



e-Newsletter

Manusher Jonno Foundation

July-September 2021

During July-Sep 2021, Manusher Jonno Foundation (MJF) accelerated its online advocacy efforts for effective measures by the government and relevant agencies to stop violence against women and children and to improve the situation during Covid-19. Besides, the organisation tried to continue regular project activities with the beneficiaries.

This e-newsletter highlights some of the major activities undertaken during the mentioned period of July-Sep 2021.

Legal aid officers' role in addressing violence against women

Digital technology has played a massive role in reaching the national legal aid offices in various districts during the Covid-19 pandemic. Victims of violence, especially women, took to Facebook, Messenger, Imo, Whats App and hotline numbers, to reach out to the officers in districts during the Covid-19 lockdown period. This was come out from a virtual workshop, '**Role of legal aid officers to address violence against women during Covid and beyond**' focusing on the importance of legal aid services and digital technology in reaching the national legal aid offices by the victims all over the country during the Covid pandemic. The event was organised by MJF in association with National Legal Aid Services Organizations (NLASO) on 11 September 2021.

Honorable Justice M Enayetur Rahim, High Court Division, Bangladesh Supreme Court & Chairperson, Supreme Court Legal Aid Committee was the Chief Guest of the event when Md Saiful Islam, Senior District and Sessions Judge & Director, NLASO was present as Special Guest. Shaheen Anam, Executive Director of MJF, chaired the event.

Chief Guest drew the attention of the Director of the NLASO to work on increasing the use of digital technology in providing assistance to victims. He said, "This will not be possible overnight, but we have to take the initiative slowly. There are so many NGOs, which can also assist us." Shaheen Anam said introducing legal aid offices was a momentous initiative of the government and that, in the past 10 years, funds have been utilised well in terms of providing legal aid to marginalised women victims of violence.

However, it was also revealed in the workshop that poor internet connectivity, lack of smartphone and internet literacy, high price of mobile data, lack of proper guidelines, ignorance of the laws, absence of upazila and union legal aid offices have also worked as major challenges during this period.

Mothers play crucial role in tackling extremism

In recent times rise of violent extremism and radicalisation has become an issue of concern in Bangladesh. The role of a mother is very significant in terms of their education, teaching good values etc. Due to lack of capacity and awareness on identifying the signs of radicalization, family members, specially young boys are not given the right information or messages by their mothers in order to

prevent such behavior of their children. So if the mothers are equipped with necessary supports they can properly guide their children towards proper path.

MJF in association with Community Participation and Development (CPD) organised a four-month long training workshop titled "Parenting for Peace" for mothers under a Project, MotherSchools aimed at raising awareness on building safe society for everyone. As part of this training, a certificate giving ceremony titled 'Parenting for Peace' organised at Uddipon Conference Centre at Dhaka City on 17 September 2021. A total of 125 mothers received the certificates after completion of the training.



While expressing their reactions, several mothers, who got certificates, told that they will play their due role for building a society free from violent extremism through utilising the knowledge gained from MotherSchools Project. They said that they learned the various details of parenting including what to say or do with their children.

"There is no scope to disregard the role of mothers in preventing radicalism and violence. Projects like this will play a significant role in this regard," said Advocate Sultana Kamal, former adviser to the caretaker government. Lawmaker Aroma Dutta reiterated that the training program has created a new dimension in maintaining social harmony by involving mothers as a key stakeholder in the fight against extremism. CPD Executive Director Moslema Bari said mothers who have received the training will become more conscious about such issues and play a leading role in their families and communities to counter hate and intolerance. Shaheen Anam, Executive Director of MJF, said MotherSchools played an important role for halting degradation of social values and preventing the rise of extremism and terrorism.

Inequality found in Gov. assistance during pandemic: A scanty allocation for indigenous women

The Covid-19 pandemic negatively affected the livelihoods of indigenous women and is exacerbating the inequality and marginalisation faced by them. This became evident on an online discussion, titled, "Livelihood Crisis and Security of Indigenous Women in Covid-19" organised by the MJF on the occasion of International Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples on August 2021. Very few received any assistance from the government and have been deprived of any special incentive in the current budget, speakers said during the webinar.

Falguni Tripura, Coordinator of Bangladesh Indigenous Women's Network, presented the keynote paper and said an indigenous woman is a victim of multifaceted discrimination. They are discriminated against

for being a woman, an indigenous person, and an indigenous woman. According to a survey of MJF, only 25 percent of indigenous families in the plains, including the three hill districts, have received government incentives in the pandemic. She also mentioned that 72 percent of indigenous women working in the informal sector lost their job in the pandemic, while 92 percent faced income reduction.

Aroma Dutta, MP, who was present at the event as chief guest, urged the government to resolve the existing systemic problems so that indigenous communities can properly receive the aid the government disburses for them. Advocate Sultana Kamal, former adviser to the caretaker government, joined the webinar as a special guest and said the current government is thinking about indigenous people, but this is also true that the state is yet to ensure equality for all citizens. The webinar was attended by Dr Sadeka Halim, Dean, Faculty of Social Sciences at Dhaka University, Tahera Jebeen, Social Development Adviser, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, Shamsul Huda, Executive Director, Association for Land Reform and Development (ALRD), among many others. Shaheen Anam, Executive Director of MJF, chaired the event and said biggest problem for indigenous women is their lack of security.