



How They Stop It

Best practices on the prevention of child marriage, gender based violence and sexual harassment

Mohammad Golam Sarwar



European Union



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Glossary & Acronyms

| | |
|------|--------------------------------|
| ADR | Alternative Dispute Resolution |
| CMRA | Child Marriage Restraint Act |
| CSO | Civil Society Organization |
| DVA | Domestic Violence Act |
| FF | Field Facilitator |
| FO | Field Officer |
| HRD | Human Rights Defenders |
| KII | Key Informant Interview |
| LA | Local Authority |
| NGO | Non-Government Organizations |
| SDG | Sustainable Development Goal |
| UNO | Upazila Nirbahi Officer |

Executive Summary

The increasing number of child marriages and incidents of domestic violence shows a gloomy picture for girls and women in Bangladesh. In order to stop child marriage and prevent domestic violence, the government of Bangladesh has enacted necessary laws and policies. However, enforcement of relevant laws remains a crucial challenge that deserves to be addressed with concerted effort. The following seventeen case stories reflect the best practices of preventing child marriages and domestic violence. The case stories indicate that the local government, Upazila administration and other implementing stakeholders identified under the relevant laws, Civil society Organisations (CSOs), are working together to empower people in order to eradicate the vices of child marriage and domestic violence.

Over the years, CSOs are playing an instrumental role in preventing child marriages and domestic violence through advocacy, and providing psycho-social support to the victims. CSOs are also coordinating with the government so that people can avail of government support and empower themselves to fight back against child marriages and domestic violence. The activities and contribution of the CSOs facilitate the government to understand the root causes and thereby take action together to uproot the evils of child marriages. The coordinated and concerted attempts of local government and CSOs help to stop the occurrence of child marriages. CSOs also help to avail legal aid services, provides support to file cases against domestic violence. The case stories also showed that the CSOs played pivotal role while providing support to the victim as well as mobilising the relevant stakeholders including local chairman and police to stand beside the victims and undertake necessary action.

It is noted that in order to successfully stop child marriages, follow up of a case is very significant because the parents of the child often re-attempt to marry off their daughters if they find better opportunities. In this regard, the role of CSO is also praiseworthy because CSOs constantly maintain follow ups with the victims that help to stop child marriage successfully. It is noteworthy to mention that the initiative and intervention of CSO helps to prevent child marriage by notary public which founds to be a widespread practice in the research areas. The CSOs not only raised the issue before the District Commissioner but also played pivotal role to organise democratic dialogue where relevant stakeholders including members of local government, Upazila Administration and most importantly the lawyers and officials from local bar association were present. The dialogue helped to make the lawyers realise about their misdeeds and commit themselves not to conduct any further child marriage through notary public. A couple of case stories portray the role and initiative of the student forum in making students and children especially girls aware and trained about basic human rights and gender issues. The activities and training of the student forum helped the girls to realise their potentials and to fight back against harassment and abusive practices.

As we all know the Covid-19 pandemic has shaken our economy leaving a large number of people in the cycle of poverty. Such poverty leads to the increasing number of child marriages and incidences of domestic violence during pandemic. In this regard, the CSO members came forward to contribute to tackling the crisis with their combined efforts. The members of the CSOs also successfully distributed relief in their locality with a systematic effort.

While the ongoing pandemic increases the vulnerability of girls and women, the following case stories reflect positive perspectives and strategies that can be taken into account while undertaking future action plan to prevent child marriages and domestic violence.



1. Introduction

NETZ Partnership for Development and Justice is a non-governmental organisation that aims to promote human rights and justice in Bangladesh with a focus on the most vulnerable and marginalised people to create an enabling environment in the society for demanding good governance, a non-discriminatory society, and social justice.

NETZ, in partnership with WE CAN and DASCOH Foundation, Since the project has been completed already, the sentence should be...'has implemented'. a project titled “Strengthened Civil Society Protects and Promotes Women’s Rights” (EIDHR/2017/397-087 with the financial assistance of the European Union. The overall objective of the project is that civil society, democracy activists, and Human Rights Defenders (HRDs) proactively enhance the protection and promotion of human rights and further democratisation in Bangladesh. Being part of this project, NETZ has undertaken the following study to identify the best practices and lessons learned by assessing the changes it has brought as a result of project intervention especially on the successful application of the Domestic Violence Act (DVA), 2010 and Child Marriage Restraint Act (CMRA), 2017. The outcome of the documentation will also serve as the knowledge product to be shared across a wider audience and will be used as an advocacy tool for policy inputs on the DVA and CMRA.

2. Purpose and Objective

The overall objective of this study is to analyse the case studies and identify the best practices that portray the successful application of DVA and CMRA. The identification of best practices shall also indicate possible ways of effective implementation of both the Acts.

The study shall, specifically, undertake the following tasks:

- Document the best practices and lessons learned during the project implementation cycle in the form of narrative and case stories for showcasing to a wide spectrum of audience
- Capture and document case stories showcasing changes and impacts brought out by the project interventions.

3. Methodology

The study has analysed 34 cases in total. The case stories have been collected from 4 districts including Sirajganj, Pabna, Chapainawabganj, and Naogaon. NETZ, in partnership with WE CAN and DASCOH Foundation, is working in the aforesaid districts where a good number of case stories have been documented.

While selecting the best practices out of those cases, the study scrutinised the cases considering their impact and prospects. The study has followed the qualitative approach to analyse the cases. To determine the best practices relating to case stories, the study has identified the following indicators. While making the list of indicators the study has consulted with relevant literature, journals, online materials to have a proper understanding of the subject of the study. In identifying the best practices, the study emphasises the role of CSOs in preventing child marriage and domestic violence. The best practices have also been measured based on their implications towards the implementation of laws and rules.

3.1 Indicators of analysing best practices:

- Whether the child marriage was stopped permanently and successfully?
- What mechanisms have been worked behind such success?
- What was the role of CSOs?
- Whether there was any intervention from the local government to stop child marriage?
- Did CSOs face any challenge to prevent such child marriage?
- What kind of coordination has been happened among CSOs, NGOs, and the local government?
- What kind of support has been offered to the victims of child bride?
- Whether the victims of domestic violence are feeling safe and empowered?
- What kind of psycho-social support has been given to the victims?
- Is this practice replicable elsewhere? How?
- Whether the best practice indicates any prospect that may be followed in the subsequent cases?
- To what extent the best practices contribute to stop child marriage and domestic violence while promoting women's rights?

3.2 Key Informant Interview (KII)

After primary analysis of the case stories, the study identified missing information in each case story. In order to collect that missing information and to portray a comprehensive picture of the case, the study has conducted a good number of KIIs at the field level. Due to Covid-19 health restriction, the study has undertaken the KIIs over digital platform. The respondents of the KII include the CSO members and staff working at WE CAN and DASCOH. The information received from the CSO members facilitates to validate the information contained in the case stories and to understand the impact of the best practices at the field level. Their information also helped to learn the role of CSO in preventing child marriage and domestic violence.

3.3 Analysis and Reporting

Considering the aforesaid indicators and information received through KIIs, the study conducted a thorough analysis on the selected case stories. After a draft report is prepared, the Consultant has shared the draft with NETZ to have their feedback and comments. All the comments and feedback have been duly addressed and incorporated in the final report.

4. Analysis of Case story and identification of best Practices

The following Seventeen (17) cases have been selected for analysis with a view to identifying best practices that are reflected in these stories. These stories are collected from 4 different districts being located in the northern part of Bangladesh. These cases reflect the stories of the victims of child marriage and domestic violence and also indicate how these victims survive by their own or with the support of CSO members. The stories portray not only the vulnerabilities of women but also show the inherent strength and resilient of girls and women who fought back against child marriage and domestic violence. Couple of stories reflects the role of organised youth in preventing child marriage and domestic violence. It is noted that while addressing the names of the victims and their families and other associated persons, fictitious names have been used in order to protect their identity and reputation.



4.1 Case stories

Case story:
Collective initiative of CSOs and local authority stopped a
child marriage and brought back the girl her right to education

01



Summary of the case

Md. Shariful Islam lives in the village Dhubil Mehmanshahi which is located at Dhubil union in Royganj upazilla. He took the initiative to marry off his daughter Jinia (fake name) who is in tenth grade. Her marriage was set with a groom who lives in the village Aamsora of the same union on 20/09/18. Sonia was born in a lower-middle-income family. She has a sister and a brother. Her father had already married off his elder daughter, Sabina. Thinking about Sonia's security her father decided to marry her off. In this case, they found a groom from a well-off family who is financially solvent and has a good job. Meanwhile, the CSO of Dhubil Mehmanshahi got to know about the matter. It is noted that one of the CSO members, Morium was the neighbor of Sonia's house. She at first realised about the marriage while seeing an unknown guest in Sonia's house and she informed other CSO members.

The concerned CSO let the Union Parishad Member Hasina know about the incident. Moreover, on 11th September 2018, the matter of Sonia was discussed and it was decided to take joint steps to prevent the marriage. As per the decision, on the following day, Yakub, Hamida, Mariyam, Momena, Rokshana, Fulal, and Union Parishad member Hasina visited Saiful. They tried to make him understand that this is a child marriage as the girl is still a minor and the relevant law restricts to commit child marriage. CSO members and Field Facilitator (FF) of WE CAN pointed out the punishment as well as the negative effect of the marriage of Jinia. They explained to Saiful how this marriage can halt her education which will ruin her bright future. He, being her father, will not want his daughter's future to be ruined. After hearing all the conversations, Saiful assured them that he won't get his daughter married

now even if it is against his will. CSO member informed the Chairman about the matter. Sarmin, staff of We Can and CSO members kept the matter under follow-up. They could finally stop the marriage after many obstacles. The organisations paid another visit to Saiful's house to ensure the continuance of Jinia's education. It was even decided in a meeting on 9/9/18 that matters regarding education would be kept under observation too. After that, mental support was provided to Jinia with the support of UP members Hasian and Alliance members along with WE CAN Staff. Jinia realised that child marriage is one kind of violation of Child rights.

Jinia is continuing her studies. She will give her SSC exam in 2020. Jinia's father is managing her education cost. Her father realised his mistake.

The above matter created a positive image of CSO in society. People started believing more in CSO. WE CAN and CSO members are getting more popular. Alongside the organisation people are giving credit to Saiful for stopping the marriage.

Learning from this case story

The case story carries a glaring example of preventing child marriage with the support and intervention of CSO members. The story reflects a collaborative approach among CSO members, WE CAN, members of local government including member of Upazila Parishad. This story also indicates that the Chairman can involve the village police to stop child marriage. Though not mentioned in the fact, however, while talking to the CSO it has been learned that UNO also encourages the CSOs for their initiatives.

The story reminds us again that ending child marriage requires intervention from all sectors of the society including Government, Non-government, Civil Society, and people in general. It requires us to apprehend the complex drivers behind the evil practice of child marriage in various contexts and adapt interventions accordingly. In the given case, the interventions of the CSO members were strategic and effective that led to the successful prevention of child marriage.

Their efficient steps made the father realise his mistake. They didn't merely rely on the words of the father but ensured he doesn't change his mind by keeping the matter under follow-up. This ensured that even if the father did have any intention to give his daughter's marriage secretly, he could not take such steps as he knew he was being watched. In the meantime, the CSO was taking steps to empower the girl while ensuring the continuance of her education. This is another praiseworthy work of the CSO. However, the working of CSO was not smooth rather they face challenges in preventing such child marriages. In this case, the parents of the girl threatened the CSO members while asking to bear all the responsibilities of the girl if any unwanted situation happens to her. They also asked whether the CSOs will bear the responsibilities of the girls in providing food and clothes.

However, the coordinated approach and strategies undertaken by CSO and local government representatives helped to prevent the commission of child marriage. Another significant aspect of this case story was that here CSO members did not undertake any forceful measure to prevent child marriages rather they took steps to make aware the concerned parent while informing him about the negative aspects of child marriage. The father of the girl realised and voluntarily agreed to stop the child marriage. It is noted that this case story leaves room for our policy-makers to emphasise more on making people aware and empowered that would facilitate to prevent such child marriages.

Case story:
Democratic dialogue helps to stop illegal practice of
conducting child marriage through notary public

02



Summary of the case

A joint workshop with LAs and CSOs was organised on 26 August 2019 with the objective to find out the way forward to stop child marriage at least in their locality. In the workshop District Commissioner (DC) and other government officials were present. In the workshop, an issue was raised by a CSO member that a huge number of child marriages happening based on Notary Public in their areas. Though there is no provision of such marriage under any existing laws of Bangladesh, these marriages are being conducted with the help of corrupt advocates who issue such notary. These marriages have no legal basis and community people are not aware of the fact. He also said that they didn't find any initiatives from any district administrator or bar council against this malpractice. After hearing this issue, Deputy Commissioner (DC) of the district took a decision in the workshop to arrange a dialogue with the lawyers who are providing Notary/affidavit. In this regard, a democratic dialogue was held on 02 December 2019 with the lawyers who are providing Notary/affidavit. Before that DC issued a letter to Bar Association of Naogaon to ensure the presence of lawyers in dialogue. In dialogue meeting, 09 lawyers out of 10, secretary of Bar Association and relevant government officials attended. In the meeting, firstly, lawyers did not agree with the complaint of HRDs. But when proper evidence was shown in the meeting, finally they promised that they would not certify the underage girls and boys for marriage. DC also assigned responsibility to the Secretary of Naogaon Bar Association for monitoring and following-up of the issue. Now Notary Public is not certifying the underage girls and boys for marriage in this area. In the meantime, 3 child marriage cases were returned from Notary Public office and these girls are continuing their schooling. HRDs are also monitoring the issues in their locality. This initiative created a positive impact in the society to stop child marriage.

Learning from this case story

The case story identified and resolved one of the most important challenges to prevent child marriages. Child marriage through notary public is an illegal practice that is prevalent in the research areas. Though this marriage through notary public has no justification in the eye of law, the parties to the child marriages often engaged with child marriage with the belief that since lawyers are issuing certificates, they can exempt from liability of conducting child marriages. Such rampant practices by the lawyers induced a misbelief among the commoners. CSOs are working to address this issue and one such initiative is reflected in the present case. The continuous efforts of the CSO facilitated the DC to undertake action against the malpractices of notary public lawyers. A democratic dialogue with the presence of local authority, CSOs, lawyers, government officials and secretary bar association was held. This dialogue helped to correct the notary public lawyers in front of all the relevant stakeholders. The discussion held in the dialogue helped them to realise their wrongs and to commit themselves not to undertake any further child marriage through notary public. The intervention of the CSO starting from raising the issue to organising the dialogue was remarkable which makes the present case as a best practice.



Summary of the case

Shamima Khatun is the daughter of Mr Samsul Haque from Tatoir village of Sapahar Upazila of Naogaon district. After her mother's death, Shamima's father got married again. When Shamima was eleven years old, her parents conducted her marriage with a 31 years old man. Shamima was being raped (intercourse without her consent) by her husband every day since her marriage, but her parents did not give any importance to the mental and physical torture she had faced by her husband. Even though she cried for not going to her father in law's house, her parents compelled her to go there. One day while Shamima's father-in-law was taking her to her parent's house, Shamima ran away. She thought that she would go somewhere else where she would not be found or she would commit suicide. Local people found her and after talking to her, they realised her situation and they informed Mariam, a local CSO member. Mariam brought Shamima to her house and heard everything from her. Then Mariam informed the matter to police and Union chairman. Chairman and police authority called Shamima's father and made a bond signed by him that he would not send his daughter to her husband's house. On the same day, Shamima also divorced her husband by the help of police. Shamima was passing well for few days after her divorce, but her father again tried to arrange marriage for her. Shamima informed that to Mariam and Mariam brought her to a relative's house. Shamima is now enrolled in class seven at Sapahar Zaman Nagar high school with the help of Mariam.

Learning from this case story

The case is another example of preventing child marriage as well as domestic violence with the intervention of CSO. This case again started with child marriages and ended with domestic violence which shows that child marriage can be a source for domestic violence.

This case also reflects about the marital rape which remains ignored in most of the cases. Child brides being victims of marital rape often faced torture and other maltreatment by their husbands. It is noted the bridegroom and his parents are well aware to the fact of marital rape and they consider this practice as granted. In the present, Shamima was about to flee when she could not tolerate the tortuous behavior by the husband. The CSO played a vital role while providing support to the victim as well as mobilizing the relevant stakeholders including local chairman and police to stand beside her. Chairman and Police took strong action to break such imbalanced marital tie and divorce the husband. It is noted that the parents of Shamima could not take lesson from the story, they continued to pursue her marriage again. However, with the constant support and follow up by CSO helped Shamima to continue her education while residing in her relative's house. The role of CSO deserves to be taken into account while undertaking action plan to prevent child marriage and domestic violence.



Summary of the case

Violence against women in our society is an everyday matter. In our society, women are constantly being victimised in various ways. On opening the page of the newspaper, you will be greeted with news of horrific incidents like torture against women and children, domestic violence, and rape happening in different parts of the country, in one way or another. Children are not even immune to such abuse. Tender girls are also victims of heinous acts like rape. Moreover, as a result of child marriage, most children are being deprived of their right to education. As a result, the bright futures of many young girls are being nipped in the bud. Khaleda from Gowarakhi village in the Poushar union is no exception to this cycle of torture.

The name of the girl is Khaleda, whose father is Abdul Khalil. They live in Goarakhi village which is located at Madhai Nagar Union under Tarash Upazila in Sirajganj district. Khaleda was a student of eighth grade in the Poushar tribal high school. She was born in a middle-income earning family. Her dream is to study. Her parents know about her dreams. But her father thinks that if he can get the daughter married with as little education as possible, he may be spared from the responsibility. This is the view of most of the parents in the locality. But they do not know about the consequences of child marriages. Khaleda's father A. Khalil decided to marry off Khaleda as he has found a suitable groom. Without heeding Khaleda's opinion, they fixed the wedding date on 17/04/2020 with Md Ayub (15), son of Abdul Mannan who lives in the neighbouring village Parbotipur. When the entire country was under lockdown due to the Covid-19 pandemic and most people were suffering from hunger, Khaleda's parents were planning to arrange the wedding of their girl secretly. But it could not happen because of the intervention of Hasan who is a member of the Student Forum. Hasan immediately set about trying to stop this child marriage. Hassan works to prevent child marriage. He informed the We Can officials about this and requested them to take steps to prevent the marriage.

Initiatives by Student Forum: Hasan is an active member of the Student Forum of Poushar Adivasi High School. He came to know about the incident from Khaleda's cousin that the child marriage was going to take place on 17/04/20 by the will of the parents. He went to Khaleda's house in the morning of 17/04/20 with his school classmate Hakim and talked to his parents about Khaleda's marriage. They told the parents that Khaleda being 14, cannot be married off in the eye of law. If she is given married at this age, her education will be hampered in addition to having various physical problems. Moreover, child marriage is a punishable offense. If the administration knows about this marriage, they might take legal action against the parents. Hearing this, Khaleda's father did not pay attention to them and said he doesn't understand much. He added that he will marry his daughter off as per his wish. While being helpless, Hasan informed FF Kamruzzaman about the matter and requested him to take initiative to prevent the marriage. Not only that, Hasan kept in touch with the FO and stayed around the bride's house until the Member, Chowkidar came and prevented the marriage.

We Can's initiative

After FF Kamruzzaman came to know about child marriage from Hasan, he informed FO Mahabub. The FO immediately informed the chairman about the child marriage. The chairman wrote the name and address from the FO. After informing the chairman, the FO informed the UNO about the matter over the phone.

UNO's initiatives

After being informed about the issue of child marriage by phone and message from the FO of We Can, UNO directed the Chairman of Madhainagar Union Parishad to take initiative to prevent such child marriage on urgent basis.

Chairman's initiative

After learning about the issue of child marriage from WE CAN's FO and receiving instructions from UNO, the Madhainagar UP Chairman took the initiative to prevent the marriage by sending the concerned ward member and chowkidar. UP member Fazlar Rahman went to Khaleda's house along with Chowkidar and told her father Khalil to stop the marriage. He also said that if the marriage was not stopped, UNO and police would come and arrest him. Moreover, Fazlar Rahman advised him to give her in marriage when she becomes 18. After hearing the member's words, Khaleda's father agreed to stop the marriage.

Outcome

Khaleda was saved from getting married at an early age due to the Student forum's Initiative. Khaleda's father vowed not to marry her off till she attains majority. She could continue her study.

Learning from this case story

The case reveals a successful story of preventing child marriage with the help of collaborative effort from different stakeholders including Student forums, local government, and CSOs. The initiative of the student forum not only facilitates the prevention of child marriage but also helps to rejuvenate the relevant actors and stakeholders to play their role in addressing social evils including child marriage. The case story also unveils the role and power of organised youth to

prevent child marriage and contribute to the making of a good society. In a developing country like Bangladesh, the role of youth is instrumental to address the drivers of social change and eradicate evil practices from society.

In this case, the role of CSO especially WE CAN deserves to be appreciated. The field officers of WE CAN not only provide awareness to the people but also mobilise the stakeholders to prevent child marriages. In the present case, the CSO informed the local chairman and UNO and undertaken an initiative of collaborative endeavor that led to the prevention of marriages. It is generally assumed that though a child marriage initially stopped, however, within a few days that marriage occurred secretly with the help of parents and relatives of the child. But in this case, the CSO was closely observing the parents and the child and taking follow-up so that a secret marriage could not happen. The close monitoring and counseling of the parents by CSO helps them to realise at a certain point about the consequences of child marriage.

Case story: | 05
Psycho-social support from fellow
friends saved Mohona's life



Summary of the case

Mohona is 13 years old. She lives at Harolpara village in Majapara Atghoria upazila of Pabna. She studies in class 8 at Shahid Abdul Khalek High School. Mohona had a good relationship with her parents. However, the relationship between her father and mother was not good. They often engage with quarrels. Mohona was not mature enough to understand the reason behind such quarrels. When her father wasn't at home, her mother would cry. Mohona's grandmother would always scold her mother badly due to which her parents used to engage in conflict even at night. Mohona's days were passing as such. Her sadness was increasing with each passing day. Finally, her parents got separated. At that time, Mohona was in grade seven. She was left in the custody of her father. Mohona would cry always thinking about her mother. She wanted to see her mother multiple times but her mother could not contact her. Now, Mohona is determined to know the reason for the indifference between her parents. Every time Mohona would go to her grandmother, she would yell about Mohona's mother. She would even label her mother with bad names. Mohona's mother was unable to tolerate such abuse. So, she decided to break the bondage of the marriage. After the separation of her parents, loneliness took over Mohona. She passes her days crying. She stopped hanging out with her friends.

Mohona's father got re-married. Mohona was in good terms with her father before he got re-married. But her step mother wasn't very nice towards her. She started talking to her about why her mother left her, why her grandmother always scolded her. After a few days, Mohona got to know that her mother re-married too. This broke her heart even more. Her father while consoling her, told her she is his daughter and will take care of her. This incident made Mohona even more confused about her parents. Her stepmothers' rough behavior towards her attracted pity from the neighbors. They were discussing how unfortunate Mohona was to never get the love of a mother. A neighbor told her she was adopted. Her parents adopted her when she was 25 days old.

The reality of her birth raised her sadness. Loneliness gulped her. One day she asked her father about her real parents. Her father told her the truth on the condition that she wouldn't leave him. She promised her father that she wouldn't leave him and she would continue to love him. They shared a moment of sadness. After a while Mohona explained her father why she wants to know who her real parents are. She went to visit her real parents after collecting the address.

Her real parents have two daughters. They are quite well-off. They gave Mohona up for adoption just because she was a female. The truth behind her adoption shattered Mohona's heart to a hundred pieces. Despite her mother's request to stay, she came back. She was hurt and thought she was dead to them. She came back to her father Mojahar Khan.

Mohona's stepmother didn't like her return. Mohona wasn't herself either. She shared her sorrow with her paternal cousin Halima Khatun. She told her that she had lost the will to survive. She no longer had any desire to move forward and that her father was suffering because of her.

Halima was a member of Student forum of Shahid Abdul Khalek High School. She understood that Mohona was being subject to mental torture. She was suffering from mental pressure. Halima informed the matter to another student forum member Isha.

Meanwhile Mohona took preparation for suicide. Isha and Halima visited Mohona. They spent the whole day together. Mohona gradually returned back to her normal self with the help of their support.

Mohona started smiling again. Seeing her happy Isha and Halima informed the WE CAN Field facilitator Ms. Fuljan Khatun. Mohona Told FF that she had decided to end her life. If she is alive today this was because of Student Forum. She wouldn't repeat the mistake again.

Learning from this case story

The case story shows how a life was saved with the support of student forum. A 15 years old girl who was about to commit suicide, came back and realise her mistakes.

Suicide is never a solution. Being born as a child is not a crime. The female children should not be treated as a burden rather they deserve a peaceful atmosphere to grow up which was missing in case of Mohona. The story reminds us that children deserves love and affection especially when they are passing critical moments. When anyone suffers from loneliness, he or she needs companionship to come out from the depression. In our society, the parents do not consider the growth of the children rather they engage in conflicts in front of the children that disrupts the proper flourishing of the children. In this case, Mohona's parents did not play their parenting role effectively which contribute to shatter the grievance of Mohona. The case story reveals psychological torture against Mohona which causes to opt for committing suicide. However, the role of student forum is praiseworthy that deserves to be explored. The members of the student forum provided mental support to Mohona at her distress time which makes her realise to understand the meaning of life and spirit to survive in this beautiful world. The mental support also boosts her confidence to move ahead.

Here the role WE and CSO member is mention worthy. With their guidance, supervision, motivation and training on psycho-social support, members of the student were able to come

forward in such a critical moment of Mohona. In a way, the CSOs are mobilising the youth to come forward to help each other especially at the time of distress and suffering. The CSOs also monitor and follow up the activities of the student forum which help the members of the student forum to remain united and committed to fight against common cause and to contribute for the welfare of the society. It is noted that the government has social services including shelter homes and social welfare measures, however, these services are rarely reached to the victims of violence. The contribution of the CSOs reminds us that the collaborative effort with government, non-government and CSOs can strengthen the psycho-social support system which is significant to address the vulnerabilities of victims of violence and torture.



Summary of the case

Srimati Rumpa Rani (fake name) and her husband Sri Prasanta Biswas along with their children were managing their livelihoods but with hardship. Prasanta Biswas works at a grocery store in Ekdanta Bazar with a very low wage. Along with poverty they used to engage with conflicts and quarrels which at some point reaches to violence.

If things weren't bad enough already, the COVID situation made things even worse. Grocery sales went down drastically. Less transaction meant less profit. The shop owner had to make pay cuts as he used to pay Prasanta from the profits he used to make. The pay cut made it very hard for Prasanta's family to survive. Poverty has led to a further increase in domestic violence.

On 17/05/2020, after hearing the news of distribution of 10 kg rice, 2 kg potatoes, 1 kg salt among 600 families in Ekdanta Union, Rumpa Rani informed her husband Prasanta that the government is distributing lots of aids and said, "instead of sitting at home you could go and see if you could bring anything". On hearing this, Prasanta suddenly got very angry and exclaimed that ever since his birth he never had the habit of asking for anything. Rumpa Rani said that during times of crisis one cannot take into account so many things. Before she could finish her words, a quarrel erupted between the two. At one stage, Prasanta being excited started beating Rumpa.

The members of CSO of Ekdanta came to know about the incidence. When CSO leader Bhokti Rani met Rumpa Rani and asked her why she was looking upset, she informed her the story. The CSO members then organised a special meeting regarding this on 18 May 2020. They discussed about putting an end to things like this and took decision of bringing them out of this oppression.

They gave the responsibility of this task to 3 women and 2 members. They talked to them about a poster which said "What kind of family do you want?" and attached it in the noticeable places. In line with this, the assigned persons used to visit the concerned husband and wife regularly. At one point, Prasant and Rumpa Rani came to the realisation that there is no good in engaging

with such type of conflict. Rather it is better to face and solve the problems together. They stated to the responsible visitors that, “the favour you people did for us cannot be obtained by money. If we work as per your suggestions, there will be no violence in any family. The entire society would be violence free”.

Learning from this case story

The case story is an example how a family has freed itself from violence. The story contains a positive message for other families. It is undeniable that poverty has a linkage with domestic violence which was also reflected in the present case. However, the mutual understanding and compromise may facilitate to survive along with poverty. The pandemic situation is unprecedented that also contribute to engage in conflicts at home. The government is distributing aids and services, so as a citizen there is nothing wrong to avail that services. In the present case, Prasanta Biswas did not realise that as a citizen he is entitled to get the government aids especially in the time of pandemic. Rather he has committed domestic violence against tumpa which shows a patriarchal attitude and dominance over women. That’s how the women are being victims of domestic violence. However, in the present case, the oppression of domestic violence could not prolong due to the intervention of the CSO members. Here, the CSO members played significant role starting from engaging few members and to providing motivation to the concerned husband and wife.

It is to be noted that the campaign of the CSO members helped the husband realise about his mistakes that paved the way to come out of violent behaviour. It is mention worthy that there are laws and policies which did not reach to the door of the common people like Prasanta and Rumpa. Instead of legal battle, the power of counseling and psychological support while making people aware about their rights and duties can sometimes give a good result which is indicated in this case. Unless and until people realise about the importance of compromise and sacrifice in case of conjugal life, a family may engage in conflicts. In this regard, it is recommended that CSOs should be trained on counseling and psychological support so that they can stand beside the victims of violence. It is noted that violence and oppression cannot be an option to deal with family life rather mutual respect and understanding may help to lead a peaceful conjugal life which was pioneered by the CSO members in this case. This case shows how CSO members facilitate to bring fundamental shift in the social attitudes and beliefs that is instrumental to prevent domestic violence. And the CSO members also got inspired from this story which will motivate them to work in other similar cases.



Summary of the case

Reena Rani Orao is the daughter of Shantimoy and Surabala. They live in Badalgachhi village which is located in Badalgachhi Upazila under Naogaon district. Her husband's name is Harendranath who lives in Kalibari village under Tarash Upazila of Sirajganj district.

Reena and Harendra Nath got married in 2005 according to the social norms of the Urao dynasty. Only for three months after the marriage, Reena and her husband lived together happily. After that Reena has been subjected to physical and mental torture by her husband for various reasons. Reena's husband was working in a private company however, he lost his job suddenly. This leads to financial scarcity in the family. In addition, to repay the loan from different person, he had to sell the only belongings land and now he is continuing his livelihood with a shop of insecticide in the local area bazar.

Moreover, since the marriage, there was less bond between husband and wife. Financial issue, disagreement of opinion, lack of self-confidence towards each other all combined were responsible for the indifference between them. Moreover, her husband pressurised Reena to bring money from her father's house. Because of this, Reena often had to suffer physical and mental abuse. Reena had been living under inhuman torture at her husband place.

Amidst all these, Reena gave birth to a son and a daughter. Reena's dream was that if he saw the children's face, maybe her husband would behave better.

But the opposite happened. When the expenses of the family started increasing, Harendra Nath started living a nomadic life. He became intoxicated without doing any work. He returns home being drunk everyday.

If she said anything, he started to abuse her with offensive language and physically torture her. He would also beat children. He would start beating with whatever he could get his hands on. Despite everyday tortures, Reena Rani still wanted to have a family because of her children.

Reena endured all the torture on her. Harendra Nath used to misbehave with Reena's family member when they came to talk about their issues. Helpless Reena was living in Harendra Nath house in pain.

The monthly meeting of CSO was held on 17/07/18 at Maya Rani's house in Kachla Para. Each month's meeting, the CSOs discuss issues such as prevention of domestic violence, violence against women, women's rights, equality between men and women. So it became known in the Kachla Para area that a group of 25 people has been formed who work against the oppression of women.

Reena got to know about the meetings too. So, Reena participated in the CSO meeting held on 4/9/18 and listened to the subject matter of the meeting attentively. Towards the end of the meeting, Reena told CSO leaders Maya Rani and Field Facilitator Kamruzzaman in person about all the incidents of torture in her life and sought the cooperation of the organization.

After hearing the incident, Kamruzzaman told all the members in the meeting that Reena Rani was being subjected to heinous torture in her life. We have to stand by his side. She must be protected from further abuse. We all have to stand by Reena at the same time to protect her from torture. We will have to talk to her husband about this later. They decided at the meeting to protect Reena from her husband's abuse subject to discussion. Maya Rani was given the responsibility to talk to Reena's husband about this.

Initiative of CSO: As per the decision of the meeting, CSO member Mayarani spoke to Harendra Nath. At this time, she raised the issue of his family and the torture of Reena. Harendra Nath was embarrassed to hear these words from Maya Rani and remained silent. Moreover, Maya Rani said, torturing women is a crime. She also informed UP Chairman about this case. After some days later, a village salish was organised to resolve the issue. Harendra Nath agreed to sit without saying anything. An arbitration meeting was held in the yard of Harendra Nath on 29/0920. At the meeting, residents of the affected areas and CSO members explained that domestic violence and violence against women is a crime. they also said that Reena Rani could have resorted to law for the torture inflicted upon her.

Village Salish also said that you are destroying the society by torturing Reena inhumanely. Reena is a patient and family girl. Everyone advised him to have a good family with her children without torturing her. Hearing all this, Harendra Nath became ashamed and realised his mistakes. Without further argument, Harendra Nath folded his hands and apologized to the crowd. "You have opened my eyes," he said.

I am a criminal. My crime is unforgivable. However, I promise that I will not torture Reena in the future. After hearing the words of Harendra Nath, village shalish gave another chance to him. CSO members also wished that they will be well of from now on. They joined the hands of the husband and wife and advised to forget all the sorrows and pains of the past and start a new family.

Current situation: Reena is currently doing well with her husband and children.

Learning from this case story

The case story shows how Reena fight back against torture by husband with the support of CSO and local Salish. It is noted that violence against women is a daily occurrence in today's society. For various reasons, women are victims of harassment in the family and society. This ongoing violence against women is one of the challenges in the ensuring of

equality of men and women and empowerment of women. These issues of violence against women are not seen as a social or family crime but in most cases, they remain hidden or unreported. As a result, the level of torture is increasing. The case of Reena Rani reflects a story of a victim of domestic violence. In this case, Reena got the opportunity to stand against the torture inflicted upon her. CSO's meeting was a chance for her which she successfully utilised. She could tell her story and the members of CSO came forward to take action based on her story. The story reflects both preventive and reformatory measures against domestic violence. The story reminds us again that a matter can be resolved mutually while keeping the best interest of both the parties. Here it is noted that to eradicate domestic violence, the aim of CSO is not to break a family, they act to make the people realise about their wrongs and facilitate to bring behavioral change through counseling. That's why firstly they discussed with Reena's husband and attempted to solve the problem. The role of salish in this case was praiseworthy.

It is well settled that salish provides an alternative forum to resolve disputes amicably. In the present case, Harendanath was ignorant of the present legal system. He wasn't aware of the punitive sanction of the laws. Had he known the present acts and legislature of the country, he wouldn't have tortured his wife even for the fear of penal sanction. The salish informed Harendanath about the existing laws of the country dealing with domestic violence. This attempt of salish not only makes Harendanath aware about his rights but also give him a chance to correct himself. The reformatory measures undertaken in this case by CSO and salish members helped to change the mindset of HarendraNath. He understood his mistake and promised not to commit such heinous crime again. Here again the collaborative effort of local government and CSOs are reflected that created a best practice of preventing domestic violence.

It is noted that the CSO members do not undertake any initiative on piecemeal basis rather they organise monthly meeting to address the issues of domestic violence. The monthly meetings which were held on regular basis made the domestic violence prevention program more public. Since the monthly meetings were held on regular basis and various rights and violation of them were being discussed, people are becoming more aware of their rights too. This was having an effective impact on the laymen. CSOs are also ensuring the follow up of the incident.

Case story:
The functioning of mobile court can
effectively stop child marriage

08



Summary of the case

Shaheeda Khatun studies in class eight in Dogachi Borendra School and College. Her father's name is Jahirul Islam who passed away in 2015. One day Saheeda's family guardians took decision of her marriage and the marriage ceremony was arranged on 3 August 2019. She was very much disheartened after getting the news. However, she had no alternative to escape from this situation. Md Hakim, a member of CSO initiated by the action, was informed about the news from his neighbour at the last moment when all preparation was completed. However, he took initiative to stop the marriage but failed to convince the family members. In that context CSO informed the Upazila Nirbahi Officer (UNO) of Nachole about Shaheeda's forced/child marriage. The UNO asked police to investigate the matter. When the police was preparing themselves to visit the spot, the family had already finished the marriage ceremony. However, police arrested four persons from the spot (bridegroom and bridegroom's uncle, mother of bride and Kazi). After hearing the detail case, mobile court gave 7 day imprisonment to bridegroom's uncle and Kazi and 1 month for bridegroom.

After being freed from jail, they tried to bring the bride to their home, but their effort failed due to the intervention of CSO members. Shaheeda was not happy at all with this marriage and she always wanted to continue her study. In this situation CSO members provided psycho-social support and encouraged her to continue her education.

Learning from this case story

Unlike other case, this case reflects a different approach of preventing child marriage. In other cases, the intervention of CSO along with government and non-government efforts child marriages were prevented. However, in this case the initiative of the CSO though primarily failed to convince the parents to prevent child marriage however, the constant support and follow up by the CSO members helped the victim to come out the wedlock of child marriage. Here the role of punishment by mobile court was significant. The mobile court not only punishes the guardians of the bridegroom but also imposes punishment against Kazi. The punishment against the guardians provides a message to the potential wrongdoers to restrain from committing the same offence in the locality. The punishment also creates a mass awareness among the people about the consequences of child marriages. The punishment against kazi will also create a significant impact among the kazis and other relevant stakeholders to think twice before conducting child marriage.



Summary of the case

Sumaiya is the eldest of the brothers and sisters. Sumaiya's younger sister had to amputate a leg in a road accident. Saidul, her father, is a day laborer by profession. He was being unable to treat his daughter and run the family. In this situation, the eldest daughter Sumaiya has been given married off and the poor girl had to stop her education. Her father thought that if there is found a good groom then it is better to marry off her daughter at the early age. After that the marriage was conducted with the consent of both the families.

It has been 11 months with Sumaiya Khatun and Md. Ratan getting married. They live in the same village. Sumaiya's husband urged Sumaiya to bring money from father's house even before their first anniversary. Sumaiya's father is poor. How could he manage to give money for her daughter? When Sumaiya failed to give dowry to her husband, he started torturing her. After that Sumaiya was constantly subjected to physical abuse and torture. She has been blamed that she is black. Her face is not pleasant to see. She does not deserve respect as a wife, as per her husband.

The way Sumaiya had to go back to her father's house:

Although Sumaiya used to sleep in the same bed with her husband, they did not have any husband-wife relationship because Ratan did not like Sumaiya. If Sumaiya's hands and legs touch Ratan's body during sleep at night, Ratan wakes up and starts beating. In this way, Shumaiya was often tortured.

On the last 11/6/20, Sumaiya was severely beaten with stick that made her inflicted on her chest and back. Some parts of her skin were also cut off. In that situation, Ratan sent Sumaiya to her father's house to bring dowry money. Seeing the condition of the girl, her father attempted to treat her by giving first aid. Now the girl is spending days at her father's house.

CSO's role:

The name of the CSO member at the area of Gol Bathan is Marjan Khan. Sumaiya's father talked to him about the issue and wants a solution on how to send the girl now to her husband's family. Marjan Khan asked them to come to the union alliance meeting. It will be easier to find a solution through discussion with everyone.

Sumaiya comes to the bi-monthly meeting of the Muladuli Union Alliance for a solution. The alliance members discussed the issue and it was decided that the alliance members would sit down with two parties to find a solution. Md. Ratan was given a legal notice for his inhuman torture on Shumaiya. The organization informed that we are working on this. Sumaiya is our daughter. What you are doing is wrong. It cannot be accepted. They will take legal action.

In this backdrop, a meeting was held on 16 August 2020. Where 20 members of the organization were present. Union Parishad with the help of CSO organised an informal shalish where other CSO members and influential community leaders were present. They had taken a commitment from Sumaiya's father-in-law stating that if he (son/his family) commits ever torture to Sumaiya, they will have to face punishment as per law.

At some point Ratan realised his mistake. He promised not to do this again in the future. And took Sumaiya home that day. Sumaiya is now at her in-law's house.

Learning from this case story

The case story reveals firstly a story of domestic violence but finally ended up being a best practice of preventing domestic violence. Family abuse is a daily occurrence incident. It has become a granted norm in some societies. The case of Sumaiya was not an exception. She has been tortured for giving dowry money which itself is an offence. However, Man like Ratan takes this for granted to ask for dowry and resort to violence in case of non-payment of dowry. However, the collaborative efforts of Union Parishad, CSOs and local salish members the present case was solved and created an example to be followed. Though CSO is not empowered to organise a shalish however, it was possible with the help of Union Parishad.

The decision of the salish along with the psycho-social support given by CSO members helped Ratan to realise his mistakes. He realised what he was doing is wrong. He apologised and promised not to do the heinous work again. Though there are instances of biased salish decision but in this case, salish members played their role effectively that helped sumaiya to come out of the cycle of violence.

The role of CSO is also apparent from their constant activities and social support to the victims of violence as well proper guidance to the perpetrators of those violence. Any victim who needs help can contact them easily for help. They have created a sense of trust among the locals. Sumaiya's father too have believed the CSO members and asked to deal with the sumaiya's case Though it is the responsibility of the government agencies to undertake effective initiatives and programs to prevent domestic violence, however, in reality the programs and services remain in papers or do not reach to the actual beneficiaries. In this backdrop, the role of CSO is praiseworthy. They do not solve the issue by themselves rather they engage the relevant stakeholders including government and other agencies in order to make the solution effective and institutional. CSOs also make constant follow up of every incident including the case of Sumaiya. It is noted that while taking decision at the salish, the

opinion of Sumaiya was taken by CSOs and member of the Union Parishad which reflects that the decision taken was not imposed rather both the parties are satisfied with the decision.

It is also noted that for implementing DVA, community support deserves utmost importance. Many domestic violence cases go unnoticed due to the fear of making the matter worse by complaining. Shumaiya is not re-victimised due to the strong combined initiative of CSO and Union parishad.

Case story:
The candid effort of HRD prevents
Mahafuza's child marriage

10



Summary of the case

Child marriage was stopped due to the efforts of HRD Kamruzzaman of Beldanga CSO of Goala Union in Sapahar upazila of traditional Naogaon district. Birampur is a remote village. A girl named Mahafuza from this village was going to be married off despite being a minor. Mahafuza's father is Ekramul Haque and mother's name is Matwara Begum. Mahafuza has three brothers and sisters. Mahafuza is the second among her siblings, Mahafuza has an older sister and a younger brother. Mahafuza is in 8th class in Hapania Madrasa.

Mahafuza's elder sister got married after she attained majority. But Mahafuza's parents prepared to give Mahafuza's marriage. Mahafuza's father is in good financial condition. Despite being a middle-income earning family, an child marriage was planning for Mahafuza. The main reason for this is the effect of covid-19. Mahafuza was not studying properly and in addition, all educational institutions were closed due to this epidemic. So Mahafuza's parents thought that the girl has no work to do. However, she was aware about the consequences of child marriage and she wanted to continue her education.

Mahafuza's parents thought that it would be better to give her daughter married off than to keep her unemployed at home. Mahafuza's parents were looking to find a good son-in-law.

HRD Kamruzzaman of Beldanga CSO got the news about Mahafuza's child marriage and after hearing all the news, he visited Mahafuza's house. CSO Kamruzzaman was neighbor of Mahafuza. Kamruzzaman explained a lot to Mahafuza's parents and highlighted the evils and harms of child marriage. He provided motivational support and give commitment for providing educational cost and HRD also communicated with family of the boy's side and discussed with them about CMRA.

He even gave a real example of the consequences of child marriage in a nearby village. As a result of various strategies, Mahafuzar's parents decided not to marry off Mahafuz and told her to pursue education. And in this way, it was possible to stop child marriage due to the efforts of HRD.

Learning from this case story

The case story shows how Covid-19 pandemic has increased the number of child marriage. The pandemic accreelated the already existing vulnebalities and inequalities that compelled the parents of the minor daughters to marry their daughter off. The unprecedented pandemic also shaken the education system of the country that made a a large of number of poor students drop out from the schools. This increases both child marriages and child labour. However, in the present case due to the active intervention of HRD, the child marriage of Mahafuza could be stopped. The HRD played significant role to convince the parents of both families while counselling them about the harmful consequences of child marriages.

The task of HRD was challenging because the impact of Covid-19 could not be overlooked. It is not enough to have knowledge about the bad effect of child marriages rather strong confidence along with positive mindset is required to stop child marriages in such a pandemic situation. The HRD here in the present case not only shared knowledge but also injected a positive mindset among the parents that made them realise about the impact of their decision of undertaking child marriage.

It is noted that the HRD in the present has applied his own tactics and strategies to stop the marriages that ultimately became successful. HRD also assured that he will ensure the protection of the girl and if the family of girl's side face difficulty to bear her education cost, HRD will support the family. It is great commitment and spirit to prevent child marriages while contributing also to the society.

Case story:
The active network of CSO plays vital role to
stop domestic violence against Khadija

11



Summary of the case

Violence against women is a daily occurrence in today's society. Due to various reasons, women are victims of physical and mental harassment in the family and society. This ongoing oppression of women is one of the obstacles in the way of equality of men and women and empowerment of women. When a woman is abused in the family, it is not considered a crime socially, but in most cases such abuse is concealed. As a result, the level of torture continues to rise. One of the reasons is religious bigotry and social norms. As a result, women are being abused in most families. Khadija of Tarash is no exception.

The name of the girl is Khadija. Her husband, Ajmer Hasan Sarat was from village Salanga. They got married in 2014 about six years ago. After marriage, they lived together well for about three years. Then Khadija's husband took a job in Dhaka, and Khadija stayed at her husband's house. Due to this, Khadija was not getting along with her in-laws. When Khadija's mother-in-law told these things to her son, Khadija engaged with argument with her husband. Khadija's husband would quarrel with her at home. Khadija was beaten whenever there was a quarrel. Khadija has a son in her family who is three years old. Khadija has survived in the family despite the torture of her mother-in-law and husband just for the sake of her child.

In the current situation, Khadija's husband was at home. Due to their constant maladjustment, there was not much harmony between the husband and wife. They often quarrel because of their indifference and Khadija was tortured on the basis of this. On 11/4/20, as usual, they got into an argument and at one stage, Khadija's husband started physically torturing her. Even after the torture, Khadija was kept confined within the home without having any treatment. After torturing Khadija pretty bad he kept her confined in the house in the bloody state.

Initiatives of Tarash Upazila CSO

Khadija immediately informed her sister Babita about the incident. Babita is a member of Tarash Upazila CSO. Babita was immediately asked to go to Sanatan Das and give details of

the incident. After hearing about the incident from her sister, Babita informed Upazila CS alliance about the incident and sought their cooperation. Sanatan Das convener of Upazila CS alliance immediately spoke to the OC of Salanga police station and asked him to go to the spot immediately and take action.

Salanga Thana Police Initiative

Salanga police, on learning of the incident from Sanatan Das, immediately rushed to the spot, rescued the victim and arrested her husband. Khadija's husband then pleaded with the police that he won't beat his wife in the future. He requested the police to pardon him as this is the first time. The police then released her husband with Khadija's consent. Meanwhile, Khadija's husband promised not to beat her in the future.

We can's initiative

After hearing the incident from sister Babita, CSO convener Sanatan Das over phone and requested him to seek the cooperation of the police station on an urgent basis. Besides, Babita was immediately asked to go to Sanatan Das and give details of the incident. Moreover, a follow-up was held with the victim's sister Babita until the incident was resolved immediately.

Current situation

At present Khadija is doing well in her husband's house. After the incident, her husband is getting along well with Khadija. Her Mother-in-law is also behaving well. CSO members and Police took the issue in their concern as a part of their social duty and informed the mother-in-law about the law of Domestic violence and its result then the mother realised that She has made mistake with her daughter in law. She also promises not to torture further more. A follow-up was held with the victim's sister Babita until the incident was resolved immediately.

Impact

As a result of the police taking action in Khadija's case, a frightening attitude is working in the minds of the people of the area, they realised that wives cannot be beaten as per their desire.

Learning form this case story

This case story is a unique example of preventing domestic violence with the intervention from law enforcement agencies. Generally, the intervention of police starts at police station when someone file complaints. In this case, when police were informed about the incidence of domestic violence, they took immediate action which is praiseworthy. The presence and immediate action of the police created fear in the mind of the offender that led to realise about the commission of the offence and its consequences. It is noted that when an offender realises his wrongs and promises not to commit wrong in future, they deserve an opportunity to correct themselves and accordingly in the present case, police has released the offender. The case also indicates that Khadija being constantly tortured by her husband consented not to arrest by the police which reflects that she does not want to break the bondage of the marriage. Here, Khadija wanted to maintain the stability of the family under any circumstances which coincides with the spirit of the DVA that advocates for maintaining the stability of the family while punishing the offender.

The role of CSO members in the present case while preventing domestic violence deserves to be taken into account. The CSO members closely watched the incident and mobilised other CSOs and informed the police station. Such kind of initiative enabled the police to take prompt action. Khadiza was given mental support by the Police and the CSO members. The police man said to Khadiza to inform them if her husband torture again then they will take strong steps. The CSO member's are also doing follow up of the victim's family.

Generally, people do not interfere or bother into any family issues, however the organised and informed CSO after having training created a positive atmosphere in the society where one stands for another at the time of distress. Being motivated and inspired, the community people are trying to do something for the betterment of the society for future. The example of this case also leaves a permanent positive impact on the society.



Summary of the case

Hossain Mia is a CSO member of Saraigachi CSO of Naogaon district. In their monthly meeting of June 2018, he raised a problem related to VAW. He said that his wife has been facing difficulties being harassed by some perpetrators over phone. These perpetrators somehow managed his wife's mobile phone number from mobile talk time recharging shop locally known as 'flexi load' centre and started to irritate her over phone every day. This issue was creating a problem in their conjugal life. As per decision of the meeting, Hossain Mia lodged a complaint to local police station as well as customer care service of relevant mobile phone company. After complaining, 4 perpetrators were identified and all of them lived in the same village. With the initiatives of CSO members, local authority called an arbitration council (locally called Salish) where local authority, community leaders and perpetrators and their parents participated. The perpetrators were punished and they promised not to do such things ever again. Perpetrator was fined for BDT 5000/- for doing this activity. He also gave a statement in front of all for not doing this activity again in future. Hossain Mia did not consider it as violence. Before programme participant, he always gave blame to her wife about this incident. This issue could be a big problem in their conjugal life. Her wife could be the victim of domestic violence. Hossain Mia and his wife were happy with the end result of the process. Now Hossain Mia has been a vocal and active person to end violence against women in his locality.

Learning from this case story

The case story reflects a positive approach of settling disputes outside the court. The initiative of the CSO members facilitated to organise an arbitration where the members of the local government played the lead role in resolving the dispute. In this case, the victim was harassed by some local perpetrators and in addition, her husband was blaming her for such harassment which made her double victims in a single case. The perpetrators deserve punishment according to the law, however, the local authority intervened and resolved the dispute through alternative dispute resolution (ADR). ADR helps the parties to resolve a dispute in a win-win

situation. It also helps to bring realisation among the offenders about their mistakes. In this case, the perpetrator was fined that imposed a financial stigma on him. The perpetrator was also required to give statement for not repeating such activity in future. Such statement helps the perpetrator to realise the consequences of harassment against women. It is to be noted that a collective action is reflected in organizing the arbitration and providing remedy to the victims. Such collective action also creates fear in the mind of the perpetrator to comply with the decision of the arbitration and to correct himself.



Summary of the case

Violence against women is a daily occurrence in today's society. For various reasons, women are victims of harassment in the family and society. This ongoing violence against women is one of the challenges in the way of equality of men and women and empowerment of women. These issues of violence against women are not seen as social or family crimes but, in most cases, they are remained unreported. As a result, the level of torture is increasing. Shapla of Bagbati Union is no exception.

The name of the victim is Shapla Khatun whose father is Malek Fakir and mother is late Asiya. They live in Khorargati village which is located at Bagbati Union of Sirajganj Sadar Upazila under Sirajganj district. Shapla was born in a lower middle income earning family. They are one brother and one sister. Her mother died when she was 3 years old. Shapla's father remarried after her mother died. Shapla's father's family has two sons and three daughters, including two daughters and a son from the second marriage. Due to poverty, her father did not give much importance to his children's education. So Shapla stopped studying before she reached to the primary level. To ease the pressure on the family, Shapla's father started looking for a groom to marry her off and at one stage fixed a groom too. Shapla was married to Shahin in 2011 at the Registry office. Shahin's family lives in Jafra village being located in Raiganj upazila of Sirajganj district. Shapla was living well for about seven years after marriage. After seven years of family life, she gave birth to a son. Her husband took a job in a computer shop in Dhangarha market. Although there was financial crisis in the family life, both husband and wife were happy together.

Suddenly Shahin decided to go to Dhaka. In order to live a prosperous life and alleviate the poverty, her husband went to Dhaka in 2016 and took a job in garments. But after moving to Dhaka, Shapla's husband fell in love with another girl. He spends all his income on that girl. Intoxicated with the extra-marital affair, he stopped looking after Shapla and their son. He did not send the necessary money to run the family and did not ask their whereabouts. Shapla lived with great difficulty with a child. When Shapla contacted her husband on the phone, he scolded her and pressured her to bring money from her father's house. When Shahin came home, he fought with Shapla for no reason and even hit her. Shapla's mother-in-law and father-in-law also used to torture her mentally for dowry. Shapla's husband along with her mother-in-law, continue to torture her physically and mentally. The level of torture has increased so much that it has become difficult for Shapla to continue the family. Shapla tried to survive in the family by enduring hundreds of tortures for the sake of her child. But the cruel irony of fate is that on August 19, Shapla's husband married his new girlfriend. After his second marriage, he stopped talking to Shapla and her child. He stopped sending any money for maintenance. On November 19, Shaheen came home and when Shapla talked about his second marriage, he beat her up and kicked her out of the house and told her that he would not live with Shapla. As a result, Shapla moved to her father's house. Shapla's guardian then repeatedly approached Shaheen for a compromise.

But Shahin informed that he will not have a family with Shapla. After that, Shapla became helpless and informed Raiganj Upazila CSO member Selina about her case and WE CAN's FO and sought his cooperation for a compromise.

Initiatives of Upazila Civil organisation:

At the Raiganj Upazila Civil organization Alliance meeting held on 14/12/19, alliance member Selina and WE CAN's FO discussed the issue of Shapla in the meeting. Civil organization member Selina was tasked to negotiate with the 2nd party during the settlement. If no settlement could be reached, it was decided at the meeting that WE CAN would ask for the co-operation of Legal Aid to assist in the case. As per the meeting's decision Selina repeatedly tried to communicate with the other party to solve the matter but failed to come to any compromise due to the non-cooperation of the other party. Later, Shapla and her guardians seek cooperation to file a case.

WE CAN's initiative:

On 16/01/20, Alliance member Selina and WE CAN 's FO Mahabub along with Shapla went to the Sirajganj District Legal Aid Office and filed an application. They also met with the District Legal Aid Officer and talked about Shapla's issue. The District Legal Aid Officer first advised the matter to be settled through ADR.

District Legal Aid Office Initiatives:

Shahin was notified by the Legal Aid Office on the advice of the District Legal Aid Officer. After three notices in a row, Shapla's husband Shahin did not show up at the legal aid office. So the Legal Aid Office hired Advocate Abdur Rahim to handle Shapla's case.

Upon receiving the news of the appointment of the lawyer, Shahin requested the Upazila Civil organisation member Selina to settle the matter through divorce. Then, on the advice of the Legal Aid Office, the matter was settled through divorce by paying Dower of taka 50,000 / - on 22/02/20.

Selina, a member of the Upazilla civil organisation, was present at the arbitration and highlighted the legal rights of women in getting her dower. Besides, the obligation by law to pay the dower was highlighted too.

Outcome: Shapla showed the society that a girl cannot be evicted from her home at will. At present Shapla is in her father's house with her son. People in Shapla's area understood that a case can be filed in court without money and that dower can be recovered too.

Learning from this case story

This case story reflects the strength of an women who can fight back against injustice and realise her legal rights. In the present case, Shapla endured abuse for a long term. But, Shapla could finally stand against the injustice that was happening to her. The long term of conjugal life and a son didn't stop her from standing against wrong and claiming what is righteous.

The case study also indicates the successful use of legal aid that is designed to serve the destitute women. In this case, Shapla with the help of CSO could avail legal aid service which is tool to enforce one's legal right. The case also witnesses an exercise of alternative dispute resolution. While it is difficult to go the court for every issue, ADR seems to be a good alternative to dispose a dispute. And in order to ensure the smooth functioning of ADR the case story involved the relevant stakeholders. The stakeholders including CSO informed Shapla about her legal rights against domestic abuse. CSO informed her about the law. Shapla realised and fought to claim her dower money for which she is entitled according to the law.

One of the most outstanding work of the CSO is that they have made themselves available to the victim. Most of the victim don't want to seek justice or help because they are mostly turned down by the law enforcement officer or other authority. In the era of patriarchy domestic violence has become a norm. Due to which, some family members too ask the victim to endure the pain hoping time will heal everything. In such scenario, the availability of the CSO generates a ray of hope.

Then comes the efficient measures by the CSO members. They first tried to solve the matter amicably. When It didn't turn out to be successful only then CSO decided to ask for co-operation from legal aid.

Shapla is uneducated. Unless exception happened, she can't be much aware of her rights regarding dower and maintenance. The CSO's initiative along with legal aid to ensure that she got her dower is another praiseworthy work.

Case story: | 14
The strength of being organised to
tackle crisis during Covid-19



Summary of the case

Muladuli union CSO has been responsible for distributing relief cards or relief packets in stages, including the preparation of relief distribution lists in UP at the initiative of the Union Alliance. For that reason, with the help of the alliance, the members of our 4 organizations are taking government food assistance.

At the initiative of Muladuli Union Alliance President Md. Siddiqur Rahman and Member MS. Jobeda Begum, all the members of the alliance talked to the chairman about the distribution of relief. They were supposed to give a list of some of the families who are eligible for relief in our respective areas to ensure their food supply so that we can provide relief to 100 families.

Then the chairman agreed with them. Yes, they can give the list, but they don't have to distribute the relief by themselves. The list of all the wards of Muladuli Union or the name of someone from their alliance will be written on the back of the ID card.

But the alliance couldn't give to 100 families at once. In this way the members of the alliance made an agreement with the chairman and the UP secretary. In the first step, Jobeda Begum was given a list of 15 families to give to the alliance members. After that, 70 more families were given to the alliance from the Union Parishad for cooperation. Of these, 26 have received our relief. When the listing of 6 months allowance card started from May, we have submitted list or ID card of 5 people from 4 organizations.

The president of the alliance Md. Siddiqur Rahman distributed food items to 15 families in his area at his personal initiative. Another member of the alliance, Jabeda Begum distributes 2/1 kg of rice, pulses, vegetables or any food in her area as much as she can afford. The alliance decided to help the poor and helpless as much as possible from their respective places. And in the same way, every member has extended his hand of cooperation to deal with this corona situation as much as possible from his place.

Outcome: This great initiative of the Union Alliance has created a place of confidence in the minds of the locals the members realised the success of the WE CAN Organization and the CSO after watching them how they are helping the middleclass families who are not included in the list of helpless and poor people and not getting any relief of food assistance. Poor members or helpless families have found the light of hope.

Learning from this case story

The case story reflects how a pandemic situation can be tackled with mobilised support. As we all know that the world is facing an very unprecedented problem due to COVID-19. Entire world is in distress. Economic recession is in the highest. Unemployment increased due to lock down, manufacturing activity is in standstill. In this period of distress some organisation undertook lot of relief activities and they projects were very active in relief activities. Supplying food packets to the needy, face masks, sanitizers etc. were done through the Union Alliance. It is reported that some corrupt officials and local government members committed irregularities and corruption during relief distribution even at the time of pandemic. Quite reversely in the present case, the union alliance has successfully distributed the relief to the actual needy and helpless. It is noted that in order to ensure the proper disbursement of relief, the alliance with the help of its members prepared a list of needy people. Based on their list, they have distributed the relief without having any irregularities.

It is noted that the collaborative efforts from different stakeholders including WE CAN and local government have made the task of distribution easy and professional.

The government is continuing relief distribution across the country as part of its humanitarian assistance to reduce people's sufferings amid the coronavirus pandemic. But it is not possible for the Government to supervise whether everyone is getting the adequate amount of relief. People who can afford relief work should come forward to help the needy. CSO roles in identifying the group of vulnerable people who needed the relief for survival is remarkable.

It is undeniable that during this pandemic a group which is largely affected is the lower- and middle-class people. Some of them lost their jobs, some getting lower wages than normal. Some maybe crippled by the pandemic and lost the extra earning. Usually, relief is only provided to the neediest. No one considers the middle class in the list to provide relief. Some middle class maybe too shy to ask for help as they have never asked for help before, WE CAN and CSO initiative to help those new vulnerable groups is much appreciated. During the pandemic the best practice to survive is to help each other. This work of the NGO generated hope among the civilians. Most of them started helping others with whatever they have. United we stand, divided we fall.

The case study is also significant for the reason that the alliance, local government initiatives actually aimed to ensure no one is left behind from availing relief which is the goal of the SDGs. The combined work is helping to create a feeling of trust, accountability among the people. The good work is generating hope during this time of distress. People are starting to believe in humanity.

Case story:
Awareness building through student
initiative to fight against pandemic

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Summary of the case

Ekdantha High School at Pabna District, Atgharia Upazila, was established in 1959. Presently there are 1200 students are studying in the school. In 2016, a student forum was formed at Ekdantha High School in collaboration with the We Can Prevent Domestic Violence Alliance.

The student forum meeting of the school was held on 18/03/2020. During the meeting, the students of the forum said that the school may be closed tomorrow due to pandemic. Because people are being infected and dying of corona virus. People from abroad are coming to the country and they may carry the corona virus. After discussing the matter, everyone decided together that if anyone came to the locality from abroad, we would immediately inform the chairman and the administration.

They also decided that we will use mask, wash our hands with soap for at least 20 seconds, do not shake hands with anyone, do not go out unnecessarily when school is closed.

About 10/12 days later, Shakib, Sirajul, Mehedi, Pranoy and many others from the Student Forum discussed that many of the people who had come from abroad had caught the corona virus. Even in Dhaka and Narayanganj corona infected patient were reported.

Those who used to work in garments factories in Dhaka and Narayanganj have started returning home. This has spread panic among the people. The students of Ekdantha High School's Student Forum have informed the chairman about the location of many people from Dhaka and Narayanganj. And according to the information, the chairman himself and in collaboration with the administration put many people from Narjan, Ekdant, Chachkia, Shibpur and Chandai from Dhaka and Narayanganj in home quarantine.

Meanwhile, Shakib and Mehedi had gone to the upazila for personal work. As soon as they entered the upazila, they saw a billboard next to the gate. Seeing the printing on the bill board, they realised it is a public awareness campaign and the writing is a joint initiative of the administration and the Atgharia Upazila coalition. After that they started thinking that we can also do something about public awareness.

After they came back home they joined with 5/6 students of student forum. Then they explained about the billboard. We are a part of this society, country and state. So we also have a responsibility to do something for the people of this country.

We also did a lot of writing on brown and poster paper during our training. By writing something like this but with public awareness, we can put it in the crowded areas and in the places where the roads are more crowded. After making this decision, they informed me by phone that we will do this. Then I said you have taken a very good initiative. I will arrange brown paper and marker for this. They said I was just letting you know. We can afford this logistics.

After that they wrote many posters and planted them in different areas during this Corona virus situation.

Learning from this case story

Educational institutions instill and transmit the social norms, values and beliefs. Educational institution socialises us into useful members of a society. But often the teachings are theoretical. During this time if a student engages with social works, they learn the best. The academic certificate is the bone and these extra social works are the flesh to that bone.

In the present case, WE CAN's initiative to create a student forum is praiseworthy. Students are the torchbearers of the nation. If student organizations are given the opportunity to broaden the horizons, learn new skills and meet people they can contribute to transform the society. By creating a student forum and by training up the students, WE CAN is ensuring promising figures for the upcoming days.

It is noted that negligence of the people who returned from the Mass corona infected area is evident. The case study shows one of the most innovative way to handle any grave problem. While giving training the future torchbearers of the nation and teaching them to take the leadership already, the CSO is working to unveil the potentials of students. The work of CSO is not limited to any area, their good work has already reached many areas.

One of the best things about this case study is that students are trying to help on their own. They have been taking initiative all by themselves. They are helping to spread proper guidelines set by World Health Organization. They are picking up ideas from a more developed area and using it to facilitate their areas.

These volunteering works are infused from the sense of roles and responsibilities of the students towards the nation, society and their home town. They are helping local people at the same time it is helping to build up the student's character. They are spreading the message that people should look after each other in times of need and most importantly there is no hierarchy in doing what is right.

Even when the pandemic is over, the lesson they have learnt while carrying out the social works will remain within themselves making them more suitable and empowered for their own interest as well as for the benefit of the nation. This mass awareness also reflects that inculcating a sense of responsibility and imbibing that sense to others can bring positive changes in the society.



Summary of the case

Shorna age of 13 is a student of class VII at the Khoiyachala High School in Sirajgonj district. Despite of poverty in her family, she was very much enthusiastic to continue her study. She had a dream to be an earning member for her family. One day she noticed that her parents are going to arrange her marriage highlighting the case of her safety and security. She felt concerned and decided to share this information with student forum members in her school. The students of the school were already familiar with the student forums which were formed by this action. The student forum members consulted a staff of co-applicant and decided to intervene to stop the marriage. While the student forum informed their Headmaster about this and seeking his support, the co-applicant staff shared the case with CSOs and union CS alliance members in that locality for taking immediate action. CSO members met with Shorna's parents to convince them to stop the marriage. After conversation with CSOs her parents could not understand what to do. In one hand, they preferred the marriage as the groom was 'good', on the other hand they were careful about the legal consequences of this. CSO members also met with UP Chairman but they could not convince her parents to stop marriage. However, student forum members showed their integrity and informed UNO and Women Development Office and at the same time call to national hotline (#109) preventing violence and child marriage. UNO took immediate action to stop child marriage with the support of UP Chairman, teachers, student forum and CSO members. In that time UNO talked with Union Parishad Chairman for taking rapid action. Shorna's parents saw that UP chairman, govt. official as well as community people all people are talking against child marriage. They feel frightened to arrange her daughter's marriage in early age. Finally Shorna's parents were convinced to stop the marriage. Encouraged and further motivated, Shorna is continuing her study to realise her dream.

Learning from this case story

The case story reflects the coordinated efforts of government, non-government and CSO members to prevent the child marriage of Shorna. The initiative was started by the student forum which was then mobilised by CSO members. The members of the student forum informed UNO and Women development office about this incidence of child marriage and on the basis of information, they have undertaken actions that ultimately facilitated to prevent the marriage. It is noted that UNO and Women development Office being located in the Upazila sadar might not be able to look after all the incidences of child marriages however, once they are being informed, they can take action and the present case is the glaring example. Here the role of CSO members is also important because they work as a watchdog to prevent child marriage while mobilising the relevant stakeholders including members of local government. Though it is the primary responsibility of the local government to prevent child marriage however, considering practical challenges their role is not found active in all the problems of a locality. However, the members of CSO work closely with the local people, they try to understand the social problems and provide support to come out of the social evil including child marriage. The CSOs also help to facilitate the local government to know about their role and perform accordingly. The present case also reflects how the initiative of CSO enabled the local government and UNO to take action in preventing child marriage.

Case story:
Self-defence training helps Rokhsana to
fight against harassment

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Summary of the case

Rokhsana, studying in 10th grade of Dulahar Narisabad High School of Nachole sub-district under Chapainawabganj district. She is also a student forum member of this school which has been formed by DASCOH Foundation in July 2018. After joining the forum, I received different awareness session and training on gender and rights issues. Through this training and awareness session, she become aware of about sexual harassment, child marriage and other kinds of violence against women and how to prevent those with the joint effort of student forum members, teachers, school management committees and Civil Society Organisations (CSOs). She said, “in 2019, I along with my friends received self-defence training from DASCOH which made me more confident and self-reliant. I also came to know the technique of protect myself as well as other from any unwanted situation.”

She also said that in their way to school, some boys regularly used to talk abusive language. But before joining this forum she did not share those with her parents or teacher. Because she was afraid to think that if they hear they might be stopped her to go to school. But now she is not afraid anymore! She can share her problem with teacher and her family members.

Some days ago in lock-down period, she along with her friends were returning from teacher’s home. During that time, there were only few people on the street. At that time, some construction labour who were working in the adjacent school were passing abusive language while showing the abusive gestures to them. Rokhsana confidently protested them and said, ‘it would be bad if you do this again in the next time.’ They were not expected such kind of protest from the studnets. After hearing their strong voice, the perpetrators said ‘sorry’ to them.

Rokhsana also shared this incident to her grandmother and parents for taking further action. She was not so confident earlier. But after joining with student forum, my awareness and self-determination skill has been enhanced. Now she is not afraid anymore. She knows how to talk confidently, how to protest from any unwanted situation.

Learning from this case story

The case reflects the story of a brave, confident and courageous girl. Girls in our country often face abusive behavior in schools, societies and even in home where there are supposed to be safest. Self defence along with confidence is considered to be the significant tool to empower the girls as well to prevent abuse against them. The student forum constituted by DASCOH Foundation is not only disseminating necessary information but also providing training on basic human rights and issues. Such training and awareness sessions boost the confidence of the children especially the girls. They can now seek support from relevant stakeholders and realise the power of concerted efforts to prevent harassment against girls. The self defence training is another endeavour which makes the girls more confident and composed. Such training helps to deal with their case by themselves and protest against harassment whenever and wherever necessary. This practice is a glaring example of making girls empowered to fight for their cases. Such practice can be integrated into the nation-wide programmes for empowering girls.

5. Conclusion by way of recommendation

The best practices identified above portray the strategies and interventions from different stakeholders especially CSO members, student forum members and other field level human rights workers. They live with the common people, know their grievances and empower them to fight back against abusive practices. One thing is prevalent in most of the case stories is that people once realised their mistakes, they repented for their wrong doings and committed not to repeat the misdeeds. This reformatory aspect of correcting accused or potential accused deserves to be attended. In line with this, it is noticed that if people are being made aware and empowered, they comply with the laws and rules. Another significant take away from the case stories is that a collaborative approach of government, non-government organization, CSOs, human rights workers is reflected.

It this backdrop, it is recommended that the relevant laws, rules and policies should be redesigned in the light of strategies identified in the aforesaid best practices. The relevant stakeholders should be made accountable to perform their due responsibilities. Local government should be mobilised to work in collaboration with CSOs in the field level that might pave a strong way to prevent child marriages and domestic violence. Democratic dialogue and consultation should be organised with the involvement of relevant stakeholders in order to identify the common causes of child marriage and domestic violence and thereby formulate action plan with concerted efforts. The power of organised youth should be utilised to prevent crisis like Covid-19. The children especially the girls should be trained and mentored so that they can realise their potentials and empower themselves.

