

ANNUAL REPORT





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VISION

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

MISSION

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

GOAL

Transform MJF into a sustainable Foundation recognised for achieving social transformation of vulnerable groups through rights and governance work.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

- Inclusiveness
- Respect for Diversity
- Transparency and Accountability
- Mutual Respect and Trust
- Gender Sensitivity

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List of Acronyms & Abbreviations

BHOP	Bangladesh Harijan Oikya Parishad
CHT	Chittagong Hill Tracts
CSC	Community Score Card
CBOs	Community Based Organisations
CSOs	Civil Society Organisations
CHTRC	Chittagong Hill Tracts Regional Council
Covid-19	Corona Virus Disease-19
EPR	Excluded People's Rights in Bangladesh
FCDO	Foreign Commonwealth and Development Office
GAC	Global Affairs Canada
GAF	Governance Advocacy Forum
GoB	Government of Bangladesh
IWD	International Women's Day
KM	Knowledge Management
MJF	Manusher Jonno Foundation
NGOs	Non-governmental Organisations
PNGO	Partner Non-governmental Organisation
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SDC	Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation
SIDA	Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency
SAT	Social Accountability Tools
SPI	Strengthening Public Institutions
TMD	Tackling Marginalisation & Discrimination
WRO	Women Rights Organisations
WVLB	Women's Voice and Leadership Bangladesh

MJF Governing Board

Mr. Syed Manzur Elahi

Chairman

Ms. Parveen Mahmud

Member

Prof. Dr. Md. Golam Samdani Fakir

Member

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Ms Shaheen Anam

Ex-Officio & Member

MJF Senior Management Team

Ms Shaheen Anam

Executive Director

Banasree Mitra Neogi

Director-Programme

Anwar Hossain

Director-Finance &Admin

CHAIRMAN'S FOREWORDS

I am happy to share the Manusher Jonno Foundation's 20th Annual Progress Report for July 2022 - June 2023. This report demonstrates MJF's continuous commitment for promoting social justice, equity and inclusion of the marginalised. For the past 20 years MJF has been working in building a society free from all forms of exploitation and discrimination, where everyone is equally treated and heard. MJF, through its partners, has addressed persistent weaknesses in public institutions, particularly at the local level, which limits our capability in achieving sustainable development.

At the start of the Covid-19 pandemic, many people in low and middle-income groups fell into economic crisis within a very short period of time in Bangladesh. As the pandemic increased, this happened to more and more people, shedding light on the fact that even though the country has made significant progress in ending poverty, many people are living just at the edge of the poverty line and at high risk of falling back into poverty. We need to improve and expand access to social protection and strengthen coping mechanisms for them. Beyond simply looking at poverty, we need to address vulnerability, particularly in communities such as people living with disabilities, transgender/Hijra communities, Dalit communities and ethnic people, and include their needs in upcoming development agenda.

Another important role that MJF played in achieving Sustainable Development Goals was giving voice to the most marginalised communities. A large section of the marginalised population is excluded from the policy-making process, while being most affected by challenges such as poverty, inequality, climate change and natural calamities. MJF tries to ensure voices of marginalised people, especially vulnerable women, children, persons living with disabilities, sex workers, untouchables, etc. are heard by policy-makers and all relevant stakeholders.

Considering the climate change vulnerability, MJF made its highest effort to secure the lives and livelihoods of the marginalised people living in climate vulnerable coast, Chars, Haors and hill tracts of Bangladesh. MJF's climate interventions aimed to enhance the resilience of these communities, particularly women, children, persons living with disabilities and ethnic minorities, and other intersections, by improving their adaptation capacity and accessibility to government services.

MJF envisions continuing its work in the following areas: strengthening public institutions, addressing climate vulnerabilities, promoting gender justice, and advocating for the rights of marginalised people including sexual, religious, and ethnic minorities in the upcoming years.

We are extremely grateful for the untiring support that our partner organisations have shown to MJF over the years. I want to express my sincere gratitude to the Government of Bangladesh, all our partners, stakeholders, funding agencies, and participants for continuing their support to MJF.

SYED MANZUR ELAHI

Chairman

Manusher Jonno Foundation

MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Manusher Jonno Foundation is a non-governmental, non-profit organisation providing funding and capacity building support to community based and civil society organisations to improve the lives of most marginalised and socially excluded people.

It is a privilege to serve an organisation that has been devoted for gender equality and diversity over two decades. This year's Annual Report July 2022-June 2023 is epically important because MJF celebrated in September, 20 years of working to ensure rights and services for the most vulnerable, marginalised sections of society. In this long journey, MJF with its partner organisations worked with various sectors all over the country. Over the past two decades, MJF not only funded smaller NGOs to work on vital human rights issues in Bangladesh but also contributed, through capacity building, to improve the internal governance of the NGO sector as a whole. In these years, MJF has made significant efforts in bringing quality improvements in the lives of the most marginalised communities in Bangladesh.

MJF is committed towards the global development agenda of attaining the SDG Goals for 2030. MJF, along with other NGOs, is playing an important role in this regard as a partner of the Citizen Platform for SDGs, and my role as a core group member of the platform. MJF's focus is particularly on gender justice, good governance, rights and entitlements of marginalised, climate vulnerabilities, safe migration, and social inclusion. MJF strongly believes that if socially excluded and, marginalised communities do not get their due status and recognition, national development agendas along with the global will remain unfulfilled.

MJF is committed to ensuring gender equality and inclusion of disability concerns, which are mainstreamed across all programmes and projects. To ensure quality services for these marginalised and socially excluded people, series of various activities with public service providers, media and community leaders were organised in this reporting year. MJF also worked closely on policy level advocacy through policy briefs, meetings, seminars and webinars with government, non-governmental organisations and private sector.

Despite our efforts in improving the lives of the vulnerable communities, a few overarching challenges impeded the development interventions and outcomes of MJF. The foremost challenge for MJF was lack of sustainable funding to carry out development programmes. A continuous reduction in foreign funding to NGOs as of a shift in global humanitarian focus from Rohingya crisis, emerging from the Russia-Ukraine war. Another major factor that is affecting the development is post crisis management of Covid-19 pandemic which has been greatly confounding and challenging.

I would like to take an opportunity to thank members of the governing board for their insightful guidance and untiring support to the organisation. I would like to convey my heartfelt gratitude to all the partners, donors, stakeholders and community people for their valuable support and cooperation extended to MJF. Your trust and continued support have always been our constant source of strengths and confidence to keep up the efforts despite many challenges.

MJF will continue to stand by the people and communities who need support the most and as we move forward, we sincerely welcome your ideas, critiques, suggestions and cooperation to strength our journey ahead.

SHAHEEN ANAM
Executive Director
Manusher Jonno Foundation

ABOUT MANUSHER JONNO FOUNDATION

The Manusher Jonno Foundation (MJF) is a non-governmental, non-profit organisation in Bangladesh that funds and works in partnership with local organisations to improve the lives of people living with marginalisation and poverty, such as vulnerable women and girls, people living with disabilities, Dalits, sex workers, transgender and fisher folks. MJF has been operating in Bangladesh since 2002 with the mission of ‘Promoting human rights and good governance through partnership with relevant stakeholders, including duty bearers, to ensure dignity and wellbeing of all people, especially the marginalised.’

MJF is a unique organisation in that its entire purpose is to support grassroots organisations and movements of the very people who are fighting for their rights. MJF has provided finance, organisational development assistance, technical inputs and moral support to these groups on the frontlines of human rights and accountability struggles.

Registered as an independent Bangladeshi organisation since 2006, MJF has worked with partners operating in 53 out of the country’s 64 districts, managing over USD 200 million (equivalent), which it has been channelled to more than 400 organisations to strengthen their capacities to deliver change for their group members. In its last 20 years, MJF has reached 4 million poor, marginalised and socially excluded communities in Bangladesh to establish their rights and entitlements.

MJF Operates through:

- Channelling funding from international aid donors to selected grassroots groups, human rights organisations, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and social movements;
- Supporting partner organisations with organisational development, financial management, monitoring, evaluation and learning; and
- Undertaking campaigns, advocacy, and research to create national, international and local constituencies for change.

Although MJF has worked on a wide range of human rights and related issues with a variety of partner organisations, with an emphasis, MJF focuses on four key areas: Building Accountable and Responsive Governance, Tackling Marginalisation and Discrimination, Violence Against Women and Girls, Climate Change Adaption.

MJF is committed to ensuring gender equality and inclusion of disability concerns, which are mainstreamed across all programmes and projects. MJF advocates for a gender and disability-sensitive environment where women and girls including persons with disabilities have access to services, freedom of movement and are empowered to take decisions most important for their lives without fear or coercion. MJF also works on the protection of children from abuse and neglect and partners with the government to eliminate child labour by the year 2030. Youth engagement and building social cohesion is another feature of MJF work.

MJF also provides significant support to social movements throughout Bangladesh, including funding coalition movements of sex workers, minority people, and the so-called ‘untouchable’ community. MJF aims to not only empower these marginalised communities but also help them learn how to

advocate for themselves. This work stems from the original idea that MJF should be able to support social movements in Bangladesh for improved human rights and accountable government, demanding better governance and inclusivity so that everybody's rights are respected, to build a more harmonious and inclusive society.

Through its continued engagement with civil society and the government, MJF successfully advocated for law reforms and has been involved with the most progressive laws enacted in the last 15 years. Notable among those are the Rights to Information Act 2009, Domestic Violence Prevention Act 2010, Protection of Person with Disability Act 2013 and Child Marriage Restraint Act in 2017. Besides these, MJF is now advocating for the Witness Victim Protection Act and Inheritance Rights of Hindu Women. The Anti-Discriminator Act, which MJF has been lobbying since 2013, is at the final stage of enactment.

MJF's 20 YEARS CELEBRATION



Manusher Jonno Foundation celebrated its 20th anniversary in solidarity and commitment to human rights this year. The organisation celebrated its two-decade anniversary in a festive manner. The celebration programme was organised at the auditorium of the capital's Liberation War Museum Hall room, where alongside eminent people, members of its many partner organisations spoke about achievements and future targets. The event started with the national anthem, followed by various cultural programmes where marginalised groups participated as an expression of solidarity. Honorable Planning Minister of Government of Bangladesh MA Mannan was present as Chief Guest in the event.

MJF provided capacity development support to its partner organisations for the last 20 years. Starting its journey in 2002, MJF has so far reached about 30 lakh poor and underprivileged people across the country by creating a network of over 400 partner organisations in 330 upazilas of 52 districts. Of the various other achievements, MJF assisted four lakh people come out of poverty, 6.5 lakh women be economically empowered, and stopped about 50,000 child marriages. During this period around 300 women from various marginalised communities received training on Career Development and Leadership, and 76% of them were able to find work.

Strengthening public institutions is another feature of MJF work. Over the past two decades, MJF through partners has addressed persistent weakness in public institutions, especially at the local level so that marginalised people are able to access public goods. MJF has empowered targeted communities and has also included local level government officials and public service providers in its programming to increase accountability, transparency, efficiency and citizen engagement in the local level decision-making processes.

Over the course of time, what MJF has achieved would not have been possible without support from partner organisations and the government, as well as the trust of donor agencies.

CELEBRATION OF INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY



Historically, gender equality has been difficult to achieve as women have been excluded from specific domains and opportunities (education, employment, leadership, technology, etc.) in every social, economic, political, and cultural aspect. Women and girls face great barriers in accessing digital technologies and skills due to various reasons which include a lack of information, accessibility, lack of education, lack of skills using technology, social norms, etc.

This year, the priority theme of International Women's Day 2023 is, "Innovation and technological change, and education in the digital age for achieving gender equality and empowering all women and girls". In align with this year's theme, MJF organised an interactive dialogue session, 'Gender Equality: Quality Vs Quantity' on 14 March at Brac Center, Mohakhali, Dhaka to surface the present context. The event was attended by a diverse group of people, including students, female professionals, transgender, women with disabilities, and representatives from the Dalit and indigenous communities. Representatives from donor agencies were also present at the event.

A keynote paper was presented by Ms. Banasree Mitra Neogi, Director-Programme of MJF. As panel discussants Dr. Sharmin Neelormi, Professor of Jahangirnagar University, Md. Abu Naser, GBSS Specialist of UNFPA Bangladesh, and Ms. Jinat Ara Haque, Chief Executive of WECAN was present at the event. Mr. Matt Cannell, Deputy High Commissioner & Development Director of British High Commission to Bangladesh, and Ms. Maria Stridsman, Deputy Head of Mission & Head of Development Cooperation of the Embassy of Sweden were present as Special Guest.

PROGRAMMATIC AREAS OF MJF

Based on Bangladesh context, the four strategic pillars has been identified by MJF to guide its work during 2019-2028. MJF primarily focuses on excluded population in Bangladesh. By exclusion, MJF considers those group of population who are systematically blocked from (or denied full access to) various rights, opportunities and resources that are normally available to members of a different group.

For the 2019-2028, MJF has identified the following programmatic issues to work on:

1. Social, political, economic and legal empowerment of women, including reducing violence and discriminations against women, girls and children;
2. Ensure rights and dignity of marginalised and excluded people (Dalits, persons with disabilities, sex workers, old-age people and people living in the fringe of society etc.);
3. Promote and protecting rights of all minorities, including ethnic, religious, sexual and linguistic;
4. Promote descent and safe work culture and environment for workers both male and female (migrant, formal and non-formal sector);
5. Strengthen public institutions, including transparent and accountable quality public services for all specially the marginalised;
6. Reduce and stop child labour and protect vulnerable children from hazardous work, sexual abuse and online threats such as pornography;
7. Address alienation of youths through building skills that meet market demand, encourage responsible citizenship, support economic empowerment assist them to stay away from anti-social activities such as drug abuse, radicalisation etc.;
8. Building community resilience for green economy to offset climate-induced risks and vulnerabilities and
9. Support people's movements, network and coalitions and advocate for law reform and policies that will protect and promote rights of marginalised groups.

PROGRESS

During this reporting year (July 2022 to June 2023), Manusher Jonno Foundation has been entrusted with the implementation of several projects to improve the life of the most marginalised, socially excluded people of Bangladesh. MJF through these projects has set out a noble and impactful overall objective: to make a substantial contribution to the reduction of poverty and the enhancement of resilient livelihoods for the most vulnerable and impoverished people of Bangladesh.

This report reflects MJF's narrative of July 2022- June 2023. In bygone period, MJF continued to implement its current strategic plan (2019 to 2028), covering eight thematic areas: women empowerment, gender based violence and discrimination, rights and dignity of marginalised community, decent and safe work, good governance, youth engagement, child rights and climate vulnerabilities and advocacy on marginalised people's rights and entitlements. Gender and person living with disability, especially the active participation of most vulnerable women groups remain cross-cutting across MJF.

MJF has implemented 14 projects in this reporting period. These projects were funded by Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, European Union (EU), Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO), Global Affairs Canada (GAC), Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida), Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC), US Embassy and United States Agency for International Development (USAID). These projects have been implemented in 54 districts over Bangladesh.

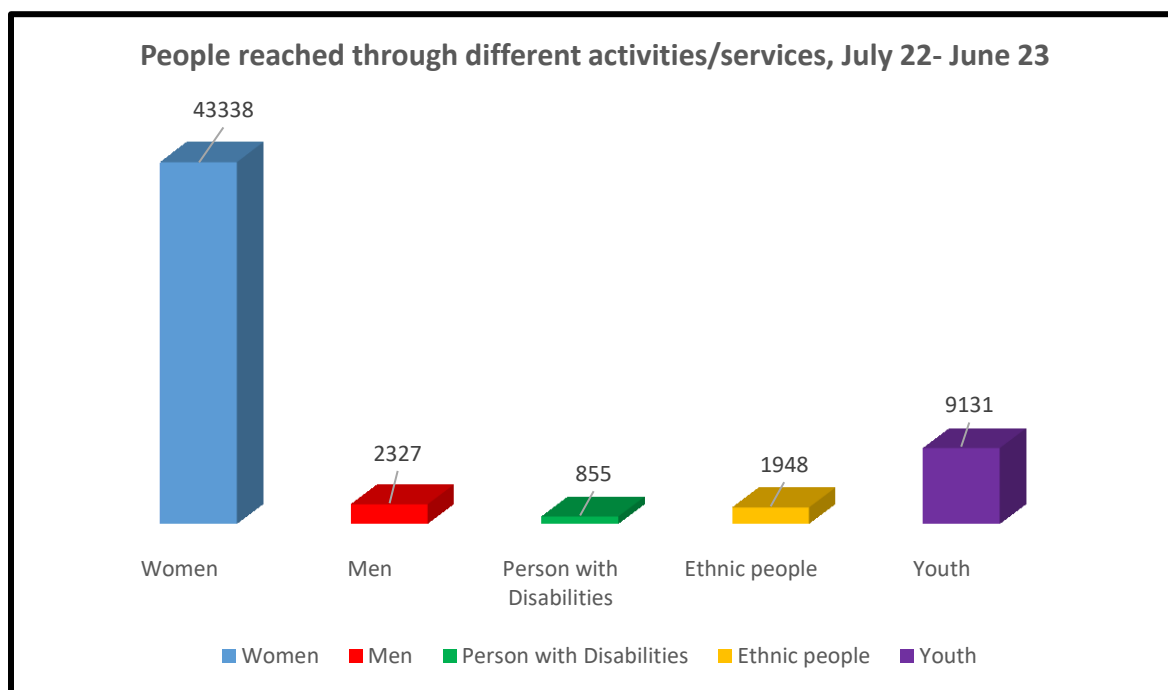
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The projects are namely, A for Access: English Learning, Global Network Building and Empowerment for the Transgender Community in Bangladesh, Community-based Resilience, Women's Empowerment, and Action (CREA), Ekota (Unity): From Invisible to Visible, Excluded People's Rights in Bangladesh (EPR), MotherSchools: Parenting for Peace, Partnership for Resilient Livelihoods in CHT Region (PRLC), Reintegration of Returnee Migrant Workers in Bangladesh, Shuchona: Informal Domestic Workers in Digital Financial Services Project, Women's Voice and Leadership, Bangladesh, Women's Empowerment and Action, Youth Engagement in Democracy, etc. Also some projects are completed in this year. These are: Strengthen Civil Society and Public Institutions to address gender equality, combat violence against women and build community resilience against climate change, Sustainable Oceans: Improving Sustainable Economic Growth and Development Opportunities through Efficient, Human Rights-based and Sustainable use of Fisheries and Aquaculture Resources in Bangladesh-Phase II and Improving Wellbeing of Ethnic Women and Girls in the Chittagong Hill Tracts etc.



PROJECT:

Advancing Women's Rights of Access to Information in Bangladesh (AWRTI)

Access to information allows women to make more effective decisions related to property rights, education, social security, skills development training and jobs. Exercising the right of access to information makes women's participation meaningful in public life, to be free from different forms of violence and exploitation and maintaining dignity in the family and society. It allows people to hold the service providers accountable and reducing corruption, bridge gender gap, minimizing exclusion and shifting power to the general people.

While the government's commitment to advancing the right to information is clear and progressive, but it is reaching to the grassroots very slowly. Besides, gender matters in the implementation of RTI because of socio-cultural factors in Bangladesh like restriction in mobility, security, less media exposure etc. Meanwhile, NCTB has incorporated brief of RTI act 2009 at the secondary education level. And, the secondary grade students who are the either information seekers or givers in future get orientation on RTI act from the textbook. However, still it is a salient requirement that the RTI content should be taught effectively by the school teachers.

AWRTI Project funded by USAID through The Carter Center to focus on women's information rights. Through this project MJF wants to enhance the capacity of duty bearers of 10 districts in Bangladesh so that they become equipped and sensitised to ensure public service related information to the marginalised women; enhance teaching ability of secondary school teachers on the right of access to information lesson; and increase awareness of marginalised women and civil society representatives in accordance of applying RTI on public services and opportunities that they require.

PROJECT:

A for Access: English Learning, Global Network Building, and Empowerment for the Transgender Community in Bangladesh

Gender-diverse community members in Bangladesh are denied access to institutional education. Also, the English language proficiency of many grassroots activists and leaders working for this community is very low. This in turn reduces the extent to which the community leaders can access global resources, discourses, professional and academic networks as well as local and international funding opportunities. It also hampers the community's ability to self-advocate, voice opinions and thrive on the global stage. Moreover, gender-diverse individuals in Bangladesh lack access to jobs and sufficient income.

Considering this context, MJF started this project with an aim to increase the English language proficiency level of grassroots transgender activists and leaders in speaking, listening, and technical writing through an online programme to increase their entrepreneurial capacity. Through the vehicle of English language learning and teaching, the project worked to improve access of the Bangladeshi transgender population to professional, academic, financial and entrepreneurial opportunities.

'A for Access: English Learning Global Network Building and Empowerment for the Transgender Community in Bangladesh' project is funded by U.S. Embassy (U.S. Department of State). Fund size is US\$ 37,470 for 1 year period (30 September 22 to 30 September 23) starting from September 30, 2022.

During this reporting period, 12 Strategic English Workshops were facilitated. A total of 250 participants attended the workshops. Besides, 120 Speaking and Listening classes and 10 Technical Writing classes were organised.

PROJECT:

Community based Resilience, Women's Empowerment and Action



MJF started implementing a project titled 'Community-based Resilience, Women's Empowerment, and Action (CREA)' spanning from September 2022 to August 2026 supported by the Embassy of Sweden. The CREA initiative was the result of synthesizing insights obtained from both the prior phase and feedback gathered from community needs, requests, and priorities. This project concentrated on enhancing community resilience, promoting accountability within public institutions, and empowering women and girls.

The CREA project is addressing climate change challenges in Bangladesh, emphasising the importance of partnerships, gender equality, and community resilience. Through this project MJF supports in changing the lives of the coastal, *Char*, *Haor* and hill areas in Bangladesh (the climate vulnerable areas).

The Project is funded by The Embassy of Sweden. The fund size is SEK 50 million (Swedish kronor fifty million) equivalent to US\$ 4.7 million for 4 years (September 1, 2022 to August 31, 2026) started on September 1, 2022. Objective of the project was to improve resilience of the most vulnerable Coastal, *Char*, Hill, and *Haor* communities to climate change impacts.

In this reporting period, the project organised series of meetings with multiple stakeholders as a part of introductory activities. The project focused on increasing awareness for collaborative works to

reduce climate vulnerability and enhancing grassroots women's economic empowerment and resilience. MJF through this project closely collaborated with Disaster Management Committees in targeted areas, to coordinate responses to disasters in the Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT).

Various groups, including women, adolescents, and youth were formed in the community so that people can actively engaged in discussions, sharing their challenges and increase their knowledge. Partner organisations used social mapping, consulting with local representatives and community members to identify climate-vulnerable areas, resources, and vulnerable households. A supportive group, Village Common Forests (VCFs), have been established, involving community members and leaders. Four VCF committees were formed in the CHT regions, focusing on water and biodiversity conservation. These committees will be actively engage in forest conservation and resource management, contributing to the community's adaptation efforts against climate change.

The project aimed to transform gender norms, challenge patriarchal attitudes, and promote climate-smart agriculture for resilience. Therefore, Women's and men's groups were established, focusing on various topics, including climate change, alternative livelihoods, and social norms. Men's groups received training on gender-sensitive disaster response. Pressure groups were formed at union and Upazila levels to advocate for beneficiaries' rights. Climate Action Groups (CAG) were established at both levels, with members trained in gender dynamics, human rights, and climate change issues, promoting active participation and contributions.

Visit from the Embassy of Sweden, Bangladesh Office



In early January 2023, a team from the Embassy of Sweden visited Sirajganj to evaluate the impact and performance of the climate change and gender-based violence project. The team interacted with beneficiaries, survivors, and stakeholders, highlighting the effective use of legal protections and the role of adolescent groups in preventing child marriages and domestic violence. They also encouraged initiatives promoting girls' participation in sports.



In March 2023, a delegation from the Embassy of Sweden and UNFPA visited the phase-out project in Bandarban. They engaged with survivors, women leaders, and adolescents, discussing the beneficiaries' increased awareness of their rights, the use of social media for campaign and awareness, and opportunities for collaborative action with local governments and private sectors.

PROJECT:

Excluded People's Rights in Bangladesh

MJF implementing a project named, Excluded People's Rights in Bangladesh (EPR) to promote rights and equality for the people in Bangladesh who are at the highest risk of being excluded, including poor women and girls, people with disabilities, ethnic and religious minorities, Dalits, children working in vulnerable situations and youth. Through local NGOs, Community Based Organisations (CBOs) MJF mobilises marginalised people to claim their rights and enabling them to access to assets and public services.

Excluded People's Rights in Bangladesh (EPR) is funded by FCDO. The UK FCDO signed a Grant Agreement with MJF for £45.9 million and released £27.52 million to the MJF to implement the EPR Project in Bangladesh from July 1, 2017 to March 31, 2023 and actually spent £27.44 million. This funding was squeezed due to FCDO's re-allocation of funding due to the subsequent effect of Covid-19. The EPR project started with supporting 102 PNGOs under five programmatic areas (Strengthening Public Institutions, Marginalisation & Discrimination, Security and Rights of Women & Girls, Youth & Social Cohesion, Decent and Safe Work) and reduced the number of partners to 60 in August 2021. MJF completed the closing process of the EPR Project by end of March 2023.

During this period MJF continued its work under three thematic areas; i) Strengthening Public Institutions (SPI), ii) Tackling Marginalisation & Discrimination (TMD) and iii) Security and Rights of Women and Girls (SRWG). MJF did advocacy work and supported small fund for network organisations.

Strengthening Public institutions (SPI) theme focuses to enhance governance of the public institutions especially the local government service delivery mechanism since the inception of MJF. Under the EPR Project, the theme enhanced capacity of citizen and engaged them participating in the governance process of Local Government (LG) and nurtured Nation Building Department (NBD) to provide primary health care, agriculture-livestock and fisheries, safe drinking water, primary education, and social security services to the excluded people in a transparent way. The thematic experience showed that improvement of governance- accountability, transparency and civic engagement enhanced access of the poor and excluded people to the public services for their well-being. To do so, MJF employed Social Accountability Tools (SAT) i.e. Social Audit, Community Score Card (CSC), Public Hearing, Citizen Charter and local level advocacy as strategies to enhance transparency and accountability of duty bearers in the service delivery mechanism. Besides, the project worked enhancing capacity of the duty bearers and mobilising citizens to make an easy embracing service delivery mechanism.

Within the reporting period MJF did selected policy influencing activities such as, implementation of Grievance Redress System (GRS) to collate evidence on public services implementation issues at three districts (Laksmipur, Bogura and Bhola), developed policy brief on citizen engagement, transparency and accountability of service delivery mechanism etc.



MJF also facilitated Governance Advocacy Forum (GAF), National Forum for Social Protection (NFSP) and Right to Information Forum (RTI Forum) to sensitize the policy planners on Local governance, social security programmes and access to information issues respectively.

Women and girls all over Bangladesh experience domestic violence, face torture and sexual harassment from family members and intimate partners. MJF works to build women leadership and to make them empowered so that women have access to services and resources.

Security and Rights of Women and Girls (SRWG) theme under EPR Project works to influence negative norms, behaviour and practices towards women and girls at home and outsides, ensure justice in case of violation and takes initiative to make government more responsive to the problems and challenges faced by women and girls in Bangladesh. The theme works to protest, address violence against women and girls, to ensure services for woman victims, to prevent and stop child marriage. Also took several initiatives for women's economic empowerment and did advocacy to change policies and laws that discriminate against women and girls. SRWG programme approach is based on social mobilisation, promoting women's leadership, skilled training to create income opportunity, strengthening and ensuring public service provisions, advocacy and campaigns.

Marginality in different forms is predominant in Bangladesh. Marginality and exclusion due to ethnicity, religion, disability, caste system, remoteness, occupation, class identity, etc discriminates against at least 30 million people in Bangladesh. As a consequence, marginal people are deprived of social,

economic, political and cultural rights and entitlements. This leads to a life which breeds poverty, poor health and sanitation, lack of education and employment, indignity and stigma. One of the leading thematic programmes of MJF, Tackling Marginalisation & Discrimination (TMD), addressed marginality very extensively. TMD addressed four broad population groups - Landless, Disabled, Dalit (Harijan) and Fisher-folk.

MJF arranged a Dalit-Harijan Convention on July 21, 2022 at the Ministry of Planning. Dalit and Harijan leaders and representatives from different parts of the country joined the convention. The Honourable Planning Minister Mr. M A Mannan MP graced the convention as the Chief Guest. The State LGED Minister Mr. Swapan Bhattacharjee, MP as the Special Guest. A short keynote was presented with specific demands from Dalit-Harijan communities. The convention allowed the representatives of Dalit and Harijan communities from all over the country to share their grief and deprivation in front of the high-profile relevant ministers, champions and CSO heads. However, renowned experts on Dalit-Harijan issue also attended the convention and expressed their opinion. The convention was covered by the leading print and electronic media.

The Anti-Discrimination Bill 2022 was placed in the Parliament on the 6th April last year (2022). After the placement of the Bill, MJF organised a virtual Civil Society Consultation on the 17th April to review the Bill and propose possible revisions to it. Consequently, a set of recommendations was handed in by MJF on behalf of civil society to all the Standing Committee Members of Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs for their consideration. Their work on revising the Bill was going on. As part of the follow-up, MJF in partnership with Law Department - Dhaka International University, Nagorik Uddyog and BLAST organised a National Consultation on the present status of the Bill on 21st Dec 2022 at BRAC Centre. The Consultation was participated by Standing Committee Members of Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs, leading civil society members, academicians and legal experts. It was assured in the Consultation by MPs that the Bill would be further revised as per the proposed recommendations and be placed in the parliament soon for adoption.

The compilation work on the recommendations provided by the audience of the 21st Dec 2022 seminar on the proposed Anti-discrimination Bill has been completed. This compilation will be sent to the Law Ministry and the Parliamentary Standing Committee members for their consideration in the Parliament. It may be mentioned that the 21st Dec, MJF organised a National Seminar on the proposed Anti-discrimination Bill which had been placed in the parliament in 2022.

In Bangladesh, 6 million are visually impaired which also includes 2.5 million children. These visually impaired people have little or no access to various textbooks and publications which are essential for their education, information, employment and livelihoods. Apart from textbooks, visually impaired and print-disabled people are deprived of accessing literature and articles as part of their intellectual and cultural development. Due to copyright barriers, provision for accessibility to books and publications in regard to the visually impaired or print-disabled is not in place in the country.

The reason was that Bangladesh had not yet signed and ratified the Marrakesh Treaty (2013) until Sep 2022. This treaty was called for the treaty signatory countries to make sure that the publishers are giving away copyright bars for the cause of humanitarian and development aspects of the visually impaired or print-disabled people. Therefore, MJF had been facilitating a process initiated by PNGO-VIPS to persuade the government to accede to Marrakesh Treaty and ratify it in the parliament to make it a law in the country.

Fortunately, the Bangladesh government acceded to the treaty on 26th Sep last year. On this occasion, a celebration seminar was held jointly by VIPS and MJF on the 5th Nov 2022. A number of relevant government officials and civil society members were present. The speakers emphasized the need for its adoption immediately by parliament to make it an enforced law. MJF continued its advocacy with the relevant ministries and parliamentarians in the reporting period in regard to the adoption of the Marrakesh Treaty, which Bangladesh acceded to in 2022. Since without ratification of any treaty, there is no value of the treaty itself, so MJF and its disability-focused PNGOs have been continuing their advocacy work with relevant peak policymakers for its adoption.

MJF extended financial grants to small DPOs and CBOs for doing short-term programmes like workshop, seminar, training at local level. Generally, small, one-off grants were provided to 12 such DPOs and CBOs. These DPOs and CBOs were focused on disability awareness, Dalit-Harijan rights and Transgender rights and employment. These DPOs and CBOs organised workshops, seminars, day observance, skills trainings, radio programmes, awareness raising on early marriage vis-à-vis Covid, etc.

Harijan, a section of Dalit community, is an extremely marginalised and excluded population in Bangladesh. They have a platform called Bangladesh Harijan Oikya Parishad (BHOP) which was engaged in claiming their rights in alliance with their nation-wide district and divisional committees and other Dalit organisations. The expected result of this initiative was to facilitate the process of the platform to become aware and functional for claiming their rights. In the reporting year, MJF supported the BHOP in organising an awareness programme on Covid-19 safety and a mass vaccination campaign among Harijan communities in different cities. Besides, with a support from MJF, they also worked with the district committees and networks to claim their jobs and housing from city corporations and municipalities.

MJF supported NFOWD, a national forum on disability, in organising awareness sessions on disability in Madaripur and Gazipur Districts in the reporting period. They demanded proper implementation of the Disability Law and Disability Action Plan in all mainstream development work.

MJF, its partners, Social Welfare Department and Bangladesh Pratibandhi Foundation (National Disability Foundation) jointly observed International Disability Day in December. The main purpose of the event was to raise awareness on disability issues among mass people and policy makers.

On 21st March 2023, the Down Syndrome Society of Bangladesh organised a mass awareness event on the issue with the slogan that all Down Syndrome children be included in mainstream development. The event was supported by MJF to popularise the Down Syndrome issue in Bangladesh.

PROJECT:

Ekota (Unity): From Invisible to Visible

In Bangladesh, about 20 million People who living with Disabilities (PLWD) are extremely vulnerable and discriminated against in terms of rights violations and access to all kinds of services. PLWD's are marginalised socially, politically, culturally and economically, which consequently puts them into severe privation and exclusion.

The project EKOTA (Unity): From Invisible to Visible is funded by the USAID. The fund size is US\$ 1 million for 5 years (November 15, 2022 to November 14, 2027) which has started from 15 November, 2022. Through this project MJF is working to create a space for PLWD's to claim their rights and justice and set up an accountability mechanism for relevant duty-bearing institutions to render better services to PLWD. The barriers that PLWD face are manifold – societal, institutional and infrastructural. Although there are multiple factors, the inability to access basic services and resources by disabled people at large is the greatest obstacle to their overall development. They face barriers to access education, health services, safety-nets, employment, development activities and legal justice.

Over the time MJF will set up a score of self-managed Disabled People's Organisations (DPOs) to continue claiming and realising their rights and legal justice in a sustainable and replicable manner. A more sensitised government service providers would be in place in public service delivery provisions. The project works to create more opportunities to engage PLWDs with self-employment or paid work.

In this reporting period the Ekota project's signing ceremony with PNGOs took place on 26th February 2023. MJF Executive Director, MJF Directors, from USAID Ms Habiba Akter (Team Lead-Society and Rights Team) and Ms Sarah Iqbal (Project Management Specialist, Society and Rights), Executive Directors of Ekota project sub-grantees, senior staff members and MJF Ekota project team attended the project signing ceremony. USAID representatives congratulated MJF and Sub-Grantees for entering into the project on USAID-MJF DISABILITY RIGHTS AND JUSTICE INITIATIVE. USAID representatives expected good performance from the Ekota project.

A document on Gender Gap Analysis was completed in light of five domains of USAID ADS 205. The purpose of the analysis was to identify gender gaps so that they can be addressed in the Ekota project.

PROJECT:

MotherSchools -Parenting for Peace

MJF has been implementing a project titled MotherSchools: Parenting for Peace since 2019, supported by Women Without Borders (WwB) an Austria based international organisation. The focus of this programme is peace building through parenting. It works with mothers who have children between 12-29 years of age. The significant impact of the project is - it has reached families and improved their knowledge and understanding on violence and extremism. Through this parenting, mothers as well as the entire family become aware and equipped to identify and prevent their child from being involved in violence and extremism. During this project period, MJF has covered Dhaka North and South City Corporation areas and worked with 250 families. This year, the project reached more than 250 mothers under this course with the support of L'Oréal Foundation for Women and US Department of State.

This project created a strong community unity that has strengthened the social harmony in living with peace and tolerance. The mothers who attended the sessions were advocating positive parenting in each households which impacted to establish trust among each other and also increased the family bondage. Mothers who joined the MotherSchools sessions became capacitated to actively interact with their family members and took constructive decisions about their children's well-being. As a result children were found not getting involved with risky anti-social behaviours and were supporting their parent's small business which generated additional income for their families.



PROJECT:

Partnership for Resilient Livelihoods in CHT Region



The Partnership for Resilient Livelihoods in CHT Region (PRLC) is a comprehensive project with particular attention to livelihood promotion for the extremely poor, expansion of nutrition services, community mobilisation and market development for the CHT people. Dominated by an agrarian economy, with limited technical education and a significant portion of unemployed youth, the CHT struggles with issues like child health disparities, seasonal food shortages, and inadequate water and sanitation infrastructure, exacerbating vulnerabilities to preventable diseases. Furthermore, poor transportation infrastructure hampers market access for agricultural products, while climate change-induced events such as droughts, water scarcity, and landslides pose additional threats to livelihoods, highlighting the urgent need for climate-resilient and nutrition-focused interventions to reduce poverty in this area. Keeping this situation in mind since January 2023, MJF has been implementing this project in three districts of CHT. The initiative focuses on improving the well-being of the poor and marginalised people, access to markets, climate-resilient crops, and social safety-net services. Besides, the project is also addressing Issues like gender equity, women's empowerment, and disability inclusion.

MJF, in partnership with nine local partner organisations, is spearheading the project implementation the project, with a focus on overseeing livelihoods, nutrition, and social protection components. PRLC Project is funded by EU. Fund size is EUROs 6.99 million (equivalent to US\$ 7.4 million) for 4 years (January 1, 2023 to December 31, 2026) commencing from January 1, 2023. MJF has started to implement this Project in CHT to graduate 20,000 poor households out of poverty in three hill districts with nine local NGOs. It is noteworthy that MJF is the most preferred collaborating partner

among local NGOs and Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) in CHT. Additionally, MJF played a critical role in engaging with the CHT Regional Council, Hill District Councils and the local traditional system while implementing this project. The UNDP is providing technical support to the livelihood interventions. The project will be linked with an ongoing Palli Karma-Sahayak Foundation (PKSF) Project 'Pathways to Prosperity', which is supporting millions of people in Bangladesh to overcome extreme poverty.



Within this period several significant accomplishments are achieved. The project organised an event to inform all the stakeholders about the project on June 14, 2023, nationally in Dhaka. Distinguished guests and stakeholders attended the ceremony, where key project objectives were shared. Nine local grassroots organisations were selected through a rigorous process as partners for project implementation. A formal signing ceremony with the selected partner occurred on September 4, 2023, in Rangamati District, attended by executive directors, project teams, and dignitaries. The project team conducted meetings and briefings with diversified stakeholders such as, Ministry of Chittagong Hill Tracts Affairs, Chittagong Hill Tracts Regional Council (CHTRC), Hill District Councils, various line departments, traditional institutions, and local government agencies, particularly the Union Parishads to ensure their alignment with the project's objectives and secure their support.

PROJECT:

Reintegration of Returnee Migrant Workers in Bangladesh

Female labour migration is an important sector in the Bangladesh economy. Therefore, safe migration for women is a vital issue. However, different factors create vulnerability for female labour migrants. In most of the cases of returnee migrants, particularly the failed labour migrants, experience a higher level of social isolation.

MJF with support from Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) through BRAC implements this project to initiate a model for reintegration of returnee female migrant workers in Bangladesh. Working with labour migration for long time, MJF believes that returning migrant workers must be reintegrated economically as well as socially for their overall wellbeing after returning home. Economic reintegration support through this project includes entrepreneurship development training, financial assistance and loan referral. However, their social and economic reintegration is contingent upon responsive and inclusive services being available through the Ministry of Expatriates & Welfare and Overseas Employment and its Wage Earners Welfare Board and other development actors. Therefore lobbying and advocacy with this Ministry is part of the project activities.

Within the reporting period the project worked with returnee female migrant workers and organised awareness events for returnees and their family members, community people and other stakeholders and provided guidance for proper reintegration.



The project provided information, resource on regular basis and established a bridging between referral services linkages and returnee migrant workers to avail entrepreneurship trainings, skill training, business advice, micro-credit/loans, along with government facilities/service provisions. Liaison with the government financial institutions were maintained regularly and meeting with respective stakeholders were organised for easy financial inclusions. Besides, psychosocial counselling were organised for abused and traumatised female returnee migrants from different institutions and psychosocial experts.

Reintegrating female returnee migrants into the economic and social sphere is a challenge. Most of the time they return with no savings. Besides, female migrants have limited education and skill to start a business or participate in skill development training. However, proper counselling for the m helps them choose the most suitable option based on their needs, resources and contexts. Collaboration with the local government departments has been found to be helpful in reintegrating the female migrant returnees.

Table 1: Major Activities Accomplished by Returnee Migrants Project from July 22 – June 23

Major Achievements	Number
Project beneficiaries and respective community people informed on better investment of their savings	753
Returnee migrant workers introduced and linked with local level service providers for economic reintegration	236
Provided psychosocial counselling to selected returnee migrant workers	302
Returnee migrant workers linked with business advisory support, financial institutions, technical institutions and enrolled for	319
Returnee migrant workers reintegrated through financial inclusion and psychosocial counselling initiatives	83
Returnee migrant workers received skill development training	45
Returnee migrant workers benefited through referral services of skills training, loans/credit/grants facilities from public and private services	270

PROJECT:

Shuchona: Informal Domestic Workers in Digital Financial Services



There are 10.5 million people employed as domestic workers in Bangladesh and majority of them are women. Female domestic workers are a vulnerable group in Bangladesh, mostly from low-income group and excluded from the provisions of social protection and services. There is no regulatory framework for the minimum age of employment, remuneration and working hours for these poor and vulnerable workers.

MJF with a support of Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation implementing the project Shuchona to introduce digital financial services for female domestic workers in Bangladesh. MJF is working for female domestic workers financial empowerment and to increase their self-esteem as dignified workers with more bargaining power. Payments to the domestic workers was made formally and thus domestic workers work got formal recognition through systematic payment. This initiative helped in addressing non-payment or delayed wages, a common problem faced by the female domestic workers constantly.

This pilot project works with both female domestic workers and their female employers focusing on reducing gender gap through sensitisation and orientation on workers' rights, gender, labour law and different policies. It was a two-prong approach by engaging women from two different segments in terms of power and social, cultural and economic status, which has brought through digital financial services. The project is playing a significant role in enabling financial inclusion for both groups of women.

Table 2: Major Activities Accomplished by Shuchona Project from July 22 – June 23

Major Achievements	Number
Female domestic workers received salary through a digital system	4089 Female domestic workers
Female employers paying salary to their domestic workers through a digital system	3600 Female employers
Domestic workers are maintaining financial diaries	4000 Female domestic workers
Savings capability of domestic workers has increased	1724 Female domestic workers
Contributing to child education	1724 Female domestic workers
Female employers using MFS/DFS in wider scale to make their life easier	2170 Female domestic workers
Taking step to purchase asset/ initiated other IGA for better livelihood	295 Female domestic workers

PROJECT:

The Feedback State: Listening and Responding to Bangladeshi Citizens During the Covid-19 Pandemic

Manusher Jonno Foundation is involved with a research project, called 'The Feedback State: Listening and Responding to Bangladeshi Citizens During the Covid-19 Pandemic', which is an initiative of the FCDO, Covid-19 Learning, Evidence and Research (CLEAR) Programme for Bangladesh. The research aim to answer about the precise mechanisms (online and offline) through which Bangladesh government shapes pandemic response with an in-depth analysis of how the Bangladesh state listened and responded to its citizens' health and social protection needs in the pandemic.

The Covid-19 Learning, Evidence and Research Programme (CLEAR) is a 2.5-year FCDO-funded programme to support an evidence-informed Covid-19 response and recovery in Bangladesh. Researchers at BRAC University, American University, Jahangirnagar University, the University of Rajshahi and the Manusher Jonno Foundation came together to find out whether and how the Bangladesh government listened and responded to its citizens. As part of the CLEAR research initiative, MJF conducted several meetings with experts and stakeholders to collect inputs and finalise the research questions and design, research sites, tools, methods, and preliminary study findings. Afterwards, the research findings were shared with multiple stakeholders including different departments of Bangladesh government. A report on this study also published.



PROJECT:

Women's Voice and Leadership, Bangladesh



Women's Voice and Leadership (WVL) is a global initiative of Global Affairs Canada (GAC) to support Canada's new Feminist International Assistance Policy. This programme was designed to meet the needs of local women's organisations in developing countries and GAC's support helps advance gender equality and empower women in 30 developing countries. Canada's Feminist International Assistance Policy promotes feminist approach in programming and integrates feminist principles in programme implementation.

MJF has been implementing WVL project in Bangladesh since 2019 to respond to the needs of local Women's Rights Organisations (WROs) working to advance the empowerment of women, girls, and gender-diverse population and promote gender equality, protect the human rights of women, girls, *hijra* and transgender population.

The WVL- Bangladesh project is focused on strengthening the institutional capacity of WROs and CBOs to help women, girls, *hijra*, and transgender in exercising their rights. The project intends to promote a more organised and inclusive society that will contribute in changing social norms and customs to reduce underpinning practices of discrimination and inequality. The project advocates on behalf of women, girls, transgender to government and decision-makers at all levels and has developed linkages and networks that amplify their voices. To this effect, MJF has worked through multi-year partnerships with 16 WROs & CBOs including women networks across the country. Besides, this project offered financial assistance to organise discrete events and opportunities for other non-partner WROs, and CBOs under the Fast Responsive Fund (FRF).



MJF organised a women's conference titled 'Feminism: Advancement of Women in Bangladesh' on 30 January 2023. WVL-Bangladesh project works to build the capacity of WROs so that they can advocate on behalf of women, girls, and transgender to government and decision-makers at all levels and develops linkages and networks that amplify their voices and influence. To this effect, the WVL-B project of MJF organised a women's conference to increase the effectiveness of local and national women's rights platforms, networks, and alliances to raise their voices towards women's rights. Representatives from more than 45 women and youth organisations joined this conference. Attending this conference participants came to know the challenges and possibilities of feminist works/approaches in promoting gender equality and they learned to identify the potential of collective actions by women's rights platforms, networks, and alliances at the local level.

Through 'Women Economic Empowerment (WEE)' initiative the project targeted the direct beneficiaries to make changes in their lives by supporting them with small grants and skill training for income-generating activities. The initiative was accepted by the beneficiaries with success. This initiative aimed to empower women, girls, and transgender towards economic, and social transformation through demonstrating their potential with shared resources so that they could make their own choices to establish control over t resources. Meanwhile, 1160 beneficiaries (women-952, girls-133, transgender-75) received financial assistance, and necessary training (as required) to start and operate their income- generating activities.



CASE STORY:

The Conquest of Transformation: Historic Win of a Transgender

At the heart of Rajshahi District, history was made when Sultana Ahmed, known as Sagarika, shattered barriers to becoming the country's first transgender Councillor with a huge response from the people. Her resounding victory in the Rajshahi City Corporation polls marked a turning point in society's perception of gender and highlighted the transformative power of determination and empathy.

Sagarika was serving as the General Secretary of "Diner Alo Hijra Sangho", one of the WROs under WVL- Bangladesh working for the rights of the transgender community in Rajshahi. In addition to that Sagarika was active in rights movement of transgender, as well as she was active in politics since 2022. Sagarika's path to success was not a smooth one. Born into a Muslim family, she was forced into a commune of transgender individuals during her school days. It was a journey of relentless teasing, harassment, and societal neglect. Reminiscing about her past, Sagarika said that she was teased and harassed by her family members, classmates and friends all through her childhood. Instead of succumbing to bitterness, she chose to channel her experiences into a noble purpose – serving the people. She was determined to work for the underprivileged and neglected people of society.

In her word, ***"There were five competing candidates but I was optimistic because I knew that people wanted something different. Voters believed me and encouraged me to move ahead as a people's representative to serve the citizens".***

MJF launched a digital campaign titled "SPEAK UP, SPEAK OUT", started from February 2023 and continued for six (06) months. The main purpose of this campaign was breaking the taboos of talking about 'feminism' and make space for interaction. Static and visual contents shared on Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, and twitter. MJF's Facebook page, Instagram, twitter, and in WVL- Bangladesh's Facebook page shared all those posts.

(Link- <https://www.facebook.com/manusherjonnofoundation/videos/700495648207848>)

Table 3: Major Activities Accomplished by WVLB Project from July 22 – June 23

Major Achievements	Number/Percent
Gender responsive Constitution review of WROs to make an update	16 WROs
Provided financial assistance to organise discrete events and opportunities for other non-partner WROs, and COs under the Fast Responsive Fund (FRF)	3 WROs
Capacity building trainings on different issues to increase skill and ability of WROs.	173 participants (F- 122, Transgender 12 and M- 39)
Women, girls, and transgender reached through service delivery	3,451 persons
People reached through awareness raising, advocacy, and outreach programmes by supported WROs	21,981 persons
Representation in district-level committees and connected with national and international level networks	38 persons
Launched six-months long digital campaign	Against 612,365 views received 25,637 reactions on Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter





Visit of the Honorable Harjit S. Sajjan, International Development Minister of Canada

It was an honor for MJF to meet the Honourable Harjit S. Sajjan, Minister of International Development, Canada on 27th February 2023 at Cox's Bazar. Representatives of 15 partner WROs joined a roundtable discussion with other dignitaries such as Patrice Cousineau, Executive Director, South Asia; David Hartman, Canadian Ambassador to the Philippines, Lilly Nicholls, High Commissioner of Canada and Joe Goodings, Head of Cooperation, Bangladesh Bilateral Development. Shaheen Anam, Executive Director of MJF welcomed the Minister and his team. The Minister appreciated and thanked everyone for their work to establish gender equality. He remained engaged during the discussions and was genuinely moved by the stories shared by the WROs. He said, that no human being should be left behind because of gender identity, ethnicity, race, caste, or whatever status they belong to. He emphasised the universality of human rights for all to live with dignity. He also said that the Canadian Government stands for all people who are left behind to protect their human rights and equality.

GAC Representatives Visit

Global Affairs Canada representative's visited to WVL-B Project's implementing partner's working area in May 2023. Rita Houkayem, Second Secretary- Development (Gender Equality), High Commission of Canada to Bangladesh and Taslima Tinni, Gender Equality, and Women Empowerment Technical Specialist at FSSP of GAC- Bangladesh visited to apprehend the WRO's works at field level and visited Bangladeshi Ovibashi Mohila Sramik Association (BOMSA), Dalit Empowerment Foundation (DEF) and Welfare Efforts (WE) at Jashore, Satkhira and Jhenaidah Districts. They observed door to door campaign and the awareness event performed by the girls' group, the impact of WEE initiatives of WVL-B Project, interaction with the Women's Group Members to learn about the changes, the initiatives of men's and boys' engagement in WROs' programme implementation and revered WRO's works to leadership and empowerment at the community.

PROJECT:

Women's Empowerment and Energy

MJF awarded a project titled 'Women's Empowerment and Energy (WEE)' to empower women through a gender-sensitive renewable energy policy. The project focused on the development of gender-sensitive energy policies to promote the responsible use of renewable energy and address the distinct impacts on men and women. WEE Project aimed to build a countrywide awareness campaign to implement climate action plans and cut emissions as outlined in the Nationally Determined Contribution. By addressing the historical deprivation and empowering women in Bangladesh, the project wanted to overcome barriers to accessing property, resources, finance, and decision-making processes – ultimately fostering sustainable development and transition in the country. WEE Project started on January 1, 2023 and it will continue till December 31 2023.

In this reporting period the project conducted a study on Gender Impact in Renewable Energy Sources and Technologies in Bangladesh and shared the study findings with likeminded stakeholders. The study findings revealed the gaps between women and renewable energy sector in Bangladesh. It was also found that the government policies are more focused on renewable energy targets rather than ensuring the balanced gender participation. As a part of advocacy a network of women leaders from a bunch of women-led organisations named WEE Network was formed. Besides, social media campaign was also introduced for awareness raising in the community.

PROJECT:

Youth Engagement in Democracy and Human Rights



Youths are the strongest and the most self-confident, creative and productive guiding force of any nation through whom the hopes and aspirations of a nation are reflected. Therefore, it is important to explore and utilise all their potentials and possibilities.

MJF is implementing a project titled 'Youth Engagement in Democracy' with a grant from the Accountability Lab-Nepal /DRL. Fund size is USD 418,109 for 2 years (October 1, 2022 to September 30, 2024), which has started from October 1, 2022. MJF works with young people, including youth volunteers across Bangladesh to run leadership building programmes targeting young women among other stakeholders. Through this project MJF is working to build and strengthen diverse and pluralistic networks of youth leaders through targeted support, collective learning and shared best practices.

MJF organised capacity building activities and provided hands-on support to youths and youth-led small organisations to build networks and develop creative outreach campaigns around their efforts. MJF also provided small grants to support youth-led initiatives to raise awareness on issues affecting young people and bring together youth groups from both countries the USA and Bangladesh to share and learn from each other's struggles and success stories.



MJF is implementing this project in four districts, Dhaka, Narayanganj, Faridpur and Rajbari. Project management responsibilities are shared among MJF, sixteen youth-led organisations. Each of them are playing a crucial role in implementing different project components, including livelihoods, nutrition, social protection, and advocacy.

In this reporting period youth leaders received training on leadership roles within civil society structures including mentorship opportunities. Training was provided to college students to increase their skill on developing media contents on democracy and human rights. As a part of advocacy work, ten number of media contents were developed and posted on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and YouTube. Civic Action Teams were formed to engage young community leaders to collect information on local democracy and human rights.

Table 4: Major Activities Accomplished by Youth Engagement Project from July 22 – June 23

Major Achievements	Numbers
Youth leaders received training on leadership roles within civil society structures including mentorship opportunities	82 youth
Arranged democracy friend raiser debate events	4 events
Youths received training on developing media contents on democracy and human rights	21 youth
Developed media contents for Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, YouTube	10 contents
Arranged a boot camp on the review of National Youth Policy 2017 for marginalised youths in Bangladesh	16 youth

STRATEGIC SUPPORT UNITS

Capacity Development

MJF works in partnership with a variety of stakeholders such as CSOs, NGOs, CBOs, government and private sector. Through its partners, MJF assists to ensure entitlements of marginalised people by building their capacity to demand basic services and to raise voice against all kind of discriminations. The Capacity Development Unit (CDU) of MJF is entrusted to building the capacity of partners for a quality programme performance and organisational development. Over the years MJF has been working to strengthen the human and institutional capacity of CBOs/CSOs/NGOs so that they can perform more effectively, efficiently and in sustainable way. Following this, in the last fiscal year a total of 220 project participants from different partner organisations have received training on freedom of religion or belief.

Human Rights & Freedom of Religion or Belief Training: The concept freedom of religion or belief is extensive and profound, encompassing not only the right to possess personal thoughts and convictions but also the ability to express them individually or collectively, whether in public or private sphere. Moreover, it protects individuals from being compelled to declare an association with any particular religion or belief.

CDU arranged 11 training sessions on "Freedom of Religion or Belief," in which a total of 220 participants from 11 districts, including 62 women, took part. The training aimed in engaging youth-led CSOs who are already actively contributing to the betterment of society through the "Freedom of Religion or Belief" campaign. It also tried to equip the participants with a theoretical knowledge on human rights instruments, as well as practical skills to effectively carry out a mass campaign on Freedom of Religion or Belief. Furthermore developed an implementation plan for a comprehensive range of Freedom of Religion or Belief activities that aligned with the organisations' existing mandates.

Regional Consultations on reviewing the National Youth Policy 2017: The core focus of the National Youth Policy in Bangladesh was to foster progress in five crucial areas that cover social justice, health, fitness, sports, employment and entrepreneurship, and education. To evaluate and update the National Youth Policy for 2017, a comprehensive review was conducted by MJF to determine the current needs and relevance of young people from various regions. This endeavour involved engaging different stakeholders and policymakers to devise a combined review and implementation plan. Three regional consultation workshops were held in Mymensing, Chottogram, and Rangpur District, which endorsed by a participation of 350 attendees, including policymakers, academics, local government officials, youth leaders, and representatives from different marginalised communities.

National Youth Parliament 2023: The National Youth Parliament of Bangladesh provided young people with a platform to raise their voices and participate in the country's political process. This programme was open to young people between the ages of 18 and 35 and was designed to promote youth participation in governance and decision-making processes. Participants were engaged in

debates, shared their ideas and perspectives, and developed policy proposals to address important issues affecting their communities and the country.

The programme aimed to empower youth, develop their leadership skills, promote national unity, and foster a sense of patriotism. Through the National Youth Parliament, young people had an opportunity to voice their opinions, develop leadership skills, and contribute to the country's development. It also helps to raise awareness about youth issues and the importance of youth participation in governance and decision-making processes. The 14th National Youth Parliament took place on March 4th, 2023, in Barishal District, and was attended by 800 youth leaders and representatives from different political parties, GoB officials, teachers, academics, and CSO representatives. The programme was organised to increase coordination with youth-serving organisations, the private sector, and development sectors to respond to challenges facing the youth in Bangladesh. Overall, the National Youth Parliament was an important initiative that empowers young people and promotes their active engagement in the country's political process.

Knowledge Management, Research and Communications

During the reporting period, Knowledge Management (KM) team issued several policy statements, press releases, concept notes, project reports, event based reports, organisation's annual report, IEC/BCC materials and web content materials. Media mobilisation, events coverage, Facebook upload and connecting with the MJF website were done as a regular activity of KM team. It was also responsibility of communication person to keep the media updated through press release and verbal contacts. Several press conferences and roundtables with media including television and radio talk shows were also organised. MJF's social media followers gradually have increased after KM was entrusted with managing website and social media platforms. KM team continued its effort to extract, capture, store and improve both internal and external knowledge to improve the organisational performance. MJF's research, knowledge management, communication and various programmatic works are now more visible, specific and effective.

Management Information System

Management Information System (MIS) is a technical unit of MJF working to manage valuable & consolidated/summarised information which is crucial as well as challenging. In this reporting period, the unit worked to improve the automated systems & software by applying modern IT & network equipment & accessories to establish a better information management practice within the organisation. Project and implementing partners' information were generated as per programme requirements on regular basis. Many financial and non-financial reports also generated and provided to the management. MIS supported programme in mainstreaming SAT for quality services in the community. Enhanced the implementing PNGOs portal for generating project completion reports. MIS unit kept continuous effort to ensure green technology, paperless operations mode in the organisation all through the year.

Finance and Administration

MJF has established sound relationship with development partners, government and civil society and managed a greater capacity of fund management. MJF ensured robust grants and financial management, technical support and field implementation in projects focused on human rights, good governance and social cohesion issues, livelihoods improvement, Covid-19 response, livelihood cash transfer, gender equality and disability integration, safe-guarding, civic engagement, agency building, climate change adaptation and high-level policy advocacy in collaborating with CSOs, NGOs and CBOs with a number of projects in this reporting period. During the implementation of the projects, MJF exercised the necessary diligence, efficiency and transparency in line with sound financial management, cost-efficiency and best practice principles such as results-based management including learning and adaptation.

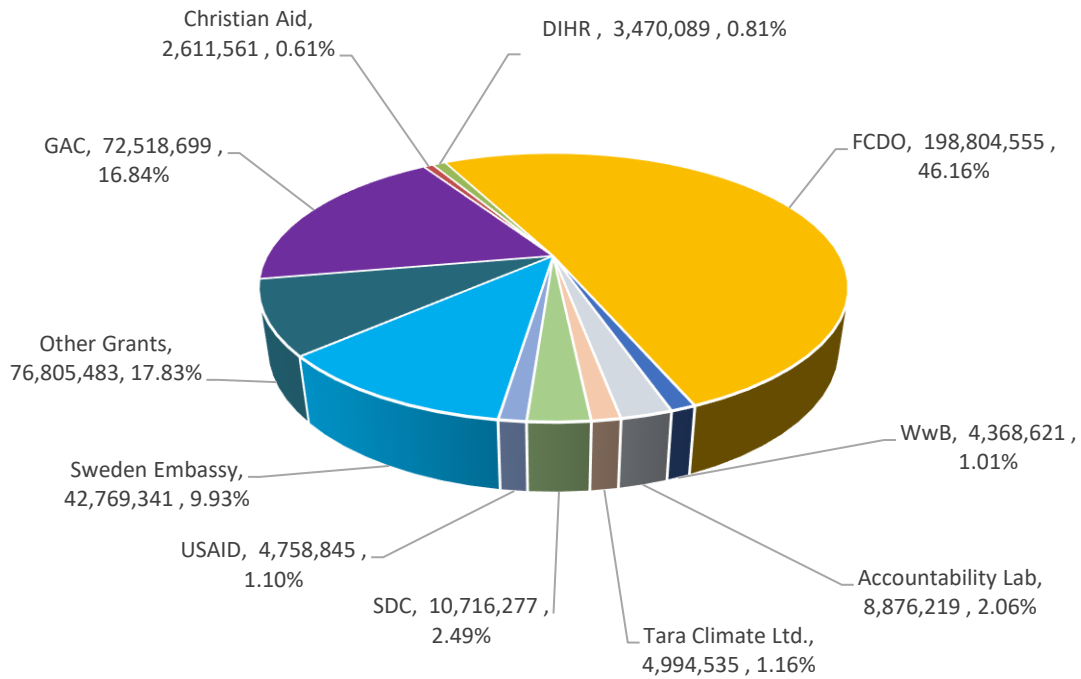
MJF tries to keep up with well-established and effective financial management systems, and an effective internal control mechanism. MJF has adequate programme and financial management systems in place, especially in the area of organisational governance, controls over support to downstream partners, audit, recruitment and procurement of goods and services.

Programme delivery of MJF took place through an Accountable Grant Agreement with small, medium and large NGOs using sub-grants management mechanism. This mechanism included appropriate management controls over fiduciary risks whilst it was remaining with a level of flexibility for NGOs to ensure efficient and cost-effective delivery of programmes towards achieving desired results.

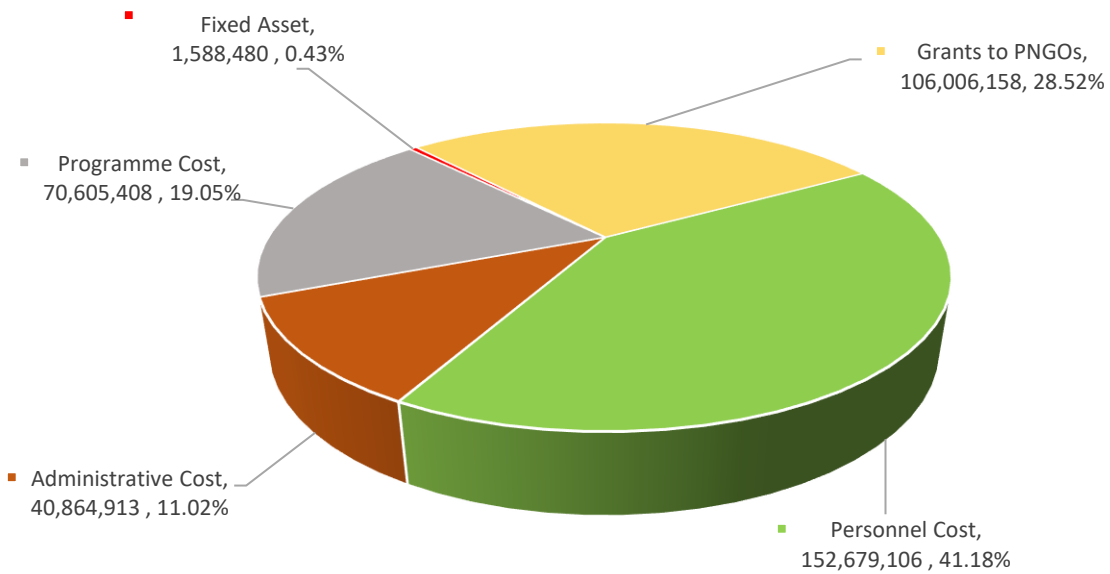
MJF maintains a highly efficient and neutral process for partner NGO selection, assessing partner's integrity, quality and capacity, and uses competitive bidding process based on proposals received from interested organisations that meet the technical and financial criteria circulated using guidelines through online open calls. MJF ensured direct procurement of other goods and services and demonstrates value for money to donors. MJF follows credible local and international procurement practices through competitive bidding process.

MJF established standard financial procedures covering the planning, budgeting, bookkeeping, accounting and internal control which are applicable to all partner NGOs. As part of continuous grant and programme management responsibilities, the MJF programme and finance team undertakes field visits to downstream partners at least twice a year, to confirm that budget and activities are on track to deliver agreed results and sure that partners are practicing sound financial and accounting systems. MJF provides capacity building support and mentoring to partners to ensure compliance to donor agreed policies.

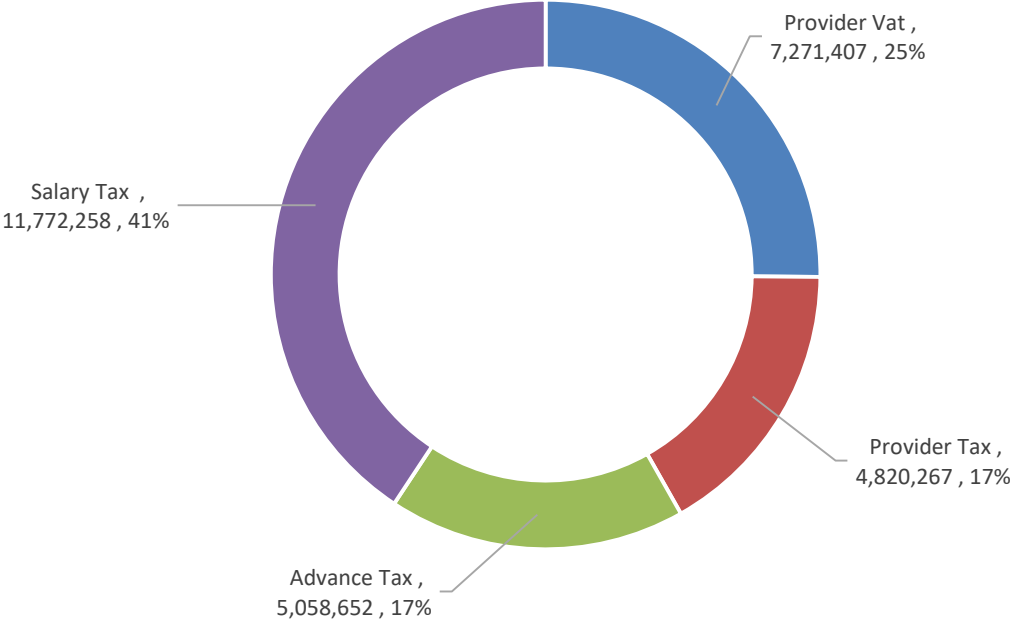
Donor wise Receipts [July'22-June'23]



Payments [July'22-June'23]



Deposit to Excheque [July'22-June'23]



ANNEX 1: AUDIT REPORT