



# Annual Report

## 2014

**Bangladesh Legal Aid and Services Trust (BLAST)**

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# Acronyms

A2J	Access to Justice for Realization of Human Rights and Advocacy for Empowerment of the Poor
ALO	Access to Legal Empowerment and Outreach
ACP	Actions for Child Protection — Violence against children
AVC	Activating Village Courts in Bangladesh
BGB	Boarder Guard Bangladesh
BLAST	Bangladesh Legal Aid and Services Trust
BSF	Boarder Security Force
BWHC	Bangladesh Women's Health Coalition
BNWLA	Bangladesh Women Lawyers' Association
CAA	Community Awareness for Access to Justice
CEPZ	Chittagong Export Processing Zone
CLS	Access to Justice for the Marginalized through Community Legal Services
CM	Change Maker
CMS	Case Management System
CRP	Centre for Rehabilitation of the Paralysed
CRPD	Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
CSP	Civil Society and Police Reform in South Asia
DPO	Disabled Peoples' Organization
ECP	Legal Reform for Ending Corporal Punishment in all Settings
EPT	Effective Participation for Transparent and Accountable Local Governance
GD	General Diary
IRS	Improvement of the Real Situation of Overcrowding in Prisons in Bangladesh
JATI	Judicial Administration Training Institute
JSW	Justice and Safety for Workers after Rana Plaza
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MIW	Making it Work: Access to Justice for Persons in Disabilities in Bangladesh
MEL	Monitoring and Evaluation of Legal Empowerment Interventions
MSB	Marie Stopes Bangladesh
NCDW	National Council of Disabled Women
NGDO	National Grassroots Disability Organization
NLASO	National Legal Aid Services Organization
OCC	One Stop Crisis Centre
PAS	Paralegal Advisory Services

PWD	Persons with Disabilities
RPC	Pre-Counselling and Completion of Claims forms under the Rana Plaza Claims' Administration
RTI	Right to Information
SAF	Growing Up Safe and Healthy
SHO	SHOKHI –Women's Health Rights and Choices
SNF	Sromik Nirapotta Forum [Workers' Safety Forum]
SRHR	Sexual and Reproductive Health Rights
SRS	Safety & Rights Society
STI	Sexually Transmitted Infections
VSC	Victim Support Center
WIJ	Women in Justice



## Message from the Chairperson

The activities described in BLAST's 2014 Annual Report reflect the valuable contributions of the staff, at the Head Office and District Offices across the country, as well as the paralegals who have joined us to secure access to justice for prisoners. BLAST has continued to provide legal assistance to the poor and marginalised, particularly to victims of discrimination who were deprived of their rights on account of religion, caste, disability or gender. While affirming that BLAST is committed to provide legal assistance to all victims, it is notable that the majority of its clients are women and girls – with legal aid being provided in cases relating to a range of issues including family and labour disputes and in relation to protection against violence.

The scale of its work, and the challenges faced by BLAST, are apparent from the Report's acknowledgment that access to justice still remains unrealised. It is noted that "obstacles remain pervasive and include general lack of awareness and knowledge of legal rights, discriminatory laws, the risk of repercussions, the burden of litigation costs, distances, and delays, all of which hinder effective protection of rights." Injustice is institutionalised in social, political, legal and economic structures of a society. These institutions have contributed towards polarisation between a narrow elite and the deprived majority, as well as between women and men; they reflect the injustices which pervade many societies and obstruct change.

These insights are reflected in the views expressed by Nobel Laureate Prof. Joseph Stiglitz in the concluding chapter of his book, **"The Price of Inequality"**:<sup>1</sup>

*"In 2011 we watched people take to the streets by the millions to protest political, economic, and social conditions in the oppressive societies they inhabit. Governments toppled in Egypt, Tunisia, and Libya. Protests erupted in Yemen, Bahrain, and Syria. The ruling families elsewhere in the region looked on nervously from their air-conditioned penthouses. Will they be next? They are right to worry. These are societies where a minuscule fraction of the population - less than 1 percent - controls the lion's share of the wealth; where wealth is a main determinant of power, both*

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<sup>1</sup> Joseph E. Stiglitz, *The Price of Inequality* (2012), Allen Lane, London, pp. 287-288.

*political and economic; where entrenched corruption of one sort or another is a way of life; and where the wealthiest often stand actively in the way of policies that would improve the lives of people in general.”*

*“The top 1 percent have the best houses, the best education, the best doctors, and the best lifestyles, but there is one thing that money doesn’t seem to have bought: an understanding that their fate is bound up with how the other 99 percent live. Throughout history, this has been something that the top 1 percent eventually does learn. Often, however, they learn it too late.”*

BLAST needs to keep in view the experience of those societies and to take necessary steps to protect our society and our people from disparities of wealth, which create conditions in which the poor and powerless are victimised and society itself becomes a victim of violence and instability resulting from injustice. BLAST should continue resolutely to continue with its valuable work, encouraged by its track record and achievements.



**Dr. Kamal Hossain**  
Chairperson, BLAST





*A woman walks through a slum in Dhaka, a working area of the Growing Up Safe & Healthy (SAFE) Project*

## 1. CONTEXT

Bangladesh is a predominantly rural country, with fast-growing urban centres. One of the most densely populated countries in the world, its population now stands at 166 million people.<sup>1</sup> Some 14 million people live in the mega-city of Dhaka alone; one-third of them are in slums and informal settlements, and lack wealth, power and social connections.

While Bangladesh has achieved many significant development indicators, access to justice still remains unrealised for many. Obstacles remain pervasive and include general lack of awareness and knowledge of legal rights, discriminatory laws, the risk of repercussions, the burden of litigation costs, distances, and delays, all of which hinder effective protection of rights. A majority of people remain reluctant to seek any form of support for legal disputes.

Over two decades, governmental efforts to increase access to justice have resulted in activation of the state's legal aid services, as well as the creation of new institutional mechanisms. The Village Courts exemplify state initiatives to activate existing community-level institutions. The Information Commission and the Bangladesh National Human Rights Commission operating centrally, provide new remedies and avenues for redress. There are also structures in place to provide services to women and girls who have survived sexual violence such as the One-Stop Crisis Centres (OCC), and Victim Support Centres.

Within this context, BLAST has emerged as the leading dedicated non-governmental legal services organisations in the country, operating in over 19 districts. It has certain unique features as a legal services organization. First, it assists all individuals below a certain income level, irrespective of gender. Second it operates across the spectrum from the frontlines of the formal justice system, starting with the Village Court, to the Supreme Court. Third, it provides comprehensive legal services, on criminal, family, labour and land law, as well as constitutional rights.

BLAST has gained proven expertise in providing legal aid to poor and disadvantaged clients in 57,467 cases to date. It has filed over 80 public interest litigation cases before the Supreme Court of Bangladesh as part of its advocacy for law and policy reforms. It regularly undertakes awareness programmes on legal rights for the local community in its areas of operation, including on family, criminal and land law and on basic rights and remedies. It is also involved in regular coordination meetings with local administration officials, in particular with the judiciary.

<sup>1</sup> World Population Review, Bangladesh. Available at: <http://worldpopulationreview.com/>





*A legal facilitator delivering legal advice to a client at a SAFE clinic.*

## 2. SERVICE

The concept of service is central to BLAST. Through their work, our staff, volunteers, interns and partners demonstrate their own commitment to service, for it permeates all aspects of the organisation: public service, community service, service to clients, service to the legal system, and service to the country. As a legal aid organisation, we are committed to ensuring that all Bangladeshis have access to the justice system.

But this commitment goes beyond simply providing legal services. Service is the acknowledgement of our responsibility to the community. Service is our commitment to a society based on the rule of law. Service involves reaching out to those who are marginalised and excluded recognising their needs and responding to them. Service is our recognition that in order to have value, human rights must be extended to all. Service is a decision to seek justice before personal gain. Service is our obligation to work for a better Bangladesh.



*Human Rights are for everyone, always, everywhere: Marking International Human Rights Day 2014 at the Supreme Court Gate*

### 3. WHO WE ARE

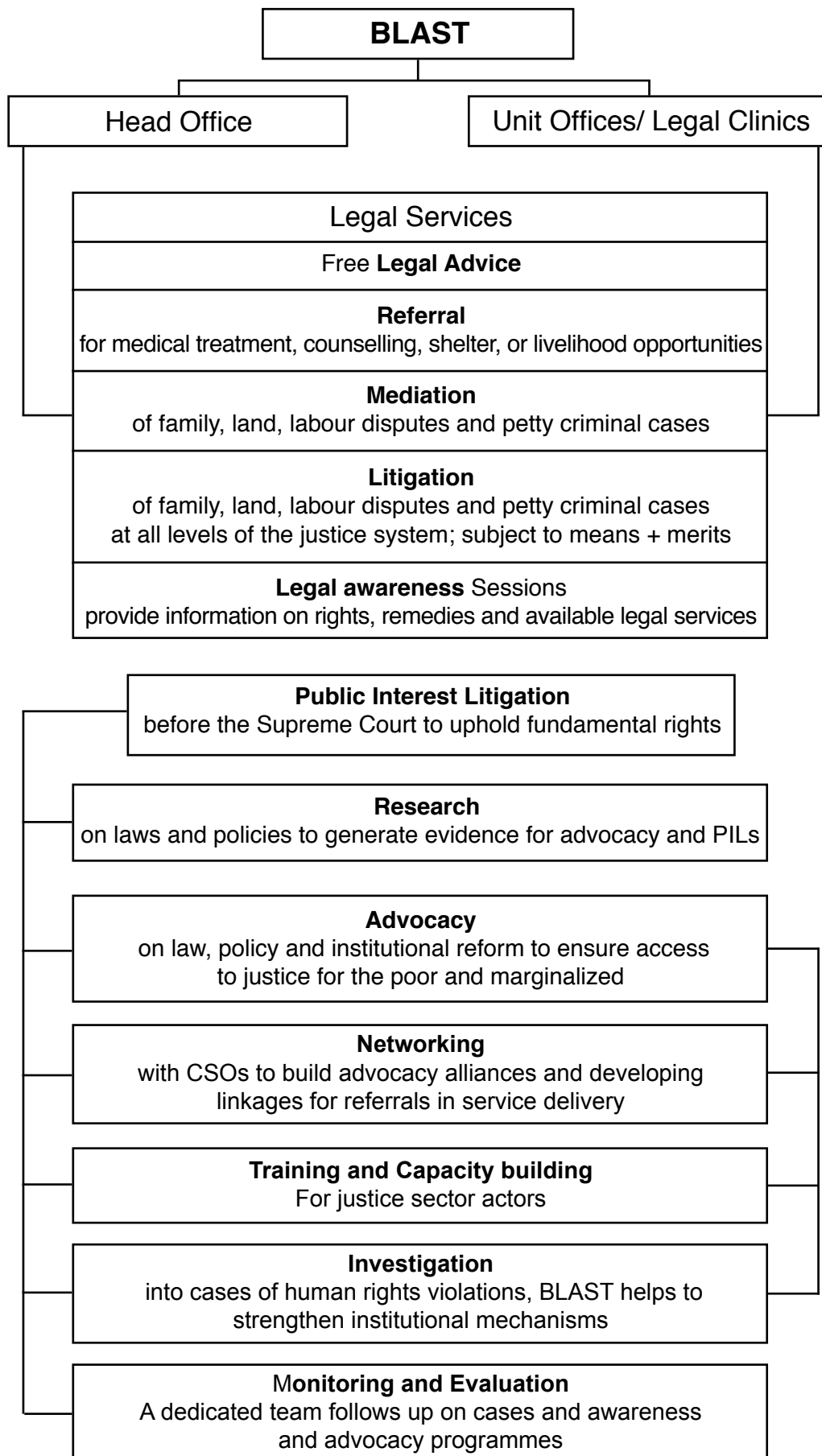
BLAST is the leading, dedicated non-governmental legal services provider in Bangladesh. It was established in 1993, following a resolution of the Bangladesh Bar Council, reflecting the commitment of the legal profession to ensuring access to justice for all.

We work to provide comprehensive legal aid and services to individuals and communities unable to access justice due to poverty or discrimination, whether on grounds of sex, gender, race, religion, caste, or disability, including the most marginalised members of society. We provide advice, undertake alternative dispute resolution through office based mediations (shalish) provide representation before the courts, in civil, criminal, family, land and labour matters, and in relation to protection of fundamental rights. We conduct community awareness and legal education programmes to increase understanding of rights, remedies and available services. We also conduct research and advocacy for reform of laws, policies and institutions to increase access to justice, engaging local communities and practitioners in these processes.

Our 450+ staff – including lawyers, paralegals, researchers and campaigners-- work in collaboration with our panel of 2500+ pro bono lawyers across 19 districts, through district offices, 10 legal clinics in urban slums in Dhaka, and two university clinics, supported by our Head Office in Dhaka.

Our Board and Executive Committee are comprised of eminent jurists, judges of the Supreme Court nominated by the Hon'ble Chief Justice, senior lawyers who have led the Bar Council and the Supreme Court Bar Association, and served in Government, with experience in international and national justice mechanisms, and others with expertise in accounting and in research. Our Management Committees at district level are headed by senior and elected members of each respective District Bar Association.

## 4. WHAT WE DO



## 5. OUR PROGRAMMES

Entrenched social norms, profound power imbalances and poor governance practices continue to result in the denial of access to justice for an overwhelming majority of those living in Bangladesh. The formal justice system remains more responsive to the rich and powerful, while being inaccessible, daunting and cumbersome for women, men and children who are poor and marginalized. In most cases, such individuals and communities are denied redress as they lack necessary social capital and the power to respond to arbitrary actions by the state, corporate interests or resourceful private individuals. Thus, the formal justice system remains largely inaccessible for the poorest and marginalized.

Within this context, BLAST seeks to enhance access to justice through a comprehensive and holistic approach combining access to non-formal dispute resolution as well as judicial remedies right across the legal system. BLAST has grown rapidly over the 21 years since its inception in 1993 in response to an increasing demand for its services.

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### **Our Programmes:**

- Legal Aid for vulnerable individuals across the entire justice system:
  - Advice
  - Referral
  - Mediation
  - Litigation
  - Awareness of Rights and Remedies
- Advocacy, Research and Communications
- Public Interest Litigation
- Capacity Building

**Programme Support** is provided by the following departments:

- Administration
- Human Resources
- Finance

We ensure process monitoring, undertaking periodic assessments regarding outcomes and results of our activities, and compliance with all applicable policies, including financial policies through:

- Monitoring and Evaluation
- Internal Audit Cell





*Advocate Firoz Ahmed, senior lawyer and icon of the human rights movement in Bangladesh, speaking at a workshop on 'Our Rights and the Role of the Police in a Democratic Society' in Khulna*

## ACCESS TO JUSTICE

Individuals in impoverished communities in Bangladesh struggle to gain access to both formal and informal justice systems. Obstacles are geographic, financial, cultural, religious, and gender based. Pervasive corruption and fear of repression or violence, as well as the absence of social support outside the family or community inhibit many from seeking violence. Many people are simply not aware of their rights or how or where to access remedies.

In 2014 BLAST sought to address these issues by undertaking legal education and awareness programmes, and providing legal aid to individuals and communities in need. It also continued to engage in consultations and to engage in advocacy seeking increasing responsiveness of justice sector actors to the rights of the poor and marginalised, while and building their capacity to better respond to the needs of those accessing the justice system.

### Legal Aid

BLAST's core work focuses on providing legal aid. This is broadly defined to include advice, referral, mediation, litigation and education and awareness programmes on rights remedies and available services.

The majority of BLAST's clients are women, and many are from the poorest or most disadvantaged groups in society, including those facing multiple and intersectional forms discrimination on grounds of ethnicity, religion, caste, or disability. Many have no source of independent income, whereas others who may be economically independent lack the means and capacity to access secure remedies without free legal aid and assistance.

In 2014 BLAST received 9,692 new applications for legal aid.



## **Mediation**

BLAST offers mediation services, a form of alternative dispute resolution, for settlement of disputes relating to family, land, financial, petty criminal, and labour matters. This legal service is often favoured over litigation due to its efficacy, cost effectiveness and expediency. In BLAST's experience of delivering legal services, mediation is mostly utilized in cases relating to family law and labour law matters to claim economic entitlements.

In 2014, BLAST settled a total of 2,151 applications through mediation, resulting in 4,302 direct beneficiaries and 21,510 indirect beneficiaries.

## **Litigation**

BLAST provides legal representation to individuals at all levels of the justice system, from the Village Courts to the Supreme Court, through its staff lawyers and its nationwide network of panel lawyers. By enabling the poor and the marginalized to access legal advice at no cost, we are trying to open up pathways to access justice.

In 2014, BLAST instituted a total of 9557 cases, at all levels of the justice system. The number of cases pending remained at 19,741.

Through litigation, BLAST enabled its clients to recover financial entitlements and compensation, primarily in family law disputes and labour law disputes. Thus, resolution of 605 family disputes, resulted in recovery of BDT 38,987,774 (USD 499,843) on behalf of clients. On the other hand arrears of wages recovered for workers amounted to BDT 11,580,794 (USD 148,471).

BLAST's greatest strength lies in its close working relationships with professional lawyers and Bar Associations across the country. Over the years, it has sought to foster and strengthen a culture of pro bono lawyering by opening up opportunities for young lawyers to be enlisted on its panel and encouraging them in offering legal aid to the poor and disadvantaged groups. This unique approach is enabling BLAST to carry forward its mandate of ensuring access to justice for all with the active support and leadership of sections of the legal profession in Bangladesh.

## **Referrals**

BLAST makes referrals for clients to services such as emergency medical treatment, healthcare, psycho-social counseling, shelter or livelihood opportunities. It also makes referrals in cases of violence against women to specialized government agencies working to support women survivors of violence such as One Stop Crisis Centers (OCCs) located in the metropolitan medical college hospitals and Victim Support Centers (VSCs).



*A field facilitator speaks to adolescents and young women at a rights awareness session*

## **Community Awareness**

As a complement to its legal services provision, BLAST conduct legal rights awareness sessions focusing on legal rights and remedies at the local level with poor, socially excluded and marginalized people to provide them with information and opportunities to seek legal redress. BLAST undertakes courtyard meetings, training sessions, *Odhikar Melas* (rights fairs) and networking meetings for this purpose. In recent years, BLAST has increasingly extended the outreach of its legal services. It has increased the presence of field workers in particular areas (see below on the SHOKHI legal facilitators working in urban slums in Dhaka). It has also held legal aid camps for example for persons with disabilities in Sirajganj district. BLAST uses social media to raise public awareness among lawyers, students, civil society groups and rights activists. These efforts not only provide knowledge on rights, remedies and services to relevant groups at the local and national levels, but also create opportunities for improving referrals and coordination between service providers in government and within the social sector.

## **ADVOCACY**

BLAST has longstanding experience of effectively combining tested advocacy tools including community consultations, media campaigns, and comparative legal research - to ensure law policy and institutional reform for improving access to justice. In 2014, BLAST held advocacy meetings, workshops and seminars on a range of issues, including women's access to justice in cases of violence, particularly rape and domestic violence; and safeguarding property rights for minority communities. We also provided inputs for laws reform through dialogue and consultation with key justice service stakeholders, particularly on the Draft Anti Discrimination Act, 2013, on amendments to the Legal Aid Services Act, 2000 and policy and procedures for medico-legal evidence collection in rape cases.

We also worked on activation of laws on probation as an alternative to imprisonment, particularly for children and activation of legal aid committees at upazila and union levels.

## RESEARCH

BLAST's research activities are complementary to its legal aid and public interest litigation and advocacy activities. In 2014, small-scale research studies were conducted on various issues, relating to ongoing advocacy including implementation and follow up of Supreme Court judgments. Building on its previous work to reform the policies and procedures relating to medico legal evidence collection, BLAST commissioned a sociological research report to study the impact of use of character evidence provisions in rape cases. BLAST also sought support from the TrustLaw network to develop a report on comparative laws and practices on use of character evidence in rape cases in seven jurisdictions. This research is being used to support an advocacy campaign for repeal of Section 155 (4) of the Evidence Act, 1870 that allows use of evidence about a complainant's past sexual history in rape trials.

We also completed two baseline studies to measure knowledge, attitudes and perceptions of BLAST target groups with respect to access to justice and legal services.

- **CLS Baseline Highlights**

This study was conducted among 600 respondents in two rural project sites (Faridpur and Dinajpur), two urban sites (Dhaka and Rajshahi) and the Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT). Seeking to analyze legal service seeking behavior, the study found that most people are reluctant to seek any form of support for legal disputes. Where they do seek support, the satisfaction ratings for services received are highest for NGO services. This highlights the significant role that NGO legal services are currently playing and also reinforces the fact that NGO services can bridge and develop the capacity of government organisations in delivering these services.

- **Shokhi Baseline Highlights**

The baseline was conducted in nine slums of Mohammadpur, Mohakhali, and Mirpur areas. Information was collected from 1500 female and 500 male respondents regarding their personal profiles (educational background, rate of participation in income generation activities). Findings indicated that many women were already employed as domestic workers, garments worker, tailors, and retailers.

36% of women were aware of their rights at the work place and 22.0% of male respondents were aware the about special rights of women at their workplace. Around 12.0% of the female respondents had experienced physical abuse themselves and 18.0% of the male respondents knew of a victim of physical abuse in their locality. The forms of physical violence included slapping, physical assault by grabbing hair, kicking etc. Slapping was found to be the most used form of physical abuse.





*Scene of aftermath of a slum eviction*

## **PUBLIC INTEREST LITIGATION**

BLAST is actively engaged in efforts to strengthen institutions of justice within both the formal and informal system. Through training workshops for judges and key law enforcement officials and through Public Interest Litigation (PIL) efforts, BLAST seeks to promote the enforcement and reform of law and practice to ensure greater access to justice for those who are poor or marginalised.

BLAST, along with other human rights organisations, filed two writ petitions in the public interest on the right to shelter and right to equality and non-discrimination in the context of women:

- *BLAST and Ors. vs. Bangladesh and others*, Writ Petition No. 4015 of 2014, challenging the unlawful threat of eviction made to some 25 landless farmers and their families in Rangpur district
- *BLAST and Ors. vs. Bangladesh and others* Writ Petition No. 7878 of 2014, challenging the 'kumar' clause in *kabin namas* as gender discriminatory and unconstitutional.

The High Court Division of the Supreme Court in each case asked the relevant government authorities to show cause regarding their alleged action or inaction resulting in violations of fundamental rights. These cases are all pending for hearing. More detailed discussion of specific PIL claims can be found throughout this report.

## **CAPACITY BUILDING**

BLAST aims to improve access to justice by building the capacity of legal service providers and other actors in the justice sector. BLAST's activities in this area include staff training; capacity building for management committee members and panel lawyers; awareness programmes for clients; capacity building on rights on rights and collaborative events to straighten justice delivery focused on the remedies available under particular laws or for particular groups.

At the community level, BLAST conducted Training for Trainers, and trainings for panel lawyers, DPOs, paralegals from other NGOs on a range of legal issues as well as rights awareness training on basic family and criminal laws, for beneficiaries, mostly women. BLAST also conducted focus group discussions with Union Watch Groups, Ward Watch Groups, District Legal Aid Committees, media groups and civil society organisations.

## **MONITORING AND EVALUATION**

Our Monitoring Team currently monitors the activities and progress of current projects and programmes, and seeks to assess the impact of our services. It deals with various categories of applications, including family matters, (such as claims for dower, complaints regarding second marriage, decree execution of judgments and orders), land disputes, petty criminal offences, and other miscellaneous matters.

We undertake impact assessment of our mediation and litigation services through observation of activities, documentation review, interviews of clients, lawyers, and stakeholders.

**Monitoring and Evaluation of Legal Empowerment Interventions (MEL):** In 2014, BLAST aimed to improve its monitoring and evaluation of legal services through an assessment of its current monitoring framework, designing a web-based case management system (CMS), developing a data management and reporting system, and capacity building of the M&E team. This included involving beneficiaries to play a critical role in assessing the success and “failures” of the interventions, and identify how future actions should be taken.

**Case Management System (CMS):** While we have traditionally sought to monitor our activities by setting casework targets, and reviewing the extent to which these are achieved, we are now developing a more data-driven approach, through the use of a web-based case management system. This will allow us to identify bottlenecks to case progress, coordinate action, follow up with staff and panel lawyers in a timely fashion and give prompt feedback to clients. The CMS has been designed to improve our understanding of the nature and outreach of our services. It will enable us to track and monitor the quality of our services by: providing information on the average timeframe for cases; collecting the numbers which are resolved by out-of-court settlement; identifying whether there is an increase or decrease in litigation following failed mediation; and the rate of our referrals from other agencies. Collection and analysis of such data is important for understanding the demand for and nature of legal services, as well as in designing strategies to ensure access to justice for particular communities.

## ***Social Change through Legal Action***

Our latest statistics show that 72.3% of those interviewed had unsuccessfully sought redress prior to seeking help from BLAST. Many clients benefited in terms of securing compensation, or other financial settlements, which catalysed further change in their lives. We found that a total of 1,40,55,100 BDT (one crore forty lakhs fifty five thousand and one hundred BDT) was recovered through mediation and litigation. For women, recovering dower money is a critical issue following the breakdown of a marriage: women were able to recover their dower money and use it for various livelihood purposes such as the expenses of their children’s education, investment for income-generating activities, to repay loans, to help pay for a second marriage, and other daily expenses. About 81.5% of women clients said they were no longer victims of domestic violence after resolving their marital problems through mediation or litigation through BLAST.





*Ayesha Khanam, President of Bangladesh Mahila Parishad and Lutful Kabir of BLAST speaking on the reasons for repeal of the law on character evidence in rape prosecutions*

## WOMEN'S RIGHTS

Through the year, we continued to campaign for reform of laws, policies and practices to secure women's rights in the family, community and state.

***Expedited Process for Family Cases:*** BLAST is currently advocating with NLASO for setting up a Family Support Division to assist destitute women, the vast majority of our clients, in ensuring speedier and more effective enforcement of their economic entitlements after separation or divorce. The Family Support Division aims to ensure that women litigants are able to secure a proportion of these entitlements (maintenance, and for Muslims, dower money) at the start of litigation, rather than waiting for many years while the cases wind their way from court to court, and that they can secure temporary shelter during the proceedings. Based on the findings of research undertaken in 2013 to identify the barriers that women face in accessing their economic rights in marital relationships, BLAST sent a memorandum to NLASO and undertook meetings with it to seek its collaboration in implementing a family support division at the Dhaka family court on a pilot basis.

***Improving access to justice for rape survivors:*** Although there are set laws in place that penalize rape, the right of access to justice of survivors of rape is often denied. A combination of insufficient institutional support, lengthy and adversarial court proceedings, and cultural barriers lead to a denial of justice in this respect.

One particular impediment to prosecuting rape cases fairly in Bangladesh is the defense's ability to challenge and question the victim's character at trial. Section 155(4) of the Evidence Act of 1872 states, "*when a man is prosecuted for rape or an attempt to ravish, it may be shown that the prosecutrix was of generally immoral character*". The current validity of character evidence in trial carries the risk of being presumptuous, as well as humiliating and degrading for the victim. This in turn could deter victims from reporting their rape. Furthermore, the suggestion that the victim is 'of easy virtue' may result in the exoneration of the defendant, even if the court has found that non-consensual intercourse occurred.

In relation to that evidence, rape victims are further subjected to demeaning medical evidence collection tests, known as the “two fingers test” (TFT). This evidence is often used to prove that the complainants were “habituated” to sexual intercourse and therefore could not have been raped.

BLAST, along with its partners, has been advocating for the repeal of these procedures through commissioning research to identify ways and means in which the use of such evidence acts as a barrier to access to justice for women survivors in rape cases. BLAST also partnered with TrustLaw to produce a report titled ‘*Character Evidence in Rape Trials: A Comparative Study of Rape Shield Laws and the Admissibility of Character Evidence in Rape Cases*’. The report sets out the practice regarding the inadmissibility of character evidence in rape cases across multiple Common Law jurisdictions. The findings of the research were then shared with magistrates, lawyers, women’s rights activists and academics to create a cohesive advocacy platform for the repeal of this archaic provision.

In addition to addressing the issue of character evidence in rape cases, BLAST has been continuing its campaign to ensure prohibition of the ‘two finger test’ as a method of medico legal evidence (MLE) collection and development of comprehensive guideline for MLE collection in a rights and victim sensitive manner. In 2014, BLAST continued to advocate with the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare to ensure enforcement of an Order of the High Court Division, Supreme Court of Bangladesh to streamline the process of MLE collection through developing guidelines. BLAST also provided technical research support to the Ministry. The draft Guidelines were submitted by the Ministry of Health & Family Welfare in April 2014. The High Court Division Order was awarded the prestigious Silver Gavel Award for advancing gender equality by Women’s Link Worldwide an international human rights organisation that works to establish gender equality worldwide in May 2014.

### ***Strengthening women’s participation in local government***

As a temporary special measure to ensure women’s effective participation in government, there are quotas or reservations provided for election of women to local government bodies – in both rural and urban areas – as well as the national Parliament. Throughout the year, women from UPs took part in dialogues and experience sharing meetings to discuss issues relating to their powers and special functions, raising concerns about the discriminatory distribution of work allocations, and the continuing non-enforcement of a High Court judgment which had clearly prohibited discrimination between members elected from general and reserved seats. In landmark case of *Shamima Sultana Seema v. Bangladesh*<sup>2</sup>, the Court declared that “*once elected the Commissioners, whether in the general seats or in the reserved seats, male or female, are equal in all respects and they shall be so treated by all concerned*” (par. 22).

Following these discussions, BLAST prepared draft *Rules on the Power and Functions of UP Members Elected from Reserved Seats*, which were subsequently reviewed at consultations with UP members, and legal experts. Advocacy meetings with parliament members, and government officials, in particular the Ministry of Local Government, Rural Development and Cooperatives was carried out to communicate these concerns.

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2 57 (2005) DLR (HCD) 201

## **Securing Legal Aid for Women**

As in previous years, over 85% of BLAST's legal aid services were delivered to women and girls. Legal aid was provided in cases relating to a range of issues including family law matters such as claims for economic rights after separation or dissolution of marriage (dower and maintenance), criminal law matters notably for instances of violence against women (dowry demand related violence, acid attacks, rape, and trafficking) and labour law matters such as claiming arrears of wages, maternity benefits and against wrongful dismissals.

In addition to its regular case work for women, BLAST started delivery of legal services to women in urban slums through the *Narir Shastho Odhikar O Icchapuron*: SHOKHI Project in 2014. The SHOKHI Project established nine one-stop shops, called *Shokhi Kendros*, in the Mirpur, Mohakhali and Mohammadpur areas of Dhaka for doorstep delivery of health, legal and information services. The project aims to improve protections of women and girls against violence as well as enabling them to claim redress in case of violations of their sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR). Through this innovative outreach model BLAST and its partners- Bangladesh Women's Health Coalition, Marie Stopes Bangladesh and We Can are undercutting both the physical and social barriers that women face in seeking services and remedies. Accordingly, in the inception phase of this project 38 women and girls have made applications for legal for cases concerning family law disputes.

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### **Case study: Securing legal protection against domestic violence**

*Sania, a 23 year old woman, from Dhaka, married Kabir. B in 2010 under Muslim shariah law. They were initially happily married and Sania gave birth to a daughter. However, Sania later learned that her husband was a drug addict. When she questioned Kabir about his addiction, he responded with violence. He also started claiming dowry from Sania. Sania's father paid B Tk. 30,000 and gave him furniture but Kabir made further demands. Sania then visited BLAST's Jessore Unit Office and explained that, because she could not meet her husband's demands for dowry, he subjected her to violence and therefore she required legal assistance.*

*Upon receiving her complaint, BLAST's Gopibagh Legal Aid Clinic Office sent a letter to Kabir asking him to visit the BLAST clinic for settlement of the dispute with his wife. Kabir attended the mediation meetings facilitated between him and Sania, by a trained mediator from BLAST. At the end of the mediation session, Sania and Kabir decided to remain married. Kabir signed a document statement that he would pay maintenance to his wife and daughter and not make any more demands for dowry or cause violence. He was also given to understand that violating these terms would lead legal action being taken against him.*

*Thus, BLAST's mediation services resulted in protecting Sania from domestic violence and enabled her to claim her economic rights within marriage.*

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### **Case Study: Enabling a woman with a disability to seek access to justice in a rape case**

*A woman with physical disabilities was raped in 2003 by a neighbor and consequently became pregnant. The offender forced her to abort the pregnancy as a pre-condition for marriage, but after the abortion he refused to marry her. The victim's mother consulted a local NGO and was referred to the DPO Shobar Shathey Bolbo, who supported her in filing a case with the Tribunal of Violence Against Women and Children.*

*A local Shalish (mediation) was arranged by local groups while the criminal was under trial in the court, although mediation is not allowed in such cases. The Shalish held the victim guilty and demanded that she pay monetary compensation. The local DPO representatives rejected this decision and started a social mobilization and advocacy initiative to build public consensus and demand justice for the victim.*

*The accused and his associates then directly threatened the victim and the DPO. The DPO referred the victim to BLAST for legal support. After consultation with a BLAST appointed lawyer, BLAST and the DPO supported the victim in filing a General Diary at the local police station and the police arrested the accused and sent him to court. A member of the local DPO also provided psychological support to the victim. The victim's transportation costs for the case were also covered by Action on Disability and Development.*

*Through the justice procedure The Tribunal on Violence against Women and Children, the accused was convicted and sentenced to 22 years jail with a 30, 000 taka fine.*

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### **Case Study: Release of an Indian Citizen on 29 December 2014**

*Mina was reunited with her father and the rest of her family members after six months on 29 December 2014. Mina, aged 20, is an Indian citizen. She met Shohid through her brother and developed a relationship with him. At one point of their relationship, she left her parents house in India and, without her passport in her possession, crossed the border to Bangladesh with Shohid. While staying at his place, she was arrested and put in prison by an S.I of a temporary Police Camp for entering Bangladesh without a passport; an act that constitutes an offence under Section 4 of The Control Entry Act, 1952.*

*An application praying for Mina's safe custody was put forward by the Bangladesh Women Lawyer's Association (BNWLA) but the Court refused their application. A request was made to BLAST to take legal steps to help Mina and following this request, Salma Akhter, a panel lawyer of BLAST, conducted the case for the young Indian woman.*

*During the trial, Mina admitted to committing this offence to the Court on 22 June 2014 and on the basis of her admission, the Court sentenced her to 15 days in prison at the end of which she was to return to her home country. Mina was eager to go back to her family and once she served her sentence, she took all the required steps for her return with the help of the District Magistrate in Kushtia. Kushtia's Police Administration and Chuadanga's BGB subsequently collaborated with India's BSF to facilitate her return to India on the 29 December 2014.*

*Mina finally returned to her home country thanks to collective efforts and cooperation between the Kushtia District Prison Super, BLAST Kushtia Unit and Syed Belal Hossain, District Administrator, Kushtia, who took prompt actions from their respective positions to ensure her return and reunion with her family in India.*

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**Case Study: Investigating the eviction of sex workers from Tangail brothel**

*Over 1000 men, women, and children living in a brothel in Tangail were evicted from their homes between 11 and 13 July 2014. According to locals, the brothel has existed in the area for almost a hundred years and at the time of the incident had approximately 950 sex workers living in it. On 12 July 2014, those who had not left in response to the previous threats made were given an hour to evacuate, and told that if they did not, they would be locked in their homes and burnt alive. Many were forced to leave quickly, and left behind their possessions and homes. Those who were able to retain their belongings, i.e. televisions, refrigerators etc., eventually had to sell them for as little as Taka 500 in order to flee as quickly as possible. Though some of the offenders were recognized by those being forced to vacate, the majority of the victims were unwilling to disclose their identities due to the threats that had been made.*

*BLAST became involved in August 2014, when a team of its members went on a mission to verify the number, locations, and needs of the evicted sex-workers and their children, as well as to discuss any short and long term solutions with the sex workers, local government, and law enforcement agencies. Short-term goals included providing for immediate humanitarian needs of those evicted, education for their children, and communicating with local government to underline the difficulties arising from the eviction. Medium to long-term goals included providing permanent accommodation for the sex workers, as well as compensation to those who lost their land and property, and to ensure similar evictions do not take place in the future. However, upon arriving to the site, it was discovered that all the homes had been torn down.*

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## **Public Interest Litigation Challenging the Kumari Clause in Marriage Forms**

### ***BLAST and others v Bangladesh and others (Writ Petition No. 7878 of 2014)***

*Marriages under Muslim law are required to be registered in a prescribed form (kabin-nama).<sup>3</sup> Clause 5 of this form requires a bride to make a statement regarding her marital status and sexual history, stating whether she is unmarried or a virgin (kumari)/widowed/divorced). The groom is not required to do this. These forms also do not require either the bride or the groom to produce any original identification document or photograph to confirm their identity.*

*BLAST and two women's organisations, Bangladesh Mohila Parishad, and Naripokkho, sent memoranda to the Ministry of Women and Children's Affairs pointing out this clear discrimination. On receiving no response, they filed a public interest petition before the High Court. They argued that the inclusion of this clause was gender discriminatory and arbitrary. The requirement that women identify whether or not they are 'কুমারী' (virgin) when marrying violates women's personhood and dignity, protected by Article 32 of the Constitution, and by CEDAW.*

*They also argued that grooms should be required to prove his identity, for example by attaching a photograph. Without this women face barriers in securing remedies in cases of marital disputes or breakdown, as husbands often evade court orders by giving a different name to service providers or other officials.*

*On 14 September, 2014 Justice Naima Haider and Justice Jahangir Hossain directed the Ministry of Public Administration and other governmental agencies (which, put in fn) to explain why clause No. 5 should not be declared discriminatory and in violation of Articles 28, 31 and 32 of the Constitution. They also asked for an explanation as to why the form should not be changed, by omitting the word 'কুমারী', and requiring both brides and grooms to give information on their marital status and to affix their photographs on the forms. The Rule was made returnable within four weeks.*

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<sup>3</sup> Sections 3 and 5 of the Muslim Marriages and Divorces (Registration) Act, 1974 read with Rule 28(1) (a) of the Muslim Marriages and Divorces (Registration) Rules, 1974. Clause 5 may be found in BG Form Nos. 1600 and 1601.



*Community Legal Services in Action: Rights Awareness Session in Balukhali Rangamati*

## MINORITY RIGHTS

Across the country, people face institutional or societal discrimination on grounds of gender, caste, race, religion, sexuality, or occupation. Access to justice is of vital importance to marginalised communities, who often face discrimination from the justice system when they seek its protection. BLAST works to promote equality in access to justice by educating people on their rights and the law, and drawing on existing tools in the justice system to ensure those rights are recognised and protected.

### **Race-based Discrimination**

BLAST and Research Initiatives Bangladesh are currently involved in undertaking rights awareness training sessions for Santhal communities in Dinajpur and Naogaon districts. This has enabled critical reflections on our own working practices and the need to ensure that legal service providers are sensitive to the special needs of these groups.

### **Language based Discrimination**

BLAST, in consultation with its partner RIB, advised individuals to make use of the Right to Information Act (2009) to secure national identity documents for young people from Urdu speaking communities. Several were initially informed that they could not secure passports, despite being citizens and holding national identity documents, due to a ban imposed by government order. They filed RTI applications, and were at first met by silence. When they pursued the process, and secured a date for hearing at the Information Commission, they were able to secure information from the Ministry of Home Affairs clarifying that no such ban was in place, and were accordingly able to obtain passports.

## Equality and Community Justice Fellowships

In 2014, BLAST began the Equality and Community Justice Fellowship Programme. The program seeks to further the inclusion of marginalised and socially excluded communities through 6-month fellowships. Equality Fellowships were offered to recent graduates in the fields of law, journalism or the social sciences from socially excluded communities. Fellows divided their time between BLAST and RIB, with at least one month dedicated to knowledge sharing with their communities.

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### Equality Fellow: Menu Ching Marma

Menu Ching Marma is from Rangamati District in the Chittagong Hill Tracts. She completed her LL.B with honours at the University of Information Technology and Sciences in 2014. She conducted a comparative analysis of the inheritance rights of Marma women in three indigenous communities in CHT investigating the overlap between Marma laws and constitutional guarantees of equality before the law. As this is an area where limited research has been conducted, Menu Ching conducted a qualitative study and in-depth interviews to collect her data.

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### Community Justice Fellow: Md. Bayezid Hossain

Md. Bayezid Hossain is a 2014 Community Justice Fellow from Bogra. He obtained a first class Master of Social Sciences degree in Journalism at Jagannath University in 2014. He won a fellowship to study business ownership patterns of the Rakhine community in Cox's Bazar. While the popularity and demand for Rakhine handicrafts is increasing, Rakhine ownership of the markets which sell these handicrafts is decreasing. Bayezid's research investigates how changing ownership patterns impact upon financial security and eventually land ownership in the Rakhine community.

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## ***Public Interest Litigation for Preventing Forced Eviction of Landless Families***

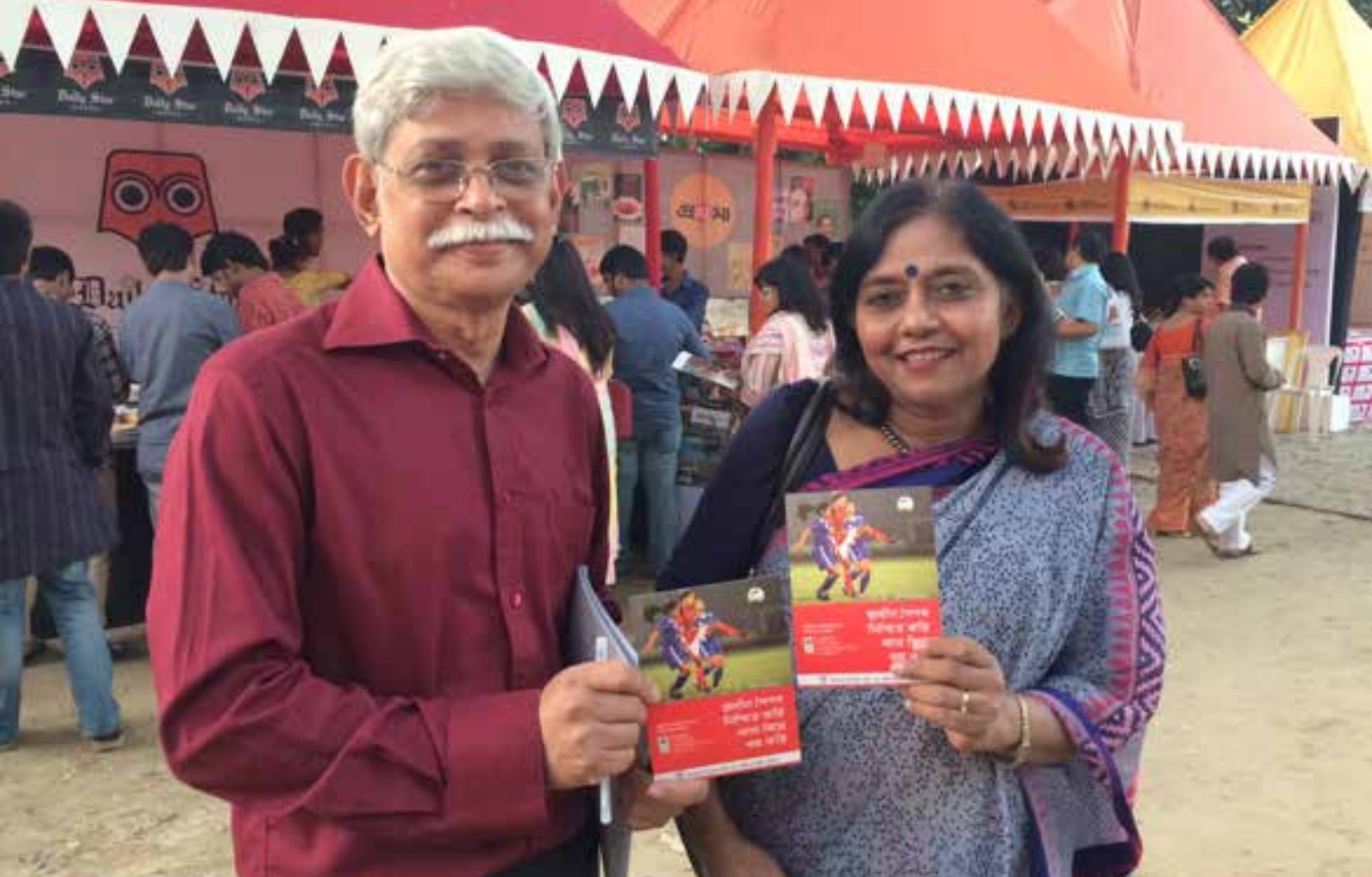
### ***(BLAST and others vs. Bangladesh and others, Writ Petition No. 4015 of 2014)***

In 2013, some 25 landless families in Rangpur faced a threat of eviction from homes. They included families with young children, infants and the elderly. They had been occupying *khas* land for over 35 years. They suddenly received a notice from the District Commissioner, Rangpur under section 5(1) of the Government Land and Buildings (Recovery of Possession) Ordinance No.24 of 1970 directed them to vacate the land. In July, the authorities demolished 15 homes, leaving these families in a precarious condition.

BLAST filed a writ petition before the High Court in the public interest on behalf of these families. On their behalf, their lawyers argued that evicting them from homes where they had been living for over a generation, without any alternative arrangements, would amount to a violation of their right to life and to livelihood, and would cause them huge loss and damage. They also argued that the eviction was arbitrary, and being carried out at the behest of a local influential person who wanted to build a school on the space.

On 29 April 2014, the High Court asked the government authorities to explain why the forceful eviction should not be declared without lawful authority, and also why they should not be directed to comply with any other order regarding rehabilitation.





*Prof. Zafar Iqbal and Prof. Yasmeen Haque join BLAST in calling for an end to child marriage*

## CHILDREN'S RIGHTS

Children across Bangladesh remain at risk of violence in different contexts, at home, in schools, in institutions and in public spaces. The Constitution recognizes that special measures may be taken by the state for the advancement of children, and to this end new laws and policies have been adopted and institutional measures such as the Victim Support Centers, or Child Correction Centers are in place, though with limited access or coverage given the numbers of those in need. In 2014, BLAST focused some activities on increasing awareness of key stakeholders, including its own staff and panel lawyers on the new Children Act 2013, and advocated for establishment and activation of institutional mechanisms to ensure that the law could be effectively enforced.

In September 2014, the Cabinet approved a draft law to replace the Child Marriage Restraint Act, 1929. The draft act proposed lowering the minimum age of marriage to 16 years for girls. Given that Bangladesh has the second highest rate of child marriage worldwide,<sup>4</sup> with 74% of Bangladeshi women aged 20-49 were married before the age of 18, and half of those before the age of 15, many organisations protested this proposed amendment. BLAST was involved in consultations and discussions on this issue throughout the year.

### ***Ending Corporal Punishment in Educational Institutions***

Since the High Court banned corporal punishment in all educational institutions in 2011, BLAST has been undertaking efforts to inform the public of this decision, and to ensure that school teachers, guardians and children, as well as education officers, and those in the justice system, are aware of its content.<sup>5</sup> Dialogues were held in Chittagong, Barisal,

<sup>4</sup> [http://data.unicef.org/corecode/uploads/document6/uploaded\\_pdfs/corecode/Child-Marriage-Brochure-7\\_17-HR\\_164.pdf](http://data.unicef.org/corecode/uploads/document6/uploaded_pdfs/corecode/Child-Marriage-Brochure-7_17-HR_164.pdf)

<sup>5</sup> BLAST has worked in partnership with Save the Children through 2014 to address children being

and Jessore Divisions with district judges, metropolitan magistrates, judicial magistrates, and assistant judges, as well as lawyers and local rights and development organisations focusing on how to ensure more effective implementation of the High Court Guidelines. Networking sessions with relevant organisations in Dhaka emphasized the need to continue to raise public awareness of the issue and to disseminate information on the judgment in simple language to those concerned.

Advocacy meetings were held with the *Ministry of Women and Children Affairs*, and with the *Law Commission* and the *National Human Rights Commission*, as well as public representatives, to propose that steps be taken for repeal of laws that continue to sanction corporal punishment of children. In addition workshops were held to discuss the legal framework for preventing physical and mental abuse of children, in several districts including Jessore, Barisal and Chittagong. These focused on strengthening the capacity of government officials and decision makers to carry out their own duties to prevent or punish violence against children, and to increase their awareness and understanding of the law. Participants at all meetings agreed to work individually towards a total ban on corporal punishment.

Meetings were also held with partner organisations **CAMPE** and the **Family Planning Association of Bangladesh** to agree common demands and approaches to seeking repeal of existing laws that permit corporal punishment.

To provide technical input for the South Asian Initiative End Violence Against Children (SAIEVAC) country chapter in Bangladesh, BLAST held a training programme focused on strengthening conceptual understanding of physical and humiliating punishment, drawing on learning from other countries. It also held a networking meeting to create links and improve coordination of activities on prohibition and prevention of violence against children with Law Ministry officials, senior judicial magistrates, lawyers and child rights activists. Many participants noted that such punishments were outdated and welcomed the preparation of proposals for repeal of existing laws that sanction such penalties.

### ***Ending Child/ Early Marriage***

BLAST joined with members of the coalition **Girls Not Brides** to call on the government to ensure that 18 years would be specified as the minimum age of marriage in the new law, with no exceptions. BLAST supported a young woman who had stopped her own child marriage to attend the Bangladesh Girl Summit.

BLAST provided comments on the proposed draft legislation to UNICEF regarding compliance with international laws and treaty obligations. BLAST also submitted recommendations to increase enforcement of the minimum age requirements.

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#### ***Case Study: Legal Protection for Nargis against Child Marriage***

*Nargis, 13, from Rangpur Sadar Upzaila was approached several times with a proposal of marriage by the President of the local primary school. After multiple rejections by the girl and her family, Parul was kidnapped after coming out from school and forced to sign an affidavit attesting that she was 18. The School President then registered the marriage and held her at his home for a month. A case was filed against the School President for marrying a child. Parul's father also filed a case against those who assisted in the illegal and forced marriage. Parul was reunited with her family, but they continue be threatened in attempts to force them to drop their case.*

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subjected to corporal punishment, physical or humiliating punishment, in homes, schools, and workplaces under the Ending Corporal Punishment Project.



In 2014, the findings of the end line study measuring the impact of the Growing Up Safe & Healthy (SAFE) project were disseminated. BLAST was an implementing partner of this project, which demonstrated the efficacy of the intervention in ensuring the health of married adolescents in urban slums. Findings showed that SAFE interventions reduced physical and sexual violence against adolescent married girls between 4.9 and 11.4%.

### **Juvenile Justice**

BLAST has been consistently working to activate the probation system as an alternative to imprisonment for children. The Children Act 2013 includes an extensive scheme to ensure probation for juvenile offenders. Currently, it can be difficult to refer children to a probation officer within the mandated time period. Probation reform is an important protection for children, as Bangladesh has limited juvenile detention facilities, which leads to youth often being incarcerated with adult offenders. Following BLAST advocacy and engagement, JATI has agreed to include a focused training session on probation for children into its regular judicial training, and BLAST has helped to coordinate several such sessions, which have been led by the Hon'ble Justice Md. Imman Ali of the Appellate Division of the Supreme Court.

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#### ***Case Study: Parul Reunited with Family after Kidnapping***

*Parul, 15, from Tiapara, Barisal was kidnapped from her village and sold into a brothel in Faridpur, over 100 km away. She was rescued from the brothel by BLAST's Faridpur unit and Shapla Mohila Songstha (a local women's rights organization). BLAST lawyers ensured that Parul's family was contacted and a custody application was made to the Court. The Court ordered the police to transfer the girl to her parents' custody, where Parul is now living safely.*

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*Participant at a national consultation meeting on the UNCRPD shadow report*

## RIGHTS OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

Individuals living with disabilities face physical and social barriers to access and participation in society. In the absence of any official statistics on persons with disabilities, it is estimated that 10 % of the population – an estimated 15 million people – live with disabilities (based on available figures and estimates on developing countries from WHO and the World Bank)<sup>6</sup> After Bangladesh signed the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in 2008, the Disabled Persons Rights and Protection Act, 2013 has come into force.

2014 marked the beginning of the implementation stage for this law, and BLAST worked to increase understanding of the rights and remedies made available under it, and to being to seek its activation.

In partnership with the National Grassroots Disability Organization (NGDO) and the National Council of Disabled Women (NCDW), BLAST was involved in drafting a report titled **“Report on Current Status of Persons with Disabilities in Bangladesh 2015: Legal and Grassroots Perspectives”** to assess the status of implementation of the CRPD across the country, focusing on access to justice. During the year, consultations were held in six districts with government officials, rights advocates, and leaders of disabled people’s organizations s in order to reach a comprehensive understanding of the current state of the rights of PWDs.

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<sup>6</sup> A report by the World Bank and the People’s Republic of Bangladesh, (2004). DISABILITY IN BANGLADESH: A Situation Analysis. [online] Available at: <http://siteresources.worldbank.org/DISABILITY/Resources/Regions/South%20Asia/DisabilityinBangladesh.pdf> [Accessed 29 Dec. 2015].



*Participant at a national consultation meeting on the UNCRPD shadow report*

Alongside its research activities, BLAST collaborated with **Handicap International** to build the legal capacity of DPOs as the first responders to human rights violations affecting people with disabilities. Through regular training and follow up programmes, 145 PWDs were connected with legal aid services through DPOs. The partners also conducted rights orientations in three districts to inform 227 representatives of the legal profession on relevant laws on disability rights, including by using the **BLAST/Harvard Disability Rights Manual** for accommodating the diverse needs of clients with disabilities. Beyond the workplace tools, these sessions worked to change attitudes and behaviours through connecting the participating lawyers and judges with PWDs and their care-givers, who also had the opportunity to learn about their rights alongside the legal workers. Finally, the partners developed awareness through courtyard meetings and training sessions with PWDs and their caregivers directly. 50 of these grass-root level meetings took place in five districts reaching 1258 people and covered the legislative and administrative mechanisms specifically available for PWDs.

The findings of the combined consultation efforts were collected to showcase good practice and give practical recommendations, based on local evidence, on how DPOs and other actors working with PWDs can ensure access to justice and legal services. This report was disseminated to actors who play a key role in realizing the rights of PWDs such as police officers, lawyers, DPOs and human rights advocates in order to inform their actions, while also building the capacity of the involved DPOs.

In 2014, BLAST began to focus on incorporating an accessibility framework in different activities aimed at supporting women, men and children in vulnerable and marginalised communities. For example, in the continuing response to the Rana Plaza disaster, and in reform proposals relating to labour laws, BLAST has sought to integrate a disability rights perspective. While highlighting the inadequate compensation schemes for injured or deceased workers, BLAST has framed demands for incorporating the concept of reasonable accommodation so that workers who are considered permanently disabled under the Act would be entitled not only to compensation but also the right to return to a suitable job.





Panelists at a national consultation meeting on the UNCRPD shadow report

### **Case Study: Mala secures conviction in rape case**

Mala was raped in 2003 by a neighbour and became pregnant. The offender forced her to abort the pregnancy promising that he would marry her if she did so, but after the abortion he refused to carry out his promise. Mala's mother consulted a local NGO and was referred to a disabled people's organisation, Shobar Shathey Bolbo, who supported Mala in filing a case with the Nari o Shishu Nirjaton Domon Tribunal [Special Tribunal on Violence against Women and Children].

While the case was under trial, a local shalish (mediation) was arranged by local groups, although any kind of out of court settlement is prohibited by law in such cases. The members of the shalish declared that Mala was at fault and guilty of extra-marital sex, and demanded that she pay a fine for her 'offence'. The local DPO representatives rejected this outright, and started a social mobilization and advocacy initiative to build public consensus and demand justice for the victim.

The offender directly threatened Mala and the DPO. The DPO referred Mala to BLAST for legal support. After consultation with a BLAST appointed lawyer, Mala filed a General Diary at the local police station. The police arrested the offender. A member of the local DPO also provided psychological support to Mala throughout the process, while another DPO, Action on Disability and Development, covered her transport costs.

The offender was convicted and sentenced to 22 years jail and directed to pay a fine of BDT 30,000.



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**Case Study: Noor secures inherited property**

*In 2001, Noor, a worker in the Chittagong Export Processing Zone, sustained a disability due to an injury. He was admitted to the Centre for the Rehabilitation of the Paralysed (CRP), which provided physical rehabilitation and helped him start up an income generating activity. Noor set up a grocery shop on land he inherited after his father's death. In 2014, however, cousins attempted to seize his land in collaboration with local government representatives and the police. Noor went to see a local DPO, Disabled Development and Research Centre (DDRC), involved in the promotion of access to justice for people with disabilities in Chittagong. DDRC consulted the Chittagong BLAST office which advised Noor to file a General Diary at the local police station. Subsequently, BLAST also sent a legal notice to Noor's cousins, and they attended a mediation hearing which was held in the presence of DPO members. Noor was eventually able to reach an outcome in his favour through this mediation process.*

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*Advocate Md. Al Amin sharing the findings of his research *Present Practice of Dissemination of Legal Instruments in Bangladesh: A Study on Accessibility by the Persons with Disabilities* at a sharing meeting*

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**Equality Fellow: Md. Al Amin**

Advocate Md. Al Amin secured his LL.M degree from the University of Chittagong in 2007, and is enrolled as an advocate in Gazipur District Court. Despite his keen knowledge and skills in legal matters, clients refused to consult him due to his blindness. Although he had passed the written entry exams for government and private organisations, he found he always fell short at the vivas (oral examination). As new laws are not published in a readable format for the visually impaired, it has been very difficult for him to stay updated on laws. He felt the need to conduct research on how lack of information is depriving people with disabilities of their rights. Through the equality fellowship now offered jointly by BLAST and RIB, under the Community Legal Services consortium, Al Amin is conducting research on “*Present Practice of Dissemination of Legal Instruments in Bangladesh: A Study on Accessibility by the Persons with Disabilities.*”

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*BLAST paralegals providing counseling to clients under the Rana Plaza Claims Administration*

## WORKERS' RIGHTS

In 2014, the issue of redress and rehabilitation of Rana Plaza survivors remained a national and international priority. Initiatives were also being undertaken to strengthen workplace safety across the ready-made garments industry. Little headway was made in contrast in recognizing the rights of informal sector workers, including those in domestic work.

Recognizing the prohibitive barriers that workers and their families face in seeking justice, BLAST undertook multiple initiatives to promote and protect workers' rights. Its dedicated labour cell continued to provide direct legal services (advice, referrals, mediation and litigation) to workers and to conduct rights awareness sessions. BLAST joined others in continuing to advocate for the establishment of a national legal framework for compensation for workplace deaths and injuries, and in the meantime pursuing remedies for victims of the Rana Plaza disaster, through public interest litigation in the Supreme Court, and engagement in the pre-claims assessment process for the Rana Plaza Claims Administration. BLAST remained active in campaigning for labour law reform in Bangladesh, as part of national coalitions, such as the Sromik Nirapotta Forum (SNF), and for recognition of the rights of workers in domestic service, through the Domestic Workers' Rights Network.

### ***Providing Legal Aid for Workers***

In order to increase outreach efforts, BLAST holds regular rights awareness sessions for workers in industrial areas such as Savar and Gazipur, and in some areas with a high proportion of garments workers live in Dhaka City, as well as for partner organisations. In 2014, BLAST held nine rights awareness sessions for 331 workers in Savar, Dhaka, and Gazipur on issues related to workplace health and safety, rights and remedies under the Labour Act 2006, and practical approaches to workplace problem-solving. The input gathered from the participants gave rise to future opportunities for legal advice and assistance from BLAST and trade unions.



*BLAST paralegal providing assistance to client under the Rana Plaza Claims Administration*

Through the Shokhi project, BLAST is currently focusing particularly on protection of rights of working women- in the family, community and the workplace. On the one hand, health and legal services are delivered directly to women through fifteen one-stop shops located in urban slums to ensure protection of their SRHR and against VAW. On the other, women are provided with training on laws and rights, including special sessions on rights in the workplace. Women workers are also linked to trade unions in their areas. This is done to build their capacity to claim their rights in the workplace, individually and jointly. It is also noteworthy that the Shokhi clinics are located near garment factories and function during the evenings, in order to undercut barriers of access to justice such as lack of mobility and accessibility to services.

In 2014, some 618 workers received direct legal services: 206 made requests for legal advice; 195 accessed free litigation support; 79 undertook mediation; 135 received a referral and 3 workers filed an appeal.

Further, BLAST along with its partner Safety & Rights Society undertook a short-term initiative to proactively identify injured workers from hospitals and provide them with comprehensive support services. Accordingly, 137 workers (134 men and 3 women) were identified and referred to the *Srromik Nirapotta Forum* (Workers' Safety Forum) to enable them to access medical services, financial services and livelihood support. BLAST communicated with the workers and took steps to prepare applications for seeking financial support from Workers' Welfare Fund on their behalf.

***Rana Plaza Pre-Claims Assessment:*** In the wake of the collapse of Rana Plaza, the most catastrophic event in the industry's history, BLAST was closely involved with SNF in campaigning to reform the law to provide for criteria to assess compensation, and to put in



place a realistic and practical process for recovery of compensation for workplace deaths and injuries. It proactively disseminated information to Rana Plaza survivors on means to claim compensation and sources for mental and physical health services, rehabilitation and re-employment to workers in the garment district, in collaboration with Safety and Rights. BLAST also set up a referral process to partner organizations in order to provide emotional and psychological support to victims.

The active campaigns from the SNF to demand justice and accountability and to coordinate relief, rescue and rehabilitation were part of national and international demands which spurred an unprecedented international response: the formation of the Rana Plaza Claims Administration, and the establishment of a voluntary international trust fund. This was coordinated by the ILO and supported by the government. A BLAST team worked on the pre-claims assessment process, interviewing victims and survivors and logging their claims for review by members of a Commission set up for this purpose. The BLAST paralegal team and two supervisors ultimately assisted 2803 survivors and families of deceased, injured and missing workers to file claims.

2014 saw local, national and international actors come together to improve the **regulation of occupational safety standards** in the industry. BLAST also served as an Advisory Committee Member of the Bangladesh **Accord on Building and Fire Safety**. In addition, it organized nationwide memorial events to commemorate the one-year anniversary of Rana Plaza's collapse, calling for school assemblies to remember the victims, attending at the unmarked graves in Jurain graveyard and meeting in solidarity with others at the site of the disaster on 24 April.

Reforming Laws on Workplace Safety	Reforming Law on Compensation for Workplace Deaths and Injuries
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Adopt Rules under the Labour Act, 2006 regarding workplace safety</li> <li>• Ensure strict enforcement of health and safety provisions of the Labour Act, 2006.</li> <li>• Prioritise inspection of safety and security standards in smaller factories.</li> <li>• Ensure accountability of factory owners for workplace deaths and injuries.</li> <li>• Ensure the security of trade union leaders and members who raise concerns on workplace safety.</li> <li>• Create and maintain a national database of injured workers and a follow up process to ensure payment of compensation.</li> <li>• Ensure that women workers receive equal pay, medical facilities, secure transportation and maternity leave under the existing law.</li> <li>• Ensure injured workers and bereaved families of deceased workers are linked with social safety net schemes.</li> </ul> <p>Recommendations, BLAST &amp; SRS, <i>Report on Meeting on Safety and Security at the Workplace: Law &amp; Reality</i>, December 2014</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Differentiate laws on deaths by accident and by negligence with appropriate compensation and punishment for each to ensure accountability.</li> <li>• Specify clear criteria to determine the quantum of compensation, including for pain and suffering</li> <li>• Put in place laws to ensure compensation is awarded to domestic workers for workplace injuries and deaths.</li> <li>• Enforce compensation awards through Mobile Courts</li> <li>• Amend the Labour Act, 2006 to ensure adequate and speedy awards of compensation</li> </ul> <p>Recommendations from BLAST &amp; SRS, Roundtable: <i>Developing a National Legal Framework for Compensation for Workplace Deaths and Injuries</i>, October 2014.</p>



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**Case Study: Abdul Recovers Arrears after Refusal of Paternal Leave**

Abdul was employed at a garment factory for five years, when his wife became pregnant. He sought but was not granted leave. He had to stay off work to assist his wife, and after she delivered the child, he returned to the factory. His supervisor told him that he was no longer needed. Abdul was reassured that during the next round of recruitment he would get his job back, but this didn't happen. Abdul went to the factory to claim his arrears of wages and other legal benefits but he was refused both. After he approached BLAST, it issued two letters to the factory authorities to resolve the matter through mediation. After successful mediation he eventually received Tk. 25,000 as his back wages and other legal benefits from the respondents.

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In addition to following up on the writ petition filed in public interest in April 2013 immediately after the collapse Rana Plaza to ensure payment of compensation to the victims of the building collapse, in 2014 BLAST continued to advocate for the creation of a national, practicable compensation scheme for workplace deaths and injuries. Accordingly, advocacy meetings were organized at the national level which saw the participation of **Md. Israfil Alam M.P. Member, Parliamentary Standing Committee of the Labour Ministry**, Inspector General of Factories and representatives of the Labour Directorate. The primary objectives of the meeting were to discuss amendments to the existing provisions in the Bangladesh Labour Act on compensation for workers to bring them up to international standards in cases of workplace deaths and injuries.



*Justice Awlad Ali, Trustee of BLAST, Advocate Syed Ziaul Hasan of GIZ and Adv. Md. Ishaque, Coordinator, BLAST Jessore with paralegals of IRSOP Project*

## PRISONERS' RIGHTS

### Guaranteeing the Legal Rights of Prisoners

Due to existing and steadily increasing backlogs in Bangladesh courts, prisons have become increasingly overcrowded, significantly hindering the rights of prisoners. BLAST aims to provide legal assistance to indigent under-trial prisoners through paralegals, and to facilitate urgent review of their cases through the Case Coordination Committees, bringing together all relevant actors in the criminal justice system, to expedite multi-agency responses. Through this project, which is being led by the Ministry of Home Affairs and the Ministry of Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs) BLAST seeks to increase prisoners' access to justice.

Paralegals provide first-hand free legal assistance and advice to the prisoners, their families and other justice seekers at police stations, courts, and sometimes in the community through the Paralegal Advisory Services (PAS). Paralegals assist lawyers, police, courts and other criminal justice agencies. They make legal interventions, which pave the way for the prisoner release, ensure speedy trial and investigations. They also work to identify suitable prisoners for skill development training and refer drug dependent prisoners to rehabilitation programmes; this contributes to efforts to lower the risk of reoffending and helps to reintegrate the prisoners into the society. In 2014, 92 paralegals made 6963 interventions in prisons and 474 prisoners were released.

In a few cases, BLAST's team came across foreign nationals left in prisons beyond their terms of sentence or without legal aid. BLAST contacted their respective missions and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and helped them get repatriated.

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**Case Study: Mahmuda Returns to India after 7 Years and 8 Months**

*Mahmuda, an Indian national, was released from Kushtia Jail in Bangladesh on 5 February 2014 after being imprisoned for over 7 years and 8 months.*

*Mahmuda was born in Bangladesh, but moved to India with her parents as a child, where she lived for 35 years with her husband and children, who are all Indian nationals. After she travelled to Bangladesh in 2007 to visit her relatives, she was arrested while trying return to India in May 2007 at the Daulatpur border in Dinajpur district by Bangladesh Border Guards. She was then produced before the court and charged under Section 5 (1) of the Nari o Shishu Nirjaton Domon Ain, 2000 (as amended 2003) with human trafficking. In May 2012, Tribunal finally acquitted Mahmuda because the prosecution was not able to prove the charges against her. The judge also ordered her repatriation to India based on his evaluation of the FIR and charge sheet filed against her. The delay in the hearing was due to the allegations still being investigated against her, 6 years into her incarceration.*

*BLAST's District Coordinator, Advocate Shankar Mojumdar, was told about Mahmuda's circumstances by the Jail Superintendent of Kushtia Prison. He found out that her release was protracted by the fact that she had no identity documents proving her Indian nationality. On being informed, the BLAST Head Office contacted its partner organisation, the Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative (CHRI) in New Delhi. CHRI reached out to Mahmuda's family in Mumbai and verified her address and nationality through a local organization, Prayas. Prayas then contacted Mahmuda's eldest son in Mumbai. CHRI also informed the High Commission of India in Bangladesh and the Ministry of Home Affairs in India of the case. BLAST forwarded the court orders made in Mahmuda's case to CHRI in India as evidence that all charges against her in Bangladesh had been dismissed.*

*Finally, Mahmuda was able to return and reunite wither her family in India in February 2014.*

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**Activating the system of probation: Alternatives to custody**

BLAST is working on activating the system of probation as an alternative to imprisonment in collaboration with the Judicial Administration Training Institute (JATI). Through its training and knowledge sharing programmes, a range of key justice sector actors - the Additional District and Session judges, DC's office, police administration, lawyers, Bar Association Representatives, VSC officers, Social Services Officers, Probation Officers, prison authorities and concerned NGOs have learned about the probation system and relevant laws (including the new Children Act, 2013, Probation of Offenders Ordinance, 1960, The Special privileges of Women Prisoners Act 2006). They also had an opportunity to review current gaps, processes, practices, trends and misconceptions regarding the law of probation. Subsequently, JATI has included the issue of probation in the foundation course, and other training curricula. JATI has also agreed to include the Children's Act 2013 and the laws on probation in their foundation training curriculum. BLAST contributed to a foundation training conducted on 21 December 2014.

## **Protection against Arbitrary Arrest and Remand**

Since obtaining the landmark 2003 judgment of the High Court laying down fifteen guidelines on exercise of police powers of arrest and remand, BLAST has been seeking their full and effective implementation. In 2014, BLAST organised a meeting to disseminate the findings of its research on the extent of implementation of these guidelines. The findings highlighted the overwhelming lack of knowledge about the guidelines among relevant stakeholders. Recommendations made included increasing awareness regarding the guidelines among police, lawyers, judges and magistrates as well as inclusion of the guidelines in the curriculum for judicial magistrates through JATI.



# I. Financial Statement

**A. QASEM & Co.**

Chartered Accountants Since 1953

**Bangladesh Legal Aid and Services Trust (BLAST)**  
**Consolidated Balance Sheet**  
**As at December 31, 2014**

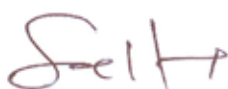
	Notes	December 31, 2014 BDT	December 31, 2013 BDT
<b>Assets</b>			
<b>Non-Current Assets</b>			
Property, Plant and Equipments	3	11,541,930	14,272,859
<b>Total Non-Current Assets</b>		<b>11,541,930</b>	<b>14,272,859</b>
<b>Current Assets</b>			
Cash and Cash equivalents	4	132,906,016	105,313,885
Receivables, Advances and Pre-payments	5	6,432,179	5,114,672
<b>Total Current Assets</b>		<b>139,338,195</b>	<b>110,428,557</b>
<b>Total Assets</b>		<b>150,880,125</b>	<b>124,701,416</b>
<b>Fund and Liabilities</b>			
Fund Account	6	113,216,203	87,605,446
Liabilities for Expenses/Payments	7	37,663,922	37,095,970
<b>Total Fund and Liabilities</b>		<b>150,880,125</b>	<b>124,701,416</b>

**Footnotes:**

1. Auditors' report - Page 1.
2. The annexed notes form part of the financial statements.



**Deputy Director (Finance)**  
BLAST



**Honorary Executive Director**  
BLAST



**Chairman/Vice Chairman**  
Board of Trustees, BLAST



**A. Qasem & Co.**  
Chartered Accountants

Dated, Dhaka  
August 25, 2015

## II. Our People

### Board of Trustees

Dr. Kamal Hossain, Chairperson  
Adv. Sheikh Razzaque Ali, Member  
Justice Md. Awlad Ali, Vice Chairperson  
Barrister M Amir-ul Islam, Member  
Barrister Shafique Ahmed, Member  
Adv. Fazlul Huq, Member  
Dr. Shamsul Bari, Member  
Dr. Rabia Bhuiyan, Member  
Raja Barrister Devasish Roy, Member  
Mr. Ayub Chowdhury, FCA, Member  
Adv. Z.I Khan Panna, Member  
Barrister Sara Hossain, Member

### Executive Committee

Dr. Kamal Hossain, Chairperson  
Dr. Shamsul Bari  
Dr. Rabia Bhuiyan  
Mr. Ayub Chowdhury, FCA  
Barrister Sara Hossain

### Presidents of District Management Committees

Barisal	Adv Abdul Goffar Khan
Bogra	Adv Abdul Motin
Chittagong	Adv Subash Chandra Lala
Comilla	Adv Tarek Abdullah
Dhaka	Adv Syed Rezaur Rahman
Dinajpur	Adv Md Yusuf Ali
Faridpur	Adv Md Shahjahan Miah
Jessore	Adv Debashis Das
Khulna	Adv Md Younus
Kushtia	Adv Nurul Islam Dulal
Mymensingh	Adv Alhaj M. Jubed Ali
Noakhali	Adv B U M Kamrul Islam
Pabna	Adv. Alhaj Md Shahjahan Ali Mondol
Patuakhali	Adv Md Harun-or-Rashid
Rajshahi	Adv Alhaj Md Nazmus Saadat
Rangamati	Adv Paritosh Kumar Dutta
Rangpur	Adv Md Abdul Haque Pramanik
Sylhet	Adv A.F.M. Ruhul Anam Chowdhury (Mintu)
Tangail	Adv Md Abdul Baki Miah

## Coordinators of the District/ Unit Offices

Barisal	Adv Md. Khalilur Rahman
Bogra	Adv Ashrafun Nahar Swapna
Chittagong	Adv Rezaul Karim Chowdhury
Comilla	Adv Shamima Akhter Jahan
Dhaka	Adv Khandakar Abdul Mannan
Dinajpur	Adv Serajum Munira
Faridpur	Adv Sipra Goswami
Jessore	Adv Md. Ishaq
Khulna	Adv Ashoke Kumar Saha
Kushtia	Adv Sankar Mazumder
Mymensingh	Adv A H Habib Khan
Noakhali	Adv Nuruzzaman
Pabna	Adv. Md Alamgir Hossain
Patuakhali	Adv Nizam Uddin Ahmed
Rajshahi	Adv Abdus Samad
Rangamati	Adv Jewel Dewan
Rangpur	Adv Nasima Khanam
Sylhet	Adv Irfanuzzaman Chowdhury
Tangail	Adv Abdul Karim Mia I Adv Khandakar Amina Rahman

### III. Where We Work

A2J : Access to Justice for Realization of Human Rights and Advocacy for Empowerment of the Poor

ACP : Actions for Child Protection Violence against children

ALO : Access to Legal Empowerment and Outreach

AVC : Activating Village Courts in Bangladesh

CAA : Community Awareness for Access to Justice

CLS : Access to Justice for the Marginalized through Community Legal Services

CLS-YPSA : Access to Justice for the Marginalized through Community Legal Services

CRP : Producing the CRPD Shadow Report to bring about a greater engagement by the state and key social actors to the recognition of disability rights in Bangladesh

CSP : Civil Society and Police Reform in South Asia

ECP : Legal Reform for Ending Corporal Punishment in all Settings

EPT : Effective Participation for Transparent and Accountable Local Governance

IRS : Improvement of the Real Situation of Overcrowding in Prisons in Bangladesh

JSW : Justice and Safety for Workers after Rana Plaza

MEL : Monitoring and Evaluation of Legal Empowerment Interventions

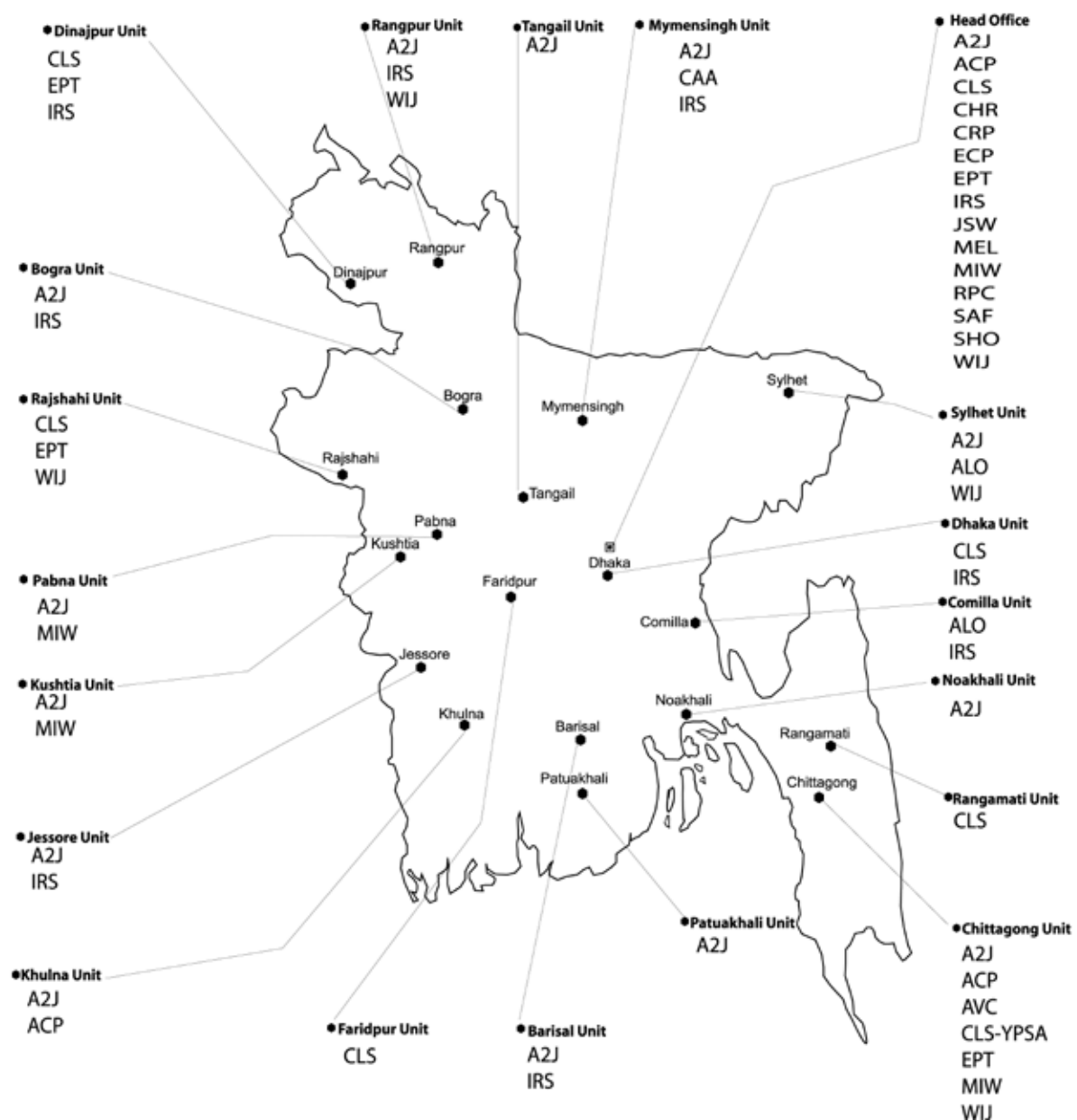
MIW : Making it Work: Access to Justice for Persons in Disabilities in Bangladesh

RPC : Pre- Counselling and Completion of Claims forms under the Rana Plaza Claims' Administration

SAF : Growing up Safe and Healthy

SHO : Women's Health Rights and Choices

WIJ : Women in Justice





## IV. Our Projects and Donors

Name of Project	Duration of Project	Working Area	Name of Donors
Access to Justice for Realization of Human Rights and Advocacy for Empowerment of the Poor (A2J)	01 Jan 2012 – 31 Dec 2016	Barisal, Bogra, Chittagong, Gopibag Clinic, Jessore, Khulna, Kushtia, Mymensingh, Noakhali, Pabna, Patuakhali, Rangpur, Sylhet and Tangail	Royal Danish Embassy, Christian Aid, Dan Church Aid, Diakonia, Drishtipat
Access to Justice for the Marginalized through Community Legal Services (CLS)	1 Jan 2013 – 31 Mar 2017	Chittagong University, Dhaka, Dinajpur, Faridpur, Naogaon, Rajshahi, Rajshahi University and Rangamati	Maxwell Stamp (DFID)
Access to Justice for the Marginalized through Community Legal Services (CLS) YPSA	01 Jul 2014 – 31 Mar 2017	Chittagong	Maxwell Stamp (DFID)
Access to Legal Empowerment and Outreach (ALO)	1 Jan 2014 - 31 Dec 2016	Comilla and Sylhet	Manusher Jonno Foundation (MJF)
Actions for Child Protection — Violence against children (ACP)	1 Apr 2014 - 31 Mar 2017	Chittagong, Dhaka, Khulna	FPAB (EU)
Activating Village Courts in Bangladesh (AVC)	1 Apr 2011 - 30 Nov 2015	Chittagong and Cox's Bazar	UNDP
Community Awareness for Access to Justice (CAA)	1 Aug 2013 – 31 May 2015	Mymensingh	National Center for State Courts (NCSC) (USAID)
Civil Society and Police Reform in South Asia (CSP)	1 May 2014 – 31 Dec 2015	Dhaka	Friedrich Naumann Stiftung fur die Freiheit –FNF (EU)
Effective Participation for Transparent and Accountable Local Governance (EPT)	1 Mar 2013 – 28 Feb 2017	Chittagong, Dinajpur, Rajshahi (Ponchogor, Thakurgaon)	Diakonia, Bangladesh (EU)
Growing up Safe and Healthy: SAFE (SAF)	1 Nov 2010 – 30 Oct 2014	Dhaka	ICDDR,B - (EKN)
Improvement of the Real Situation of Overcrowding in Prisons in Bangladesh (IRS)	1 Nov 2013 – 31 Dec 2015	Barisal, Bogra, Comilla, Chittagong, Dhaka, Dinajpur, Jessore, Mymensingh, Rajshahi and Rangpur	The Deutsche Gesellschaft fuer International Zusammenarbeit GIZ
Justice and Safety for Workers after Rana Plaza (JSW)	1 Feb 2014 – 31 Dec 2014	Dhaka, Savar	AusAid
Legal Reform for Ending Corporal Punishment in all Settings (ECP)	1 Jan 2014 – 31 Dec 2016	Dhaka	Save the Children International
Making it Work: Access to Justice for Persons in Disabilities in Bangladesh (MIW)	1 May 2013 – 28 Feb 2015	Chittagong, Dhaka, Kushtia and Pabna	Handicap International (EU)
Monitoring and Evaluation of Legal Empowerment Interventions (MEL)	1 Jan 2013 – 30 Sept 2015	Dhaka	Foundation Open Society Institute
Pre- Counselling and Completion of Claims forms under the Rana Plaza Claims' Administration (RPC)	20 Mar 2014 – 19 Jul 2014	Savar, Dhaka	The Deutsche Gesellschaft fuer International Zusammenarbeit GIZ (CC)
Producing the CRPD Shadow Report to bring about a greater engagement by the state and key social actors to the recognition of disability rights in Bangladesh (CRP)	1 Jan 2012 – 31 Dec 2016	Dhaka	NGDO (Disability Rights Fund)
SHOKHI –Women's Health Rights and Choices (SHO)	1 Dec 2013 - 30 Nov 2017	Dhaka: Mohammadpur, Mohakhali, Mirpur	Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands
Women in Justice (WIJ)	19 Jan 2014 -18 Jan 2016	Chittagong, Dhaka, Rajshahi, Rangpur, Sylhet	National Center for State Courts (NCSC) (USAID)

## V. Our Offices

**Head Office**                YMCA Development Centre,  
1/1, Pioneer Road, Kakrail I Dhaka-1000  
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**E** mail@blast.org.bd | **W** www.blast.org.bd

### District Offices/ Project Offices

**Barisal**                    Bar Association Building (1st Floor), Barisal  
**T** 0431-62805 | **E** barisalunit@blast.org.bd

**Bogra**                    Khaza Bari , Behind the Zilla Parishad Bhaban, Bogra  
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**Chittagong**                Zilla Parishad Bhaban, Court Road, Chittagong  
**T** 031-630578 | **E** blastctg@gmail.com

AVCB Project Central Office  
House 442, Road 4, Block B, Chandgaon R/A, Chittagong  
**T** 031-2573302 | **E** avcbctg@blast.org.bd

**Comilla**                    Bar Association Building, Comilla  
**T** 081-66944 | **E** comillaunit@blast.org.bd

**Cox's Bazar**                AVCB Project District Office  
Swapna Kutir (3<sup>rd</sup> floor), Kabarsthan Road, South Taraboniar Chora,  
**T** 01811 402999 | **E** avcbcox@blast.org.bd

**Dhaka**                    51/12 Johnson Road (2<sup>nd</sup> Floor), beside the Azad  
Cinema Hall, Dhaka – 1100  
**T** 02-7172192 | **E** dhakaunit@blast.org.bd

**Dinajpur**                    Bar Association Building, Dinajpur  
**T** 0531-65279 | **E** dinajpurunit@blast.org.bd

**Faridpur**                    Faridpur Court Mosque House (1<sup>st</sup> Floor)  
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**Jessore**                    Bar Association Building-1 (1st floor), Jessore  
**T** 0421-67674 | **E** jessoreunit@blast.org.bd

**Khulna**                    Bar Association Old Building (2<sup>nd</sup> Floor), Court Road, Khulna  
**T** 041-812702 | **E** khulnaunit@blast.org.bd

**Kushtia**                    Bar Association Building, Kushtia  
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<b>Mymensingh</b>	Bar Association Building (1st floor), Mymensingh T 091-64197   E <a href="mailto:mymensinghunit@blast.org.bd">mymensinghunit@blast.org.bd</a>
<b>Noakhali</b>	Bar Association Building (1st floor), Noakhali T 0321-61663   E <a href="mailto:noakhaliunit@blast.org.bd">noakhaliunit@blast.org.bd</a>
<b>Pabna</b>	Bar Association Building, (1st floor) Pabna T 0731-66450   E <a href="mailto:pabnaunit@blast.org.bd">pabnaunit@blast.org.bd</a>
<b>Patuakhali</b>	Bar Association Building (1st floor), Patuakhali T 0441-64094   E <a href="mailto:patuakhaliunit@blast.org.bd">patuakhaliunit@blast.org.bd</a>
<b>Rajshahi</b>	Bar Association New Building (1 <sup>st</sup> Floor), East side, Rajshahi T 0721-811533   E <a href="mailto:rajshahiunit@blast.org.bd">rajshahiunit@blast.org.bd</a>
<b>Rangamati</b>	Bonorupa, Kotwali, Rangamati, Hill Tracts T 0351-63509   E <a href="mailto:rangamatiunit@blast.org.bd">rangamatiunit@blast.org.bd</a>
<b>Rangpur</b>	Bar Association Building (1 <sup>st</sup> Floor) Rangpur, T 0521-61062   E <a href="mailto:rangpurunit@blast.org.bd">rangpurunit@blast.org.bd</a>
<b>Sylhet</b>	Bar Association Building (2nd Floor), Sylhet, T 0821-726458   E <a href="mailto:sylhetunit@blast.org.bd">sylhetunit@blast.org.bd</a>
<b>Tangail</b>	789 Rokeya Monjil, Sadar Hospital Road, Sabalia, Tangail T 0921-62207   E <a href="mailto:tangailunit@blast.org.bd">tangailunit@blast.org.bd</a>

#### **Legal Aid / University Law Clinics**

<b>Chittagong</b>	Chittagong University, 2 <sup>nd</sup> Gate, Siam Palace, Uttara R/A, Road 5, Block-B, Chittagong. E <a href="mailto:chittagongclinic@blast.org.bd">chittagongclinic@blast.org.bd</a>
<b>Rajshahi</b>	Heritage Archive, Kajla, Motihar, Rajshai E <a href="mailto:rajshahiclinic@blast.org.bd">rajshahiclinic@blast.org.bd</a>
<b>Gopibag</b>	89/3-1 (8 <sup>th</sup> Lane) Gopibag, next to Bishwa Road, Dhaka T +8802-7522776   E <a href="mailto:gopibagclinic@blast.org.bd">gopibagclinic@blast.org.bd</a>
<b>Mohakhali</b>	10, East Tejturi Bazar, Tejgaon, Dhaka.
<b>Mohammadpur:</b>	194/A (2nd floor), Mohammadpur Housing Society, Mohammadpur, Dhaka.
<b>Mirpur:</b>	House 9 (1st Floor), Road: 4/5, Kalshi, Mirpur, Dhaka.

## VI. Our Publications

### In English

- Advocacy Programme on the Use of Sections 54 and 167 of Cr.P.C. by Police Officers (2007)
- Alternative Dispute Resolution - Community-Based Mediation as an Auxiliary to Formal Justice in Bangladesh: the Madaripur Model of Mediation (2003)
- Development and Use of the Probation System in Bangladesh
- Ending Corporal Punishment (2011)
- Food Security in Bangladesh: Legal Obligation (2006)
- Good Prison Management (A workshop report), Dhaka (10-13 September 2000)
- Good Prison Management for Prison Personnel of Bangladesh (Training Guide) (2000)
- Land Rights and Poverty Alleviation (2005)
- Legislative Advocacy for the Establishment of Human Rights Commission in Bangladesh (1997)
- Legislative Advocacy for the Establishment of the Office of Ombudsman in Bangladesh (1998)
- Legislative Initiatives and Reforms in the Family Laws (2009)
- Regional Conference on Cross Border Migration and Protection of Human Rights Among Close Neighbours in South Asia (Report of a Conference held in December 2005)
- Regional Seminar on Human Rights and Gender: Core Concepts, Major Debates and Emerging Issues (Report of a Seminar held in October 2009)
- Reviewing the Family Courts Ordinance 1985 (2008)
- Rights of Slum Dwellers: Permanent Settlement for the Urban Poor (2005)
- Role of Media in PIL and Advocacy (2005)
- Seeking Effective Remedies: Prevention of Arbitrary Arrests and Freedom from Torture and Custodial Violence (2005, reprinted 2008)
- Separation of the Judiciary: What to Do in the Present Context (2006)
- Strengthening Family Courts: An Analysis of the Confusions and Uncertainties Thwarting Family Courts in Bangladesh (2006)
- Towards a Human Rights Commission for Bangladesh (1999)



## In Bangla

- আইন সহায়িকা: কতিপয় পারিবারিক ও ফৌজদারী বিষয় (Legal Aid: Some Family and Criminal Matters) (2005, 2006, 2008)
- আমাদের তথ্য জানার অধিকার (Our Right to Know) (1999)
- এসো আইন জানি (Let's Learn the Law) 2nd edition (2005)
- কারাজীবন, কারাব্যবস্থাপনা, কারাবিদ্ৰোহ (Prison Life, Prison Management, Prison Protests) (2000)
- পুলিশ সম্পর্কে ১০১ প্রশ্নোত্তর (101 Questions about the Police) (2010, 2014)
- বাংলাদেশ জাতীয় মানবাধিকার কমিশন : একটি আবেদন (Bangladesh National Human Rights Commission: An Appeal) (1997)
- বাংলাদেশে ন্যায়পাল নিয়োগ (Appointment of an Ombudsman in Bangladesh) (1999)
- মহামান্য হাইকোর্টের রায়ের আলোকে গ্রেফতার ও রিমান্ডের ক্ষেত্রে পুলিশ ও ম্যাজিস্ট্রেট কর্তৃক অবশ্য পালনীয় কর্তব্য সমূহ (The Obligations of the Police and Magistrates in Cases of Arrest and Remand in light of the High Court's Directives) (2008)
- নির্যাতনের শিকার-নারী ও শিশুদের জন্য সরকারী ও বেসরকারী সেবাপ্রদানকারী সংস্থাসমূহের ঠিকানা ও তথ্য সম্বলিত সহায়িকা ২০১৪
- “নিপীড়িত অধিকার: মানবাধিকার লঙ্ঘনে ব্লাস্টের কয়েকটি তথ্যানুসন্ধান ভিত্তিক প্রতিবেদন সংকলন ২০০৩-২০০৮” (Deprived Rights: Compilation of Reports based on Inquiries regarding violation of human rights) (2008)
- শিক্ষা প্রতিষ্ঠানে শারীরিক শাস্তি ও প্রদান প্রতিরোধ (Ending Corporal Punishment) (২০১১ পুনঃমুদ্রণ ২০১৪)
- শ্রমিকদের জন্য আইন সহায়িকা (Legal Handbook for Workers) (2007, 2008, republished 2009, 2014)

ন্যায় বিচার সকলের অধিকার  
আমাদের অঙ্গীকার  
**Recognizing Rights**  
**Realizing Remedies**

National Helpline on Violence against Women and Children: **10921**  
BLAST Legal Support Helpline: **01715 220220**

**Thanks to all our Development Partners**



The Embassy of Denmark



Australian High Commission



Community Legal Services



Friedrich Naumann  
STIFTUNG **FÜR DIE FREIHEIT**



Kingdom of the Netherlands



**OPEN SOCIETY**  
FOUNDATIONS



**Save the Children**



**giz**



**USAID**  
আমেরিকার জনগণের পক্ষ থেকে

