project areas, and 88 from non-project areas.

Quantitative data were collected using survey

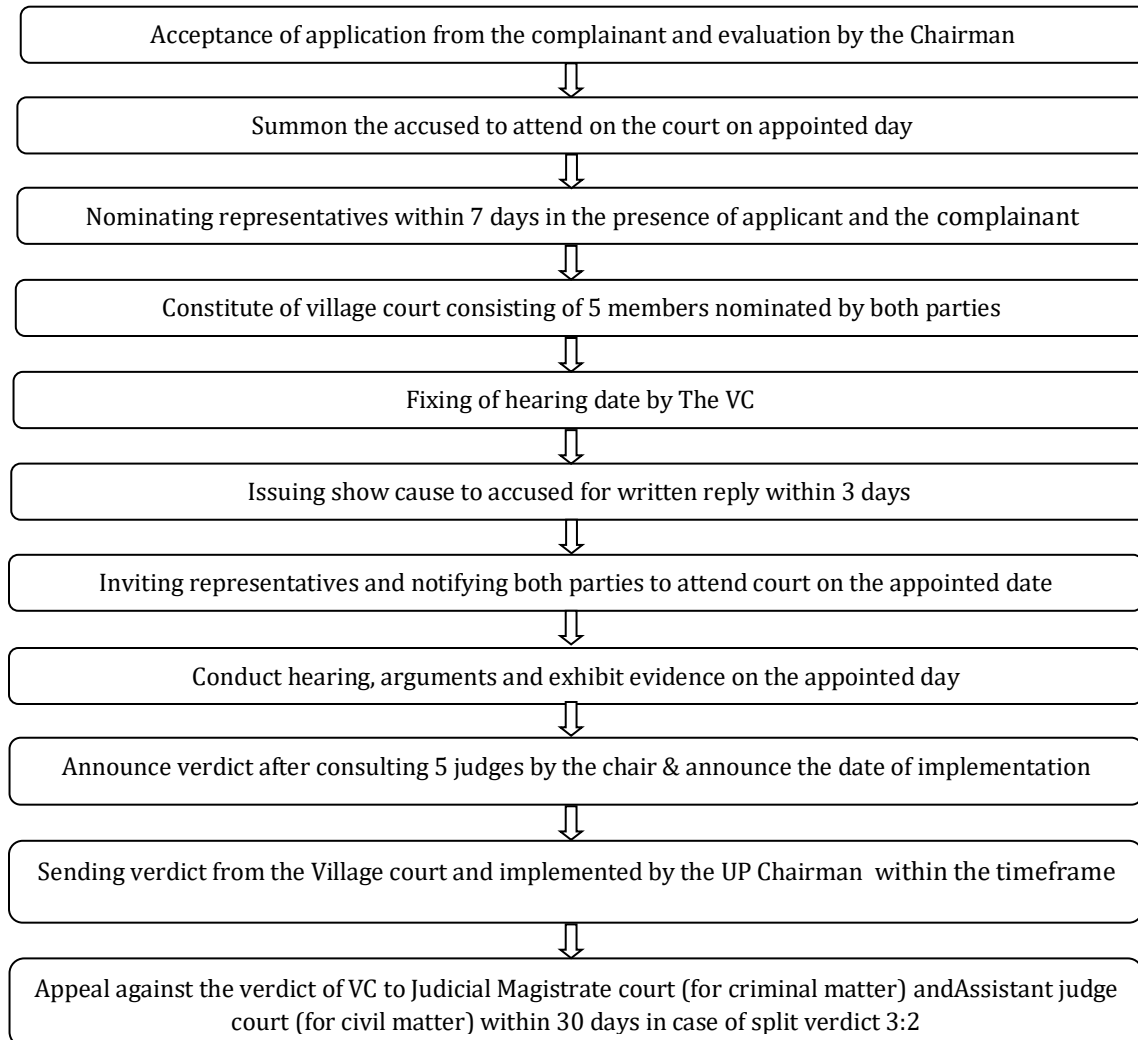
techniques. Structured questionnaires were used and it finalized through pilot survey and pre-testing. Data collection has accomplished through face-to-face interview. On the other hand, some qualitative interview was conducted through Focus Group Discussion (FGD) and Key Informant Interview (KII). KII was conducted with the UP Chairman, UP Members, Public Prosecutors, Thana Officer in Charge. FGD was conducted with the Journalists and NGO Workers by ensuring the homogeneity of participants. Alongside, the study also conducted several qualitative techniques to collect information about village court in order to justify the reliability of sample survey.

**Methods of Analyzing Data:** Collected data was summarized according to the research objectives. Before analyzing, data were processed by editing, coding and tabulation. Then, the collected data were analyzed in two

stages. Firstly, collected data were analyzed after the first round of the fieldwork and then tabulated on the basis of the objectives of the study.

Both systems of quantitative and partial qualitative data analysis have been performed for the data collected. In processing stage, quantification of qualitative data and proper coding scheme was completed by the researchers. For ensuring accuracy and clarity of results, SPSS software was used by the researchers in data analysis. Graphical presentation and proper interpretation were also carried out to address the wider audience. Finally, comparison and triangulation were made between the data from different respondents and sources.

**Structure and Functions of Village Court in Bangladesh:** A village court (*Gram Adalat*) flow chart has given below:



**Sources:** Based on Hossain, 2012; Biswas, 2008 and *Activating Village Courts in Bangladesh Project, 2012*.

Village Courts function under the institutional control of the *Union Parishad* which is the lowest tier local government administrative body constituted through direct voting of the people of the Union. A village court is a statutory court composed of the chairman of the *Union Parishad* and four representatives – two from each party, one of them being a member of the *Parishad*. Ordinarily, the chairman of the *Union Parishad* acts as the chairman of the court, but any member of the *Parishad* can act as chairman. The only adjudication option open for village courts is to order compensation of an amount not exceeding 25,000 taka, payable to an aggrieved person. If the decision of a village court is unanimous or by a majority of 4:1, the decision shall be binding on the parties. But, if the decision is by a majority of 3:2, any party to the dispute may, within thirty days of the decision, appeal to any judicial magistrate of the first class or assistant judge having jurisdiction over the case

(Hossain, 2012). If the Magistrate is satisfied that there has been a failure of justice by the *Gram Adalat*, he can reject or modify the decision or direct that the dispute be referred back to the *Adalat* for reconsideration (Khondker, 2012).

**Results, Discussions and Findings:** Village courts in Bangladesh are now running under project and non-project area. Here, several village courts are being operated under ‘Activating Village Court’ project and rests of them are running as usual. In an attempt is made to comparative analysis of village court under project and non-project area on their performance and effectiveness, it is also considerable that in non-projected area about 23 cases were lodged in contrast in projected area more than 200 cases were lodged. So it can be easily revealed that the rate of lodging case in projected area is 10<sup>th</sup> time higher than the non-project area.

Table 1. Type of Case (Complain) usually lodging in Village Court (non-project area).

	Number	Percent
Trial for unlawful assembly	2	2.8
Trial for simple hurt	17	23.6
Trial for impairments of harvest or others	21	29.2
Trial for trespass	2	2.8
Trial for riot	10	13.9
Trial for familial and domestic violence	46	63.9
Trial for fight	53	73.6
Trial for hurt by unwilling/sudden provocation	8	11.1
Trial for wrong doing	3	4.2
Trial for grievous hurt	6	8.3

Source: Field survey, Delduar, Tangail district, November, 2014.

Table 2. Difficulties faced as a Litigant in Non-project Area (Multiple Responses).

	Number	Percent
Threaten by opposition	9	31.0
Attempt to forceful arbitration/mutual	7	24.1
Suggestion from influential person for mutual	4	13.8
Disobedience of opposition on VC trial	3	10.3
Biasness of Judges/Jury	1	3.4
Lengthy process	4	13.8
Victim of torture	1	3.4
Threaten by opposition	9	31.0

Source: Field Survey, Delduar, Tangail district, November, 2014.

Table 1 indicates the types of cases usually lodging in the village court. It shows that maximum cases logging in the village court is the trailing of fighting (73.6%). There are some other cases such as about familial and domestic

violence and quarrel, simple hurt, impairments of harvest, simple hurt, grievous hurt and so on. This above statistics represents that the village court deals with the normal disputing issues those punishment not exceeding

twenty-five thousands taka accordance with village court act-2006. Litigants in village court non-project area faced various difficulties which are actual challenges of village court. In non-project area, among 88 respondents, 29 respondents said that they faced

difficulties during seeking services from village court. 31% responders responded a common difficulty that is threatened by opposition, whereas 4 per cent mentioned two different problems biasness of Judges/Jury in village court, victim of torture respectively (Table 2).

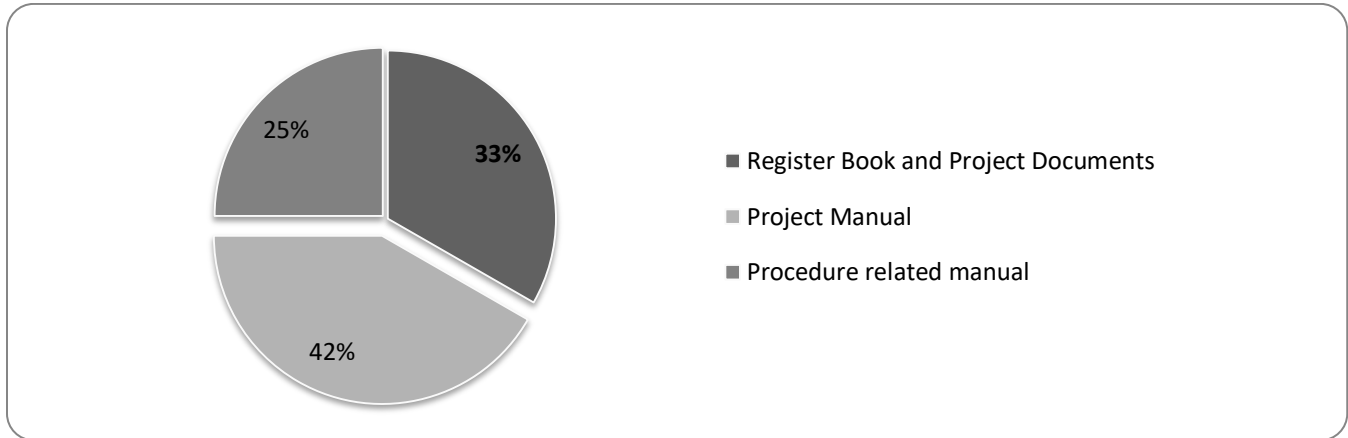


Figure 2. Facilities Related with Judges for Village Court Project.  
Source: Field Survey, Katiadi, Kishoreganj district, November, 2014.

Table 3. Barriers of Village Court Project.

Indicators of barrier	Responses	
	Number	Percent
Influential's interference of powerful	3	12.6
Political Interference	5	20.8
Didn't get any assistance from PS	5	20.8
Didn't get any assistance from Court	2	8.3
Didn't get any assistance from Administration	4	16.7
Deceptive tactics by middlemen	2	8.3
Illiteracy	1	4.2
Unconsciousness about Court	2	8.3
<b>Total</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Source: Field Survey, Katiadi, Kishoreganj district, November, 2014.

Village courts those included with project provide various judges related facilities. 42% respondents are facilitated by the project manual and 25% by the procedure related manual where 33% facilitated by register book and project documents (Figure 2). Project manual increases the awareness about village court among villagers. Procedure related manual provide the proceedings information and other formal rules and regulations related to proceedings. Register book and project documents help to find out information. Village court serves people by local participation oriented justice system. Though project village covers many

fruitful facilities but there have some barriers for village court project. Among them, Lack of assistance (20.8%), political influence (20.8%) and influence of powerful people (12.5%) are the main obstacles for the village court project. For lack of assistance of police station local leader and police are responsible. Influences of the politician and powerful people restrict the general proceedings of the cases. They influence on investigation, witness and judgment. On the other hand, village court administration and general administration system gives a worst backup. For that reason, 8.3% of the respondents didn't get any assistance from the

village court administration and 16.7% didn't get assistance from general administration. Some other people (8.3%) faces problem with middle men. These middle men deal with illegal systematic tactics to

mislead the court proceedings. Lastly, it is alarming that 8.3% respondents are unconscious about the village court in project areas (Table 3).

Table 4. Justice Received as Complainant Court in Project Area Vs Non Project Area.

Operation of Village Court		Justice Received as Complainant or Accused (%)		Total
		No	Yes	
Non Project Area	Count	32	37	69
	Operation of Village Court	46	54	100.0
Project Area	Count	27	76	103
	Operation of Village Court	26	74	100.0
Total	Count	59	113	172
	Operation of Village Court	34	66	100.0

Source: Field Survey, Delduar, Tangail district, &Katiadi, Kishoreganj district, November, 2014.

Table 5. Satisfaction Level of Performance in Project Area Vs Non Project Area.

Operation of Village Court		Satisfaction Range about the Performance of Village Court (%)					Total
		Not Satisfied	Partially Satisfied	Satisfied	Moderately Satisfied	Very Satisfied	
Non-Project Area	Count	15	14	39	12	7	87
	Operation of Village Court	17	16	45	14	8	100.0
Project Area	Count	19	9	49	19	7	103
	Operation of Village Court	18	9	48	18	7	100.0
Total	Count	34	23	88	31	14	190
	Operation of Village Court	18	12	46	16	7	100.0

Source: Field Survey, Delduar, Tangail district, &Katiadi, Kishoreganj district, November, 2014.

Both the complainant and accused expect proper judgment from the village court. So that they come to village court irrespective of project or non project area. Table 4 shows that the complainant or accused comparatively get proper justice from the project village court (74%). In contrast only 26% can't get proper justice. On the other hand in the non project village court area the situation is somewhat different. Here approximately 54% are getting justice where as 46 per cent are not getting proper justice. Table 4 revealed that if the government runs the operational activities of village court under any initiative or project then it will enhance the quality of justice. It also strengthens the activities of village court. As a result both the parties can able to get proper justice from the village court. Village courts in Bangladesh are performing as alternative

system of justice other than the traditional criminal justice system. Performance of village court are depends upon not only the government initiatives but also on the satisfaction of respected persons related with the village court proceedings. Respondents who are either accused or complainant of village court have stated their range of satisfaction upon the performance of village court. Table 5 shows that nearly 48% respondents of projected area have their satisfaction on the performance of village court where the level of satisfaction in non projected area is 45%. On the contrary, 18% of respondents in projected area and 17% respondents of non projected area are not satisfied with the performance of village court. Satisfaction about the performance depends not only on the performance of village court but also on the public expectation over village court.

Table 6. Opinion on Government's Cooperation in Village Court Project Area Vs Non Project Area.

Operation of Village Court		Opinion on Government's Cooperation for Effective Village Court (%)				Total
		Partially cooperative	Cooperative	Moderately cooperative	Very cooperative	
Non Project Area	Count	19	49	18	2	88
	Operation of Village Court	22	55	21	2	100.0
Project Area	Count	10	66	18	9	103
	Operation of Village Court	10	64	17	9	100.0
Total	Count	29	115	36	11	191
	Operation of Village Court	15	60	19	6	100.0

Source: Field Survey, Delduar, Tangail district, &Katiadi, Kishoreganj district, November, 2014.

Table 7. Effectiveness of the Judgment of Village Court in Project Area Vs Non Project Area.

Operation of Village Court		Effectiveness of the Judgment of Village Court (%)					Total
		Not effective	Partially effective	Moderately effective	Effective	Very effective	
Non Project Area	Count	7	20	26	30	5	88
	Operation of Village Court	8	23	29	34	6	100.0
Project Area	Count	7	19	36	37	4	103
	Operation of Village Court	7	18	35	36	4	100.0
Total	Count	14	39	62	67	9	191
	Operation of Village Court	17	20	32	35	5	100.0

Source: Field Survey, Delduar, Tangail district, &Katiadi, Kishoreganj district, November, 2014.

Table 8. Opinion about Effectiveness of Village Court in Project Area Vs Non Project Area.

Operation of Village Court		Opinion about Effectiveness of Village Court (%)		Total
		Effective	Not Effective	
Non Project	Count	38	50	88
	Village Court Under Project	43	57	100.0
Project	Count	76	28	104
	Village Court Under Project	73	27	100.0
Total	Count	114	78	192
	Village Court Under Project	59	41	100.0

Source: Field survey, Delduar, Tangail district, &Katiadi, Kishoreganj district, November, 2014.

Village court have establish by the Bangladesh government under the Village Court Act, 2006 (Constitution of Bangladesh, 2015). It is now operating with the direct involvement of the local government. Table 6 shows the perception of respondent about the government cooperation on the effectiveness of village

court. Almost 9% respondents of projected area have stated that government is very cooperation about the effectiveness of village court where only 2% of respondent from non projected area has stated the same. On the other hand 22% respondents in non projected area and 10% respondent of projected area have stated

that government is partially cooperation about village court. Though government's cooperation upon village court could not clearly understand only by the public perception, but the statistics might show the image of public insight about government's cooperation both in projected and non projected area. Hence, respondents in projected area have more positive perception about government's cooperation.

Measuring the effectiveness of any project or work is so difficult. In this way, it is also difficult to measure the effectiveness of village court judgment. Here, an attempt is made to measure the effectiveness of village court through the public perception. In this study the public perception on the effectiveness of village court of both projected and non projected area have been taken. Table 7 indicates that nearly 4% of respondents of projected area and 6% of non projected area have stated that judgment of village court is very effective. In contrast, 7% respondents of projected area and 8% respondent of non projected area have stated that judgment of village court is not effective. So, it indicates that public perceptions about the effectiveness of judgment of village court in both projected and non projected area are somehow similar.

Effectiveness of village court depends upon the step by step proceedings and adequate access of victim, offender and community. Here the opinions about the effectiveness of village court are mentioned by the respondent. From the respondents who are both complainant and accused in the projected area nearly 27% have stated that village court is not effective and 73% stated that village court is effective. On the other hand in non projected area, almost 57% respondents have stated that village court is not effective where 43% of respondent states village court is effective (Table 8).

In sum we may conclude that, the village court under the projects area are running better than the non-project area. So government should take this into consideration and the village court should be run through some project, which will enhance the performance and effectiveness of village court.

#### **Findings from Qualitative Assessment**

**Focus Group Discussions (FGD):** From the Focus Group Discussions, it has revealed that level of the knowledge of community about village court is quite low. In most instances, they mix up village courts with *Shalish* conducted by UP Chairman or members- as perceived by them. When further enquiry has made, as

to how and by whom the village court constituted and about the jurisdiction of village court, then it is notified that less number of the respondents are aware about the village court. One of the cause's in this regard both electronic and print media has not played adequate roles in popularizing various aspects of the village court. It has been observed that, the *Union Parishad* where project has started its operation the people is more informed about multifarious aspects related to village court and its proceedings. A major problem in institutionalizing Village Court is that, the verdict given by the court often unimplemented and one party of litigation does not want to comply with the decisions given by the court.

Consequently, the existing village courts acts and rules should make sufficient provisions for ensuring the implementation of the verdict given by the village court. The power of the village court should be increased and steps should be taken to keep the village courts away from the political influence and nepotism. It is important to raise awareness among people by forming committees at the levels of wards and villages. The Village Courts in Bangladesh may design the advocacy awareness interventions including behavior change through communication for promoting a peaceful and harmonious atmosphere in the society. To make village courts more effective competent authority should ensure transparent justice and need to ensure that justice should not be delayed. It also important to ensure punishment, if someone does not comply verdict, awareness among people through radio, television need to include, raising community people consciousness through Imams, teachers, and other respectable members in the community and lastly need to keep village courts free from political influence.

**Key Informant Interview (KII):** We took interview of some key informant like the Chairman & Member of the *Union Parishad* and we also interviewed Officer in-charge of Police Stations.

Generally, Chairman conducts the court twice a week, preferably Sunday and Thursday, but in maximum cases it cannot be conducted more than once a week. Sometimes, conducting a court is interrupted by local problems, noncooperation of accused and complaint. Generally, 2/3 cases are filed in the Village Court. Very often, some cases are also delegated by the district court. The numbers of filling cases are limited, because some cases are also resolved outside the court with the help of local elites. However, most of the cases of village court



are resolved within 3/4 months. No money is taken from the complaints, but only 100 taka is taken for official expenditure. Some forms and registers are supplied by the projects that are used to inform the advancement of the project. No training has been given regarding the conducting the course. But very often some posters and books were given regarding conduct and work procedure of the courts by the projects.

Political interference, illegal request of local elites and non co-operation of the stakeholder, lack of cooperation of the law enforcing agencies are the common problem to conduct the village courts. In spite of the other activities of the *Union Parishad* of the other activities of the *Union Parishad*, the chairman can smoothly conduct the court. Conduction of court and regarding verdict, both men and women member's suggestion is cordially accepted by the court. The *Upazila Nirbahi Officer* (UNO) and *Upzilla* Chairman donot monitor the village court activities in spite of sending them advancement report of the village court. The village people are solving conflict regarding land and pretty quarrels by themselves and very few people go to *Thana*. The village people who are not satisfied of the verdict of the court, they go to district court. Generally some criminal cases are filed in the *Thana*. At present, lack of proper manpower and logistics, *Thana* can play an effective role in crime control.

There are scope of resolving petty nature of crime both civil and criminal, by the village court, it could reduce the disposal of cases of Police Station, and important case will be resolved with special attention and care. Awareness campaign about the village court could reduce the crime rate, crime rate will be reduced.

#### **CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

Rule of law is the fundamental right of every citizen, and it is inbuilt in our constitution. Implementing and translating the essence of the rule of law in real life situation, multidimensional judicial systems have been established in Bangladesh. In formal judicial system Judges follow General and special laws. On the contrary, the informal court consists of local elite (*Matobbor*, Councilor and Chairman of the *Union Praishad*, religious leaders, and political leaders) following religious scripture, traditional and conventional laws. Since the British regime, there were diverse and chronological forms of grassroots justice system. After the independence, mass socio-economic changes, demographic transition of leadership dynamics and

changes of community feelings to individualism generates conflicts in the society and disrupts the previous grassroots justice system. Under the new Village Court Act 2006, initially court system was partially effective and the grassroots people had an easy access to justice and the verdict of the court could resolve the local conflicts and disputes. Gradually, the politicization, corruption, social division, neo-elitism, mistrust upon judges of the village court turns it less effective. To overcome the situation and make the village court system effective, the local government ministry and UNDP took the initiative 'Activating Village Court Projects' in 2009. Under the project, only 350 village courts are being implemented, but more than 4550 *Union Parisads* is out of the project. The core objective of this research is to compare and analyze the performance and effectiveness of the village court. From the field survey, FDG and KI some barriers and problems have been identified.

The study identified the related barriers and problems with the Village Court Act and to assess the effectiveness and performance of the court to the service seekers to stipulate justice. During the study, respondents were asked to mention the factors affecting the dispensation of justice. The respondents mentioned a series of factors which acts as barriers in dispensing justice through the VC. From the field survey analysis, FGD and KII, following recommendations may be considered as tools of activating Village Court:

- The jurisdiction of the project area needs to be increased in case of village court.
- Village court report regarding criminal cases needs to be supported by the law enforcement authority.
- Village Court needs to take all case of its jurisdiction before lodging case at Police Station.
- To arrange training, workshop about trial process for UP Chairman, Members and officials.
- Increasing the government and private mass media publicity and campaigning about village court for public awareness.
- Appointing manpower in assisting secretarial activities.
- Provide logistics support for conducting trail procedures.
- To reform village court laws in taking legal steps against person of contempt and provision of assistance from the law enforcement authority.

- Every court has to be gradually brought and budgeted under project.

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## NOTES

**Complainant:** Complainant is the persons who submit allegations against somebody.

**Contestant:** Contestant is the persons against the complainant submit the allegations. Someone who complain to the village dispute.

**Corruption:** Corruption is a dishonest action that destroys people's trust in the person or group. It can be in policy and practice level. In context of village court the member of the village court can favor somebody in lieu of bribe, political support and nepotism.

**NGO:** NGO worker are those non-government organizational worker or volunteer who works for the promotion and activation of village court.

**Population:** The particular people involved in the process of Village Court. They are complains, accused and witness.

**Rule of Law:** The rule of law is an ambiguous term that can mean different things in different contexts. In one context the term means rule according to law. No individual can be ordered by the government to pay civil damages or suffer criminal punishment except in strict accordance with well established and clearly defined laws and procedures.

## GLOSSARY

**Shalish:** Shalish is informal. Shalish has no legal basis and is not recognized by the government. Shalish is conducted by village 'Matbar' (Community Leader). There is no specific rules and regulation in Shalish. Shalish does not keep any written document about the case.

**Union Parishad:** Union Parishad are the smallest rural administrative and local government units in Bangladesh. Each Union is made up of nine Wards. Usually one village is designated as a Ward.

**Upazila:** Middle-tier rural administrative unit in Bangladesh. An Upazila consists of several Union Parishads. It is also functioning as a sub-unit of districts.

**Upazila Nirbahi Officer:** Chief Executive Officer at the Upazila level.

**Thana:** Upazila is formally known as Thana.

**Gram Adalat:** A Village Court is a grass root level judicial system of Bangladesh under the legal provision of village Court Act, 2006. It is also called *Gram Adalat*. Aim of the Court is to dispense Justice to the Community Level in regards to minor issues.