

Manusher Jonno Foundation



Human Rights Policy

Formulated in 2017

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1. Introduction

Manusher Jonno Foundation (MJF) is committed to providing an environment free from discrimination and harassment, where all individuals, partner organisations and other stakeholders are treated with respect and dignity and have equal opportunities at all levels. MJF supports the principles contained within the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) and the Constitution of Bangladesh, which clearly states that no one can be discriminated on the grounds of class, gender, caste, religion, profession, ethnicity and sexual orientation.

Manusher Jonno Foundation (MJF) was initiated by DFID in 2002 to support human rights and improve governance, against the backdrop of fragile governance and human rights violation at different levels and towards different groups of people in the country. CARE Bangladesh was awarded the bid for a project titled HUGO (Human Rights and Good Governance) with the vision for it to become an independent organisation in the next three and half years. MJF became an independent organisation and registered with the Joint Stock Company and NGOAB (NGO Affairs Bureau) in 2006. Since then MJF has been operating as the largest funding and capacity building mechanism for supporting human rights and governance initiatives through partner NGOs and civil society organisations. MJF works on 6 core thematic programmes:

1. Promote and protect rights and security of women/girls and prevent violence and discrimination against them.
2. Ensure Rights of marginalised population (Dalits, persons with disabilities, sex workers, Adivasi, etc).
3. Ensure decent work environment for workers and eliminate child labour.
4. Strengthen responsive public institutions to ensure quality public services for all.
5. Address environmental degradation due to Climate Change.
6. Address youth alienation and motivate them towards responsible citizenship.

All six programmes have strategy papers which guide the implementation of partners' projects and MJF-initiated activities in the light of rights-based approach. In the last 15 years, MJF has worked with rights-holders, empowering them to claim rights and entitlements. MJF has also motivated and built capacity of duty-bearers to be more responsive towards rights-holders. MJF is also working closely with guardian institutions, particularly National Human Rights Commission and Information Commission to address human rights and governance issues. So far MJF has supported more than 250 partner organisations on different issues of rights and governance, built their capacity to implement human rights and governance projects, and improved governance and gender sensitivity of partner organisations. MJF has also steered successful advocacy processes jointly with partner organisations and facilitated formulation, reformulation and implementation of a number of laws and policies with different ministries of Bangladesh Government.

2. Vision

A world free from poverty, exploitation and discrimination where people live in freedom, dignity and human security.

3. Mission

MJF promotes human rights and governance through partnership with relevant stakeholders, including duty-bearers, to ensure dignity and wellbeing of all people, especially the marginalised.

4. Objectives

The Overall objective of the policy is to guide the development and implementation of human rights based programmes and actions which will ensure human dignity and rights of poor and marginalised people and ensure an organisational culture that promotes human rights principles. Other objectives are to: (1) promote, respect, fulfil and preserve a culture of human rights of all those MJF works with; (2) develop awareness of human rights among MJF as an organisation, MJF staff members, partner organisations and their staff members; (3) monitor and assess human rights compliance with National and International Human rights standards; (4) make recommendations to the Governing Board on the promotion of human rights within the framework of national laws and the Constitution; (5) investigate any alleged violation of human rights within the organisation and beyond; and (6) Assist any person adversely affected by any action of the organisation and secure his/her redress.

5. Core Principles of MJF

Equality and non-discrimination: Discrimination and exclusion contributes to poverty, preventing marginalised population from accessing rights, opportunities, economic resources, public services and excluding them from power and decision-making. Therefore, equality and non-discrimination is one of the guiding principles of developing MJF's programmes and policies keeping equality at the heart of MJF and its partner organisations. Discrimination is a bias or prejudice resulting in denial of opportunity, or unfair treatment and is practised commonly on the pleas of age, disability, ethnicity, origin, political belief, race, religion, sex, etc – the factors which are irrelevant to a person's competence or suitability.

Human dignity: Ensuring human dignity of all citizens irrespective of age, class, caste, religion, culture, faith, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, language, disability, disease status, sexual orientation is the centre of MJF's values and principles.

Gender and diversity: The gender policy of MJF is to be denoted as a core 'reference' to promote women rights in all respects of its human resource and organisational development including organisational management and its programme development, implementation, monitoring and evaluation. MJF strongly believes in diversity and wants to see Bangladesh as a multi lingual, cultural and religious country. MJF has been following the principles of diversity by promoting rights of persons with disabilities and socially excluded, for example Dalits, indigenous people, traditional fisher-folks, sex workers, landless, transgender and people of different religions.

Zero tolerance towards sexual harassment: Sexual Harassment is defined as any action or comment known to be offensive, embarrassing, humiliating, demeaning or unwelcome to the recipient with sexual overtones either direct or indirect notions. MJF pursues zero tolerance policy towards sexual harassment which is an integral part of the Gender Policy. These policy commitments are integrated into the Deed of Agreement signed between MJF and partner organisations in the beginning of any partnership. Afterwards partner organisations (PNGOs) are provided with gender training and policy orientation.

(Examples of harassment include: teasing, remarks, jokes, comments about a person's dress, speech or other practices and insinuation (hint) related to a person's race, gender identity, gender expression, sex, disability, sexual orientation, creed, age, or any other ground, posting or circulating offensive pictures, whether in print form or via e-mail or other electronic means.)

MJF's conviction: MJF believes in respecting, fulfilling, promoting and protecting human rights of all citizens, especially rights of poor and marginalised; and works with both rights-holders and duty-bearers to make them responsible to fulfil rights and entitlements of people.

6. Core Competencies of MJF

- Implementing diverse programmes on human rights and good governance
- Partnership and grant management
- Sound financial and accounting system
- Capacity development of CSOs/NGOs
- Grant making for human rights and good governance
- Policy advocacy and campaign

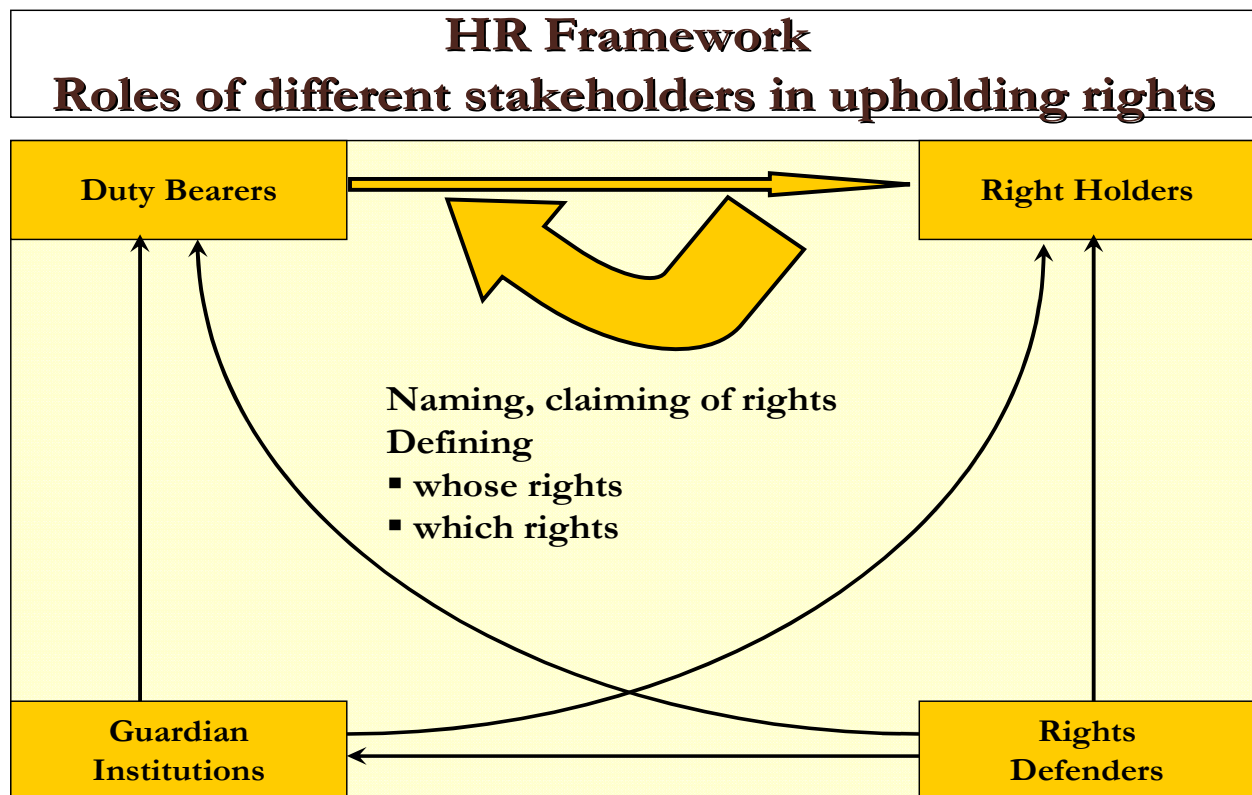
7. Major Strategies

- **MJF addresses** civil, political social, economic, cultural and collective rights.
- **MJF's interventions** encompass all levels as human rights concern all spheres of life i.e. family, community, schools, workplace, public service institutions, court, market, etc.
- **International standards that MJF follows** to uphold rights of all people irrespective of class, gender, caste, religion, ethnicity and sexual orientation:
 - ✓ Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), 1948
 - ✓ International Convention on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), 1966
 - ✓ Internal Convention on Economic Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR), 1966
 - ✓ Convention on the Elimination of all sorts of discrimination against women (CEDAW), 1979
 - ✓ Child Rights Convention (CRC), 1989
 - ✓ Convention on Racial Discrimination, 1969
 - ✓ Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families, 1999
 - ✓ Convention on the Rights of Person with Disability
 - ✓ ILO convention and Declaration (Worst forms of Child Labour-182, Maternity Leave and equal remuneration 100, right to organise 87, decent work declaration)
 - ✓ Declaration on Indigenous People
- **MJF will address the following Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs):**
'Leave no one behind' is the centre point (epitome) of SDG and Goal 16 directly addresses human rights, peace, justice and building accountable and inclusive institutions. MJF is working for implementation of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) jointly with Citizens Platform for SDG Implementation. The Executive Director of MJF is one of the core and founding members of the platform. It is a broad based coalition of civil society organisations focused on inclusive and

sustainable development for all. To address 'leave no one behind' MJF's focus is on ensuring rights of marginalised women, men, children, disabled and other socially disadvantaged groups. MJF is addressing the following goals of SDGs through its work:

- ✓ Goal-4: Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all;
- ✓ Goal-5: Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls;
- ✓ Goal-8: Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all;
- ✓ Goal-13: Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts;
- ✓ Goal-16: Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels.

8. MJF's Human Rights Framework



The above diagram shows that MJF works with these 4 types of institutions/organisations, making linkages with each other to ensure human rights.

9. Major Interventions

a) MJF's Direct Interventions: Programme Level

Development of programme strategy papers: All six thematic areas of MJF work is guided by strategy papers focused on one or more areas of human rights and governance. MJF has also developed

operational policy, financial procedure and human resource manual to guide the day to day operations of MJF. All programme strategies and policies of MJF will be revised time to time in line with the approved gender and human rights policies.

Social movement and campaigns: MJF leads and supports movements and campaigns of civil society organisations and community platforms. These movements are mostly initiated by groups of people who traditionally face discrimination and rights violations. The purpose is to build their capacity to raise their voice and to stand beside them to fulfil their legitimate demands. MJF has initiated a nationwide campaign titled “equality through dignity” for changing women’s subordinate position by highlighting their contribution in the family and society. MJF supports movements organised by Dalits and Harijans, sex workers, persons with disabilities and other excluded groups for ensuring their rights and entitlements.

Support to government: MJF is directly involved in a number of government initiatives as member of the drafting committees for drafting laws and policies, providing support for training of female migrant workers, etc. It also works with the National Legal Aid and Services Organisation (NLASO) for ensuring access to justice for poor and marginalised people, especially women.

Micro-macro linkage: MJF facilitates linkages between grassroots level and national level organisations who are directly involved in policy-making, so that grassroots level people’s voices are included in the laws and policies making them pro-poor and pro-marginalised.

Linkage from micro to global: MJF prepares alternative and shadow report on CRC and gets involved with other organisations and networks for periodic report writing particularly on CEDAW, UNCRPD, ICCPR, ICESCR, UPR, etc.

Networking: Networking and alliance are built with relevant NGOs, government and UN agencies and coalition as required.

Conducting research: MJF conducts research to improve the quality of the programme and policy advocacy based on research findings.

Capacity building of partner organisations: MJF has worked with more than two fifty civil society organisations and has been from the very beginning providing capacity building for improving the governance of the partner organisations and their project strategies and results. A number of trainings have been completed and will be conducted on rights and governance, gender, women rights, child rights, advocacy, monitoring, financial management, etc. for partners’ staff members and management.

b) Organisational Level (at MJF):

- ✓ MJF is committed to promoting human rights of all its staff members and remove barriers towards realisation of their fundamental rights.
- ✓ MJF is committed towards the realisation of the fundamental human rights of partner staff members as well.
- ✓ Develop plans for capacity building of MJF staff members on human rights and governance and implement those accordingly. MJF will maintain equal and non-discriminating approaches for providing training and other capacity building processes.
- ✓ Create organisational culture that promotes human rights of all staff members.

- ✓ Take measures against any kind of harassment and discriminatory activity within the organisation.
- ✓ MJF will revise all its policies and procedures in line with human rights principles to make them inclusive and updated, based on national and international human rights standards.
- ✓ MJF office and all its infrastructures will be made accessible to poor and marginalised including persons with disabilities.
- ✓ MJF is committed to maintaining privacy of all staff member, partner organisations and other stakeholders.
- ✓ Selection of partners, consultants, vendors, etc will be based on equality approach ensuring non-discrimination and gender sensitivity.

c) Interventions by Partner Organisations (CSOs/NGOs):

Empowerment of rights-holders and strengthening of duty-bearers:

MJF-supported projects facilitates to:

- ✓ Empower rights-holders so that they can articulate and claim their rights through organisation building, awareness raising, negotiation, demand creation and participation in different forums.
- ✓ Strengthen duty-bearers (service providers) to be more proactive to respond to the demands of rights-holders and be accountable to them through organising meetings, holding dialogues, arranging seminars, using social accountability tools and in some cases, provide trainings.
- ✓ Create bridge between-rights holders and duty-bearers by organising dialogues involving rights-holders and duty-bearer for improving delivery of public services and resources.
- ✓ Strengthen local governance for better services and access to justice.
- ✓ Local level advocacy for implementation of policy, laws and procedures.
- ✓ Conduct issue based research work.

d) Joint Interventions with Partner Organisations:

Policy Advocacy: Lead and/or support advocacy processes for formulation, reformulation and implementation of laws, policies and public services. MJF identifies advocacy issues through discussion with partner organisations and demand of rights-holders. Advocacy process is mostly initiated jointly by partner organisations and MJF, in some cases MJF leads the advocacy process and in some cases partner organisations takes the lead.

10. Implementation of the Policy

All staff members at MJF are expected to uphold and abide by this policy. Discrimination in any form towards anyone within or outside the organisation will not be allowed. **Zero tolerance policy for sexual harassment and misconduct will be implemented very strictly.** Full cooperation for investigation will be expected from staff members in case of such complaints. Managers and supervisors will have additional responsibility to act immediately on observation or allegation of harassment, discrimination or misconduct. Managers and supervisors are responsible for creating and maintaining harassment, discrimination and misconduct free organisation, and address potential problems before they become serious.

11. Steps to Address Human Rights Violation

If any staff member of MJF or MJF partner NGO complains that his/her human rights have been violated in regard to the agreed organisational rules and policies, then MJF will form an independent probe body to investigate the complaint. The probe body should be acceptable to both the complainant and the person/body against whom the complaint is lodged. The complaint should be resolved in the shortest possible time (3 months). In case of complaint within MJF the probe body may be formed consisting of MJF staff member/s; the probe body may also include member/s of governing board.

In case of complaint within any MJF partner NGO the probe body may be formed consisting of MJF staff member/s and PNGO staff member/s and/or governing board member/s.

In every step of resolving the complaint the complainant should be given ample opportunity to defend him/her.

12. Monitoring of the Policy Implementation

M&E framework is already in place for tracking process and results of MJF-supported projects through quarterly and six-monthly reports for donors, jointly prepared by the programme team and M&E unit. All these reports focus on rights and governance issues of the respective projects and programmes. In case of partnership with any CSO/NGO MJF's relevant organisational policy, rules and regulations will address any violation of norms and standards in regard to human rights practices of that organisation. Also MJF's M&E framework will be reviewed in the light of the approved gender and human rights policy and changes be made if necessary.