



The European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR) for Bangladesh

# Supporting Human Rights Defenders Working for Women's and Girls' Rights in Bangladesh



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social change and  
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This project is implemented by News Network in Collaboration with Udayankur Seba Sangstha (USS)

## Supporting Human Rights Defenders Working for Women's and Girls' Rights in Bangladesh

### Background

The Constitution of Bangladesh recognises basic human rights for all its citizens and upholds the concept of 'equality before the law' in terms of protection of women rights. The Government of Bangladesh ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discriminations against Women and passed the Women Development Policy 2011 to ensure strong protection for women and girls' rights. Yet, women and girls in Bangladesh are deprived of their Constitutional rights in accessing justice and gender-based violence is a very common phenomenon. According to the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS), four out of five women or 80 per cent of Bangladeshi women are victims of some kinds of violence in 2015 that included domestic violence, acid attack, rape, trafficking, child marriage, illegal divorce, physical and mental torture for dowry and forced prostitution to name a few. Domestic violence is the most common form of violence and its prevalence is higher in the rural areas. Eve-teasing, suicide, attempt to suicide and even killing for protesting incidents of eve-teasing often make headlines. Unacceptable social attitude among a section of the society and officials towards women and girls, weak enforcement of women-friendly laws and regulations, slow but insufficient judicial protection, inadequate social protest and protection, poor family environment, poor and inadequate intervention from human rights defenders (HRDs) and weak voice of women human rights defenders (WHRDs) are the major impediments in ensuring women's and girls' rights.

The project "Supporting Human Rights Defenders Working for Women's and Girls' Rights in Bangladesh" is a 3-year project and

started its activities in January 2018. The project is funded by the European Union and implemented by the News Network in partnership with Udayankur Seba Sangstha (USS) in the rural areas of eight districts along the Indo-Bangla international border.

## Overall Objective

To provide support to Women Human Rights Defenders and/or Human Rights Defenders (W/HRDs) working for women's and girls' rights in Bangladesh.

## Target Beneficiaries

Media professionals (both male and female) of print, electronic and social medias including potential young women journalists and rural media gatekeepers-editors, news editors and executive editors, rural journalists and creative women journalists;

Rural civil society organisations' representatives, both male and female; and rural religious leaders who are working to promote women's and girls' rights;

## Key Activities

- Workshops at national, regional and district levels for sensitization and advocacy;
- Identification of rural W/HRDs and gaps in their capacity in defending rural women's and girls' rights;
- Facilitating the Rural Media Practitioners (RMPs), representatives of Rural Civil Society Organisations (RCSOs) and Rural Religious leaders (RRLs) devoted for defending rural women's and girls' rights in forming and strengthening the caucuses and their network;
- Organise caucuses and facilitating

caucuses' leaders in promoting, networking, coordinating and cooperating with isolated W/HRDs;

- Impart training to the rural W/HRDs on risk analysis and security planning, women's and girls' rights and international law for their own protection, negotiation, advocacy, lobbying, litigation, documentation and reporting on women's and girls' rights;
- Award Fellowships to potential young women RMPs;
- Providing medical and psycho-social assistance, legal counseling and any other support to the rural W/HRDs, including to those placed in detention or in prison as well as to their relatives;

## Key Expected Results

- Functioning platform and network of rural W/HRDs for promoting, networking, coordination, cooperation and raising voice against and address the challenges, risks and threats that they may face.
- Strengthening the capacities of rural W/HRDs in recognising and promoting their roles and protecting themselves from specific challenges, risks and threats due to their work for promotion and protection of the full enjoyment of women's and girls' rights
- Establishing integrated protection systems for rural W/HRDs that make their access to services like wellbeing, psycho-social, medical and legal support
- Documentation and Dissemination of good lessons and practices.

Satkhira, Jessore, Rajshahi, Nilphamari, Rangpur, Dinajpur, Lalmatia and Kurigram districts of Bangladesh.



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