

ROLE OF ONE STOP CRISIS CENTRE (OCC) IN PROTECTING WOMEN'S RIGHTS: AN ANALYSIS WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO RAJSHAHI DISTRICT

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INTRODUCTION

Violence against women is a problem having different manifestations and it is considered to be very sensitive social issue and much rooted in the society of Bangladesh.¹ Violence against women (VAW) in the forms of physical, sexual and psychological, remains common in the lives of Bangladeshi women which seriously affect their physical and psychological health.² The women victims require immediate psychological support to reintegrate into society with dignity. Post traumatic stress disorder, suicidal tendency, fear and loss of confidence are also among other psychological crisis faced by these women.³ A survivor of domestic violence often requires medical attention during the crisis period. The lives of women are not secured in the society.⁴ In

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¹ Monsoor, Dr. Taslima., *Management of Gender Relations: Violence Against Women and Criminal Justice System of Bangladesh*, British Council, EWLR, Dhaka, 2008, at p.5; Jahan, Roushan and Islam, Mahmuda, *Violence Against Women in Bangladesh: Analysis and Action*, Women for Women and South Asian Association for Women Studies, Dhaka, 1997, at p. 62.

² Ali, Advocate Salma., Ed., *Violence against Women in Bangladesh 2001*, BNWLA, Dhaka, 2002, p. 16; Abdullah, Rashidah., "Eliminating violence against women through health services", at <http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_hb019/is_2_8/ai_n28963156/> (last visited on 03.05.2011); See also, "Violence leaves psychological scars in women", at <<http://www.thedailystar.net/story.php?nid=100898>> (last visited on 02.05.2011).

³ Ibid.

⁴ See, "ASIA: A general view of the conditions of women in Asian countries", at <<http://www.humanrights.asia/news/ahrc-news/AHRC-STM-044-2010>> (last visited on 03.05.2011)

addition, victim also needs protection, safe accommodation, support, counseling and legal assistance. Comprehensive assistance requires not only medical personnel, but also counselors, social workers, legal aid providers and the police.⁵ It emphasizes the need to establish a sustainable counseling, medicare and legal aid for women victims. Government of Bangladesh have provided specialised services for women in one-stop crisis centers. Here, survivors of domestic violence, incest and rape receive medical, psychological and social support from health personnel trained to be compassionate to women's suffering and sensitive to the need to change gender power relations.⁶ An important step towards reintegration and normalization of the lives of women victims is to take the legal cases to a final decision.⁷ The Ministry of Women and Children Affairs of Bangladesh under the *Multi-Sectoral Programme on Violence Against Women*⁸ has established Six One Stop Crisis Centers (OCC) for victims of violence that provides medical, legal and social services to the victims in the six divisional government hospitals. This concept has been derived from Malaysia.⁹ The OCC aims at providing essential medical services and legal supports to the oppressed

⁵ Jamal, Soraya., "One-stop crisis centre for Domestic violence victims", at <http://www.bemama.com/news_lite.php?id=308139> (last visited on 03.05.2011)

⁶ Supra note 2.

⁷ Supra note 1, at p. 5.

⁸ There is a multi-sectoral project on violence against women in Bangladesh, which includes five ministries including the Ministry of Women and Children Affairs (MOWCA), which works with the objective to eradicate or at best reduce crime against women. Firstly, two OCCs have been established in Dhaka and Rajshahi Medical College Hospitals, during the pilot phase of the project in 2001. Lastly, four new OCCs in the Chittagong, Barisal, Khulna and Sylhet Medical College were established and started functioning in June 2006. In 2nd phase management and efficiency in six OCCs have been improved. See for more details: See, "Violence leaves psychological scars in women", at <<http://www.thedailystar.net/story.php?nid=100898>> (last visited on 02.05.2011)

⁹ Abdullah, A.H.A., "The Establishment of the One-Stop Crisis Centre: An Inter-agency and Multi-sectoral Management of Survivors/Victims of Violence against Women and Children in Bangladesh' a Project Consultant's Report by Head of Depart, Emergency Department, Kualalumpur Hospital, Malaysia, 1999.

women of the society as well as their rehabilitation.¹⁰ It is a joint effort of five ministries¹¹ lead by the Ministry of Women & Children Affairs and is a collaborative initiative between the Government and NGOs. It provides the women and children a package support of medical treatment, legal aid, psychosocial counseling and if necessary safe shelter.¹² The service of OCC has been proved as a very effective initiative but it is only a project of Bangladesh government; it needs to be established on a permanent basis so that more sustainable thought or instrument for long lasting solution is forthcoming. From the formation of OCC, it faces different challenges and weaknesses, which affect victim's rights under its framework. The purpose of this study is to disclose the general pattern of the one stop crisis center (OCC) and to describe it's existing situation in Bangladesh on legal courses along with its strength and weaknesses in relation to women victims of violence. This article has been mostly developed from an interview in August 2010 to September 2010 at Rajshahi Court of 14 women victims who took admission in Rajshahi OCC prior to their administering of criminal cases at the mentioned Court.¹³

FORMATION OF THE ONE STOP CRISIS CENTRE (OCC)

The OCC is a part of the multi-sectoral programme of the government on violence against women and children. It is based on the concept of

¹⁰ Barua, Dwaipayan., "One-Stop Crisis Centre yet to start functioning at CMCHP", at <http://www.thedailystar.net/2006/05/31/d605313503142.htm> (last visited on 02.05.2011)

¹¹ Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, Ministry of Information, Ministry of Children & Women Affairs, Ministry of Social Welfare and Ministry of Home.

¹² Ali, Salma., "The Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the Sale of Children, child Prostitution & Child Pornography," at <http://www.crin.org/docs/Bangladesh_OPSC_NGO_report.doc> (last visited on 03.05.2011)

¹³ It may be worth mentioning that no interview was allowed to the researcher of women victims admitted in the OCC of Rajshahi Medical College Hospital. The researcher went to the OCC for three consecutive days but In-Charge said that a written permission from the Project Director of *Multi-Sectoral Programme on Violence Against Women* of the Ministry of Women & Children Affairs is needed to collect any *data* or for sit in interview of women victims admitted at OCC.