

Bangladesh: Taking Action for Sustainable Development



Pabitra Bala with her son at their home showing a new rickshaw van that they bought after the successfully resolved theft case. © UNDP Bangladesh/Village Courts project

What are the bold actions being taken by the Government to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals in Bangladesh?

Peace, justice and effective, accountable and inclusive institutions are at the core of sustainable development. However, in many countries, far too many people struggle as a result of weak institutions and the lack of access to justice, information and other fundamental freedoms.

In Bangladesh, the [Activating Village Courts Project](#) has been providing legal services and access to justice to over 7 million people primarily in rural areas, since its inception in 2010. The first phase of the project was implemented in the period 2010-

2015 in partnership between the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the Government of Bangladesh and the European Union, ensuring access to justice to the most vulnerable and poor.

The project is providing support to the overall justice system, aiming to develop the capacity of the village court members, elected representatives and support staff.

So far, there are functional village courts in 351 unions, and 4,914 representatives and officials and 3,529 village police

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If it wasn't for the Village Court, it would not have been possible to recover my assets through any other means.

Pabitra Bala

A 65-year-old widow whose case was resolved by the Village Court

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The European Union continues its commitment to strengthen social justice and in partnership with UNDP and the Government of Bangladesh ensure that more people, especially the rural poor women and children, have access to justice and have the possibility to find a solution to their disputes and conflicts at community level.

Mario Ronconi

**Head of Cooperation
EU Delegation to Bangladesh**

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The Government of Bangladesh aims to bring public services at people's doorsteps. Village Courts is one of the services that can improve lives, bringing peace and harmony in the rural areas of Bangladesh.

Abdul Malek

**Secretary, Local Government
Division, Ministry of Local
Government, Rural Development
and Cooperatives**



**SUSTAINABLE
DEVELOPMENT GOALS**

17 GOALS TO TRANSFORM OUR WORLD

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Village Courts project continues in 1,080 unions thanks to the partnership between the European Union and the Government of Bangladesh. © UNDP Bangladesh/Village Courts project

members have been trained to support the Village Courts.

In the first six years of the project, 69,200 disputes have been successfully resolved out of 87,200 reported to the Village Courts, and over 6,000 cases have been referred to Village Courts by the District Courts.

In 2017, the new scaled-up phase of the project started with a goal to bring improved access to legal services to over 21 million people mainly living in poverty and rural areas across the country.

The European Union finances the project with over 35 million Euros. The Government of Bangladesh is also financing an

additional USD 6 million for implementing the project.

Why do the above actions matter to the people in Bangladesh?

Since the inception of the Village Courts, each case has been resolved on average within 28 days, compared with more than two to three years for petty cases of both civil and criminal nature in the past in formal courts.

Earlier, due to the long procedures, people would usually give up proceeding cases and never have them resolved. But now, the Village Courts bring back the hope in the justice system of the country.

Also, a total of USD 3.79 million has been recovered as compensation that is being determined by the Village Courts panel to resolve the disputes.

What SDGs have been particularly advanced through the Village Courts project?

The project focuses on Goal 16 on peace, justice and strong institutions, and Goal 17 on partnership for the goals.



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