

**How long to remain ignored and muted?**

**Bangladesh Dalits' Movement for  
Ending Discrimination**

**Evaluation Report on the Project**

**“Reduce Discrimination through Protecting and  
Promoting the Rights of Dalit and Socially  
Excluded Communities”**

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**BDERM**

**Bangladesh Dalit and  
Excluded Rights Movement**

বাংলাদেশ দলিত ও বঞ্চিত জনগোষ্ঠী অধিকার আন্দোলন

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Discrimination based on work and descent is relatively less talked about in Bangladesh though in practice it is quite prevalent in different parts of the country. For the Government, donors and civil society in Bangladesh this is a relatively new issue and therefore, it is yet to become a significant constituent in policy regime. Nagorik Uddyog (NU), a leading Bangladeshi NGO and BDERM, a member-based social organization representing Dalits and socially excluded groups of the country, have been cooperating for years to address the issues of deprivation and sufferings that Dalits here encounter. Through their joint work the organizations have come to realize the necessity of strengthening collective movement in the country for undertaking campaigns and advocacy activities with a view to bring in change in laws, public policies, social development programmes and in mass outlook. They also have come to appreciate the importance of practical interventions for the ending miseries and rightlessness of these most marginalized groups.

Out of these understanding, both the organizations had conceived and designed this project, 'Reduce Discrimination through Protecting and Promoting the Rights of Dalit and Socially Excluded Groups'. The basic purpose of the project was to address the deep rooted structural asymmetries that shape Bangladesh society and its defined goal was to pave ways for the Dalit and excluded communities to have improved life by the means of reducing discrimination based on work and decent. Its general objective was to increase awareness, organizational capacity and income level of Dalit and socially excluded communities.

The following were the specific objectives of the project:

1. Strengthening the organizational capacity and enhance human rights understanding of the key actors in Dalit and Excluded Rights Movement, both at individual and organizational level;
2. Influencing the policy, practice and development programmes of the government, donors and institutions through advocacy, campaign and research;
3. Protecting and promoting Dalit and excluded people's human rights, through fact finding, mediation, provision of legal aid and improvement of access to justice;
4. Implementing skill training programmes for the purpose of bringing in occupational diversity; undertaking social development programmes with a view to tackle poverty and exclusion faced by Dalit and socially excluded communities; carrying out programmes and practices in a way that best practice models for future use might be provided.

The main objective of this evaluation of the project is to study and assess the success of the project in achieving the goals. At the same time, it is also tasked to examine the appropriateness of the project design for achieving the set objectives and to identify key opportunities and constraints that arises in the project areas in

relation to upholding Dalit human rights and reducing caste, work and descent based discrimination.

In keeping with the TOR, the objectives of the evaluation can be divided into **two sets**. The discussion of this evaluation report is presented in line with these two sets of evaluation objectives.

**First set** of Evaluation objectives incorporates three things: assessing project implementation success; evaluating sustainability of the impacts of the project; and identifying key opportunities and constraints. On the other hand, **second set** also has three components: assessing the effectiveness of project governance and management systems and process including the competency of the staffs; assessing both strengths and weaknesses of the management systems, procedures and practices; **and**, assessing relevance and effectiveness of project monitoring and evaluation system

This evaluation report is based on a **methodology** that incorporated techniques of data and information gathering from both primary and secondary sources. **Individual interviews** and **group discussions** were arranged with the members of Dalit communities. We have also talked extensively with the regional and local leaders of BDERM and its partner organizations as well as engaging in both focused group discussions and **informal conversations** with general members of the communities. The papers and documents related to the project were reviewed in detail. We have examined the reports on different training sessions as well as minutes of meetings at both national and local levels. All the reports relating to exposure visits, advocacy meetings, conferences and field level activities were examined. We conducted as many as 11 Focus group discussions (FGDs) among different stakeholders at both national and district levels. We conducted in-depth interviews with 10 men and women who were the project beneficiaries as they got skill trainings of different types from the project. We also collected narratives on life history of around 20 beneficiaries so that case studies could be developed based upon those narrations.

## **STRENGTHENING ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY AND ENHANCING HUMAN RIGHTS UNDERSTANDING**

The first objective of the project had two components: a) strengthening capacity of both community leaders and national, regional and local organizations; and, b) Enhancing human rights understanding of the key actors at both individual and organizational levels. This objective was conceived exclusively keeping the Dalit movement and Dalit organizations in mind. The organizations that were in focus included: *Bangladesh Dalit Human Rights (BDHR)*, *Choroibetee Scheduled and Indigenous Welfare Organisation*, *Mouloveebazar Tea Community Indigenous Front*, *The Dalit Women Forum* and *Bangladesh Dalit and Excluded Women's Federation (BDEWF)*. However, the essence of the project proposal was that initiatives would not remain limited only to these organizations. Along with strengthening these organizations and their leaders, the project was to focus on

building leadership amongst the Dalits by promoting more organizations and by undertaking many other effective ways too.

From our analysis of the reports and other documents as well as from our field level explorations, it was clear that Nagorik Uddyog and BDERM undertook project work sincerely and successfully to make sure that they perform all the activities outlined in the project proposal. To be precise, both the organizations carried out all the project activities with highest level sincerity and commitment.

### **BDERM and this project: Challenges and successes**

NU played a role of catalyst in launching BDERM as a platform for social movement of Dalits' and excluded people in Bangladesh. It was back in 2008 that effective cooperation between NU and BDERM started. While both the organizations were carrying out their path-breaking initiatives on their own, this project surely provided them with much needed support and impetus. This project supplied BDERM the ground for moving forward and for manoeuvring spaces at both national and community level. At different stages of the project work the office bearers and other activists associated with BDERM have faced number of challenges and they then overcame those. They process has made them learn things and has poised them to grow in confidence. On the whole the implementation process of the project has given the leaders of BDERM important breakthroughs and it has contributed significantly in enhancing the capacity of BDERM as an organization. As we have explored all the aspects of project implementation, we are convinced that the project has already achieved the best of the possible results in terms of leadership building and knowledge enhancement. Had the situation on the ground been different and particularly had the funding been more extensive and generous, the project could easily have been more successful and have yielded more tangible results.

Most important aspect of BRERM's struggle is that in Bangladesh context they are engaged with a social and political terrain that has never been adequately explored, examined or challenged. They learn from their own doings and they get inspiration from own successes. BDERM as an organization has been passing through stages of learning and it is important to bear in mind that these are the very early days of Dalits' movement in Bangladesh. BDERM is currently doing is potentially laying the foundation of a long journey.

### **BDERM's pursuit to become a national platform and the challenges of fostering leadership among the Dalits**

Over the project period – in the years 2012 and 2013 – BDERM has taken initiatives to yield success in taking in as many grassroots and community level organizations into its fold as possible. However, as one looks into the profiles of the organizations that are currently in cooperation or in partnership with the BDERM, it appears to be rather 'not good enough'. One would surely expect that more community level organizations, perhaps, could have been taken on board. However, the 'failure' of BDERM in bringing together more number of organizations

does not emanate exclusively from the weaknesses or limitations of the organization or project-work itself. The issues need to be viewed from a broader perspective.

Firstly, it is a daunting task for anyone to mobilize those groups of people who have accepted and lived with this 'fact' for decades and centuries that remaining in the lowest rank of the society is their 'destiny'. Secondly, division and mutual suspicion at community level, overwhelming presence of beliefs and practices relating to purity and pollution, inter-group physical discrimination, ubiquitous practices of 'untouchability' within the castes and sub-castes etc. have been among the dominating factors that have given shape to social system and cultural practices amongst the Dalits for centuries. Thirdly, different collective movements undertaken by marginal people in different parts of the country in the past were brutally suppressed by the ruling class and that passed on an enduring sense of pessimism and discouragement among the community members. Fourthly, the ways the mainstream civil society organizations or donor agencies play role in promoting Dalit causes also contribute in paving ways to creation of division among the organizations. The CSOs, NGDOs or donor agencies that are coming forward to give support to Dalit movements in the country are not always paying full attention to the multiple facets of Dalithood, casteism and social exclusion and are not mulling the ways of greater network building. In the same vein they are also failing to forge unity and build trust amongst the groups. They are giving support to different groups and platforms but are not actively encouraging networking and cooperation among them. Fifthly, as the socio-economic distresses of these most marginal communities overwhelms any other consideration, a leader or social worker who tries to mobilize these people cannot elude the 'most urgent' and 'immediate' issues. When the basic requirements of a person remains unmet for long, a benefactor or a leader has to prove before everything else that (s)he bears serious concern about the grave reality on the ground.

Along with the reasons that we outline here there are many other reasons, particularly the ones specific to an area or a community, that make efforts of BDERM to organize people more difficult than what one might assume from outside. However, our discussion with Dalit leaders at national and district levels as well as our interaction with the general members of the communities suggest that, notwithstanding all these odds, BDERM and its partner organizations have gained remarkable ground at both national and local level. Had the situation been more supportive, the organizations surely could have achieved more.

### **Capacity enhancement of BDERM and its partner organizations**

As of BDERM's own strengths and weaknesses, the organization clearly gets affected by the greater context that we have just talked about. The organization's endeavour to become a broad-based organization that encompasses highest number of organizations representing Dalit communities is fraught with number of difficulties. Appreciation and satisfaction was the dominant tone of the leaders and volunteers whereas some forms of discontent was also possible to make out. However, on the whole almost everyone agreed to the point that it was because of

their engagement with BDERM that they could make an impact on the Dalit communities as well as on the way in which these communities were viewed and treated by the greater society.

Achievements of recent years are quite remarkable particularly in comparison to past. The social and economic condition of communities are still very much appalling, however the change that has happened in recent time toward positive direction is quite encouraging. In the same vein, the attitude of greater society regarding untouchability and systematic exclusion has also started to change in positive direction – though it is still far from satisfactory level. Had an organization such as BDERM not been there, the communities would not been able to achieve the successes that it has already achieved. In that case, the level of deprivation and suffering would have remained at far more deplorable level.

In the midst of all the mixed senses of appreciation and discontent, one positive aspect was highlighted by almost everyone. This aspiring aspect of BDERM's endeavour is that the organization is currently grooming number young leaders with extensive trainings, exposure visits and other practical engagements. By undertaking programmes such as *human rights defender* training and by actively promoting ideas of placing young men and women in its district committees, the organization is creating space for young leaders to emerge as more influential and effective change makers of the future.

### **BDERM, its leadership, central committee and other pertinent issues**

Members of BDERM's 'National Working Committee' are quite capable to carry out national level advocacy, campaigning and networking activities. Many of the leaders can easily be identified as 'seasoned campaigner' as they have been engaged with the cause for years now. Different trainings, exposure visits, community meetings, campaigning for resolving practical problems, national and district level participation in seminars, workshops and discussion sessions have contributed in enhancing their knowledge and understanding as well as boosting their confidence. The leaders have extensive knowledge about the plight of the people they represent and they also have serious concerns about the distresses that their fellow Dalits go through. However, my extensive discussions suggest that in some cases they also are at times distracted by the financial constraints and difficulties that they face in personal life.

Having good relationship with neighbouring communities, effectively dealing with the municipality, City Corporation or other government agencies, making best use of an NGO intervention, resolving community's internal issues of order and discipline are the things that provide opportunities to a person to express his or her leadership quality. When an organization or its leaders succeed in proving their relevance on such occasions, they start to gain good ground. From this point of view, BDERM leaders got good chance to establish their credence to the community as this project provided a window to introduce social development interventions to the community. These 'social development' or 'livelihood-related' interventions were very much effective. However, compared to vast requirement of

the community, these interventions proved to be 'less than adequate' in many cases. This 'inadequacy' had played role in holding back the organizations from becoming most effective. It was not, therefore, the limitation of the organization in itself, it was rather limitation in its interventional capacity that it could not become more effective.

Other major achievements included: formation of BDERM central committee as well as divisional and district committees in democratic way, expansion of membership base to a significant level, and ensuring presence of trained and confident actors at national and local levels.

However, from the perspective of sustainability two major concerns were easily identifiable. One is the failure to reach grassroots in comprehensive way and the other is inability to effectively portray itself more as an apex platform than a single organization.

### **ADVOCACY, CAMPAIGN AND RESEARCH WITH A VIEW TO INFLUENCE POLICY, PRACTICE AND PROGRAMMES**

During the project period BDERM and Nagorik Uddyog have made good progress in investigating and systematically representing the grassroots situation with regards to lives of Dalits in different parts of the country. The organizations have carried out substantial research about the practical situation of Dalits' lives. At the same time the campaign and advocacy programmes undertaken by the organizations have made good use of the evidences thus divulged. There is no denying of the fact that BDERM's campaign has played good role in making both print and electronic media in Bangladesh become more aware and proactive about structural exclusion that we live through. Members of civil society, academicians and professionals are now more responsive about the existence of caste based discriminations. Politicians and bureaucrats have also been reached out to in a good number. Some of the government programmes and position statements reflect considerable awareness about the situation of these most marginal people. And, this also is an impressive achievement that key national commissions – i.e., NHRC and LC,B – have already sincerely appreciated the requirement of enacting an anti-discrimination law.

However, here cannot be any room for complacency; neither should there be any reason for disappointment. Given the facts that the key Dalit organization is still in its formation years and resource available is quite limited, the people steering the initiatives should feel encouraged to take up greater initiatives for achieving more and they should make use of the experience they have already gone through. Research and representation of fact also is an ongoing process that needs to be quite relentless. In Bangladesh data and information as regards caste discrimination has been almost non-existent for decades. Therefore, any effort taken at this point for illuminating the facts should be extensive, long lasting and



forceful. NU and BRERM have been bringing the facts to the greater audience in successful way and it is important that the efforts are kept on track in persistent way.

### **FACT FINDING, MEDIATION, PROVISION OF LEGAL AID AND IMPROVEMENT OF ACCESS TO JUSTICE WITH A PURPOSE TO PROTECT AND PROMOTE DALITS' HUMAN RIGHTS**

Allocated budget for achieving this particular objective appears to be quite meagre. Making people raise voice against oppression and seek justice is difficult in a context in which it has been the norm for centuries that the oppressed have to endure the injustices rather silently. This project is quite loaded with different kinds of activities, and this particular component of the project appears to get lesser attention from the project executives or from the BDERM leaders.

It cannot be said that the level community awareness has reached any satisfactory level. However, it was clearly felt that communities were having some impact with such discussions becoming frequent in their yards. Now, if resource permits NU can enhance its capacity with a view to encourage more resistance at field level. In such venture increased capacity of BDERM would be very vital.

### **SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT AND SKILL TRAINING PROGRAMME FOR TACKLING POVERTY AND EXCLUSION OF DALIT AND SOCIALLY EXCLUDED COMMUNITIES**

Though this is basically a right centric programme, the success of this particular project component (under project objective-4) in providing livelihood support to the Dalit men and women have proved to be most acclaimed and appreciated by the vulnerable people at community level. Field level observations reinforce this idea that when provision of basic livelihood is at stake, talks of right and resistance might appear to be quite empty and distant. Therefore, in the context of extreme marginality and deprivation, it is crucial to complement and substantiate right talks with bread provisioning efforts.

A lot have been told about the success of these programmes in the inspection reports undertaken at different phases on behalf of the donors as well as in reports submitted by NU and BRERM. NU has collected case studies and narrations that also bring about same impression. We have carefully gone through reports and documents along with conducting field level observation. We did not find any reason to disagree to the observations put in the reports and documents. Clearly, the activities undertaken for enhancement of Dalits livelihood have brought in good results for the communities and the programmes need to be carried on and scaled up.

NU and BRERM can take up concerted efforts to generate more fund and resources so that flow of support to the communities is increased and strengthened.

## **PROJECT GOVERNANCE MANAGEMENT AND MONITORING-EVALUATION SYSTEM**

- It appears that there was a gap in understanding and communication between NU and partner organizations at grassroots and community level. The project should focus more on capacity enhancement of BDERM and partner organizations.
- NU did not arrange any specialized programme for the programme staffs apart from the training that were arranged for the BDERM leaders. NU has been working for long for promoting human rights at different levels. We feel that the organization could have some manuals and readings prepared that a newly recruited staff might go through.
- Reporting and documentation should be considered as among the priority activities of the programme.
- Monitoring through monthly and quarterly progress reports should perhaps be more interactive and fruitful. There is scope for improving both field operation and finance monitoring.
- Doing 'Case Studies' could be used in more effective way to gather narratives on the situation on the ground. In case studies field staffs get the opportunity to document the particular event in fuller detail. Such case studies would provide the staffs with opportunity to have greater insights regarding complex dynamics of Dalithood in Bangladesh.

## **GENERAL RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **Organizational capacity enhancement and leadership development**

- Building and reinforcing the leadership quality of a movement is a formidable task that requires continuous renewal with adequate supply of inspiration and motivation. A strong base amongst the Dalit communities and strong support from the grassroots can provide BDERM with the much needed impetus and capacity of regeneration. BDERM has moved forward significantly in establishing broader bases in the Dalit communities in Bangladesh. However, one cannot take it for sure that the BDERM has become fully sustainable and self-reliant yet. For reaching a level of sustainability the organization would require more concrete planning as well as support and facilitation from outside.
- Once has to appreciate the advancement already achieved with regards to organizational capacity and leadership. However, we feel that there is a lot more to do for increasing the capacity of the organizations – BDERM and its partners. The organization should start working actively with a target to become 'self-reliant' and to have greater acceptance at community level.
- The organizations and their leaders should work more intensively for building confidence so that they can raise fund even from domestic sources. Currently they are not fully confident that they can raise fund and manage it effectively. If

they can overcome this shakiness they would be able to plan direct initiatives at community level to have positive impact on members' lives.

- More focus might be given particularly for building community leaders' capacity and confidence. Local civil society leaders, academics and activists might be included in more exclusively for conducting seminars, workshops or discussion sessions with a view to boost community leaders' understanding and spirit.
- In some cases the leaders and activists who have got training were not fully active. Trained actors should be motivated to become more active at both national and local levels and the organizations can define roles through which this engagement can be increased.
- Since the duration of the project is not long, much focus should be drawn on ways for strengthening capacity of the partner organizations. This is an issue that needs to be prioritized. Along with targeting more organizations to have their strong base at local level, BDERM can work for taking in more activists and leaders in its national level committees and programmes. Particularly, the size of the 'central executive committee' of BDERM might be expanded and new activists might be taken in for the sake of leadership development.
- BDERM is yet to establish stronger cooperation among the communities. As we have discussed, this is quite difficult an issue; but, to be successful in fostering a 'Dalit movement' in the country there is no alternative to bringing different Dalit communities into dialogue with a view to forge cooperation and network – if not unity.

#### **Increasing knowledge and understanding of Dalit activists and leaders**

- Knowledge base amongst Dalit leaders and activists has expanded considerably. However, creation of a level of knowledge and awareness only among limited number of district and divisional level leaders would not be adequate. Upazilla and community level leadership building should be one of the main concerns of BDERM at this phase and these level activists should be provided with more training and exposure.
- Awareness raising meetings should have increased budget so that they can engage in more people in meaningful way. Dalit youths and women should take up driving role in such meetings and sessions. For doing that, their capacity enhancement is also a key.

#### **Advocacy, campaigning and research**

- Generating more disaggregated data and doing more elaborate mapping is the call of the time and BDERM and its partner organizations can carry out some of the research works and surveys in their own initiatives. BDERM can take up initiatives involving own volunteers and activists to conduct comprehensive mapping at community, upazilla and district levels and also to conduct surveys and brief studies. This can be done even with limited budget.
- Documentation and follow up of cases of atrocity and violence need to be intensified and networking with local and national media should be strengthened so that more sensitivity is raised among the reporters and journalists about such atrocities.

- The limited success that the organizations have achieved in relation to quota based admission in tertiary level institutions does not appear to be fully sustainable yet. However, their achievements should provide them good platform for further advancement.
- NU and BRERM have been bringing the facts to the greater audience in successful way and it is important that the efforts are kept on track in persistent way.

### **Fact finding, mediation and legal aid provision for improving access to justice**

- The issue of improving access to justice does not get adequate attention from the project executives or from the BDERM leaders.
- At grassroots level community members should be given systematic encouragement for seeking remedies of misdeeds.
- It would be encouraging to the project scaling up if legal support to the victims of atrocities.
- People are not satisfied with community level mediation process. Efforts need to be taken to make such mediations more democratic, participatory and just.

### **Social development and skill training programmes**

- Though this is basically a right centric programme, the success of this particular project components in providing livelihood support to the Dalit men and women have proved to be most acclaimed and appreciated by the vulnerable people at community level. It is crucial that NU-BDERM continue to complement and substantiate right talks with bread provisioning efforts.
- The activities undertaken for enhancement of Dalits livelihood have brought in good results for the communities and the programmes need to be carried on and scaled up.
- More alternative ways for providing education to Dalit children and for creating job opportunities for Dalit men and women should be contemplated by Dalit leaders and NU in consultation with civil society members. Here are some questions that Dalit leaders and NU can seriously reflect upon: Why shouldn't initiative be in place to train up Dalit girls and women so that they can take up more mainstream jobs with least possibility to be ostracised or stigmatized? What if a girl grown up in tea garden can migrate to the cities and takes up job as garment factory worker, hospital nurse or insurance office executive? Such works can allow them to become part of greater society with being indemnified in undignified ways. And, whereas remittance earning is the basic mode of income earning in Bangladesh society, why should Dalit men and women acquire the capacity to go abroad and work there?
- NU and BRERM can take up concerted efforts to generate more fund and resources so that flow of support to the communities is increased and strengthened.
- Increased access to basic services remains a big challenge that would require careful and more vigorous engagement with central government, local government and non-government agencies.

### **Project Management and Monitoring**

- Both NU and BDERM would do well if they reflect closely on how more effectively collaboration might take place between NU-BDERM and field level organizations. Partner organizations capacity and confidence can be enhanced by letting them becoming more active at community level.
- NU may develop some manuals and readings that newly recruited staffs might go through. Orientation for staffs as regards international and national human rights regimes might be conducted from time to time by inviting guest speakers from time to time.
- Reporting and documentation should be considered as among the priority activities of the programme. Give the dearth of knowledge and understanding about caste based discrimination in Bangladesh, it should be appreciated that every bit of detail documentation on the nature and extent of Dalit exploitation would be an asset.

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1. Background

Nagorik Uddyog (NU) is one of key civil society and development organizations in Bangladesh. It works basically as a human rights organization and places particular emphasis on upholding human rights of those who are in the margin. One main target that NU gives emphasis on is forging collectivity amongst the citizens – particularly among the deprived and excluded groups. NU has achieved success by making people aware and knowledgeable and by bringing them together. Thus the core activities of NU are driven by one principle: bring people together, make them aware and form sustainable people's groups for the purpose of fighting injustice and discrimination that they face.

Nagorik Uddyog (NU) launched this project 'Protecting and Promoting the Rights of Dalits and Tackling the Poverty and Exclusion of Excluded Groups' on January 01, 2012 with support and collaboration from Bangladesh Dalit and Excluded Rights Movement (BDERM).

BDERM is an unregistered social movement and membership organization and was responsible for the implementation of the planned project. BDERM is steered by an executive committee composed of voluntary positions with divisional and district members. The organization has one coordinator in each of the divisions.

BDERM is more an umbrella organization that brings in different community and grassroots level organizations that work for ending work and descent based discrimination. Key organisations involved in project implementation as members of BDERM include Dhaka based Bangladesh Dalit Human Rights (BDHR), Jessore-based Charoibetee Scheduled and Indigenous Welfare Organisation, Moulvibazar-based 'Tea Community Indigenous Front', and Bangladesh Dalit and Excluded Women's Federation also based in Dhaka.

BDERM also collaborates with other organizations that work on dalit issues particularly in different parts of the country. This collaboration takes place in the way of organizing joint events, demonstrations, opinion sharing, collective voice raising and conceptual engagement. BDERM also established its network with key dalit organizations in South Asia while at international level it keeps close relationship with International Dalit Solidarity Network (IDSN)

Capacity building, skill learning and social development programmes will be implemented in four districts (Dhaka, Narayanganj, Jessore and Moulveebazar) through 4 Dalit organisations - Bangladesh Dalit Human Rights (BDHR), Dalit Women's Forum, Charoibeti Scheduled and Indigenous Welfare Organisation, and Moulveebazar Tea Community Indigenous Front. One of the aims of the project is to build the capacity of the Dalit organizations, which are started to journey.

NU assumes that creating spaces for citizen activism would pave way for holding both formal and informal local institutions accountable – unjust practices also would be eradicated in the same way. Ideologically NU aspires to bring about a society that would be free from poverty, exclusion and asymmetries and where educated and conscious citizens would work together to achieve their full potentials as citizens irrespective of gender, class or status.

Some of the **NU goals and objectives** are as follows:

- To facilitate the process of accessing justice through human rights education, community mediation and legal aid.
- To conduct awareness building programmes at grassroots in order to popularize and practice gender equality.
- To build and strengthen leadership quality among the community women, especially among those who are poor.
- To undertake campaigning and advocacy work for formulating and revising laws in a way that human rights and gender rights are protected.
- To organize the marginal and excluded people – such as *Dalits* and informal workers – to fight against structural violence.
- To establish link with national and international organizations that work for promoting human rights.
- To conduct research on various aspects of Bangladeshi society, economy and culture with focus upon human rights and gender rights situation.

## 1.2. BDERM and Bangladesh Dalits

Discrimination based on work and descent is relatively less talked about in Bangladesh though in practice it is quite prevalent in different parts of the country. Social structure in Bangladesh is still basically agrarian in nature and traditional

professionals such as fishermen, sweeper, barber, washer, dyer, blacksmith, cobbler, weaver, and butcher are part of social, political and economic fabric that has evolved over the centuries. These occupations are usually considered to be descent based whereas the members of the communities are looked down upon by the elites and dominant classes. In the social hierarchy these peoples are placed low ranked and are persistently subjected to prejudices and practices that emanate from caste system and its offshoots.

For the Government, donors and civil society in Bangladesh this work and descent based discrimination is a relatively new issue. It is yet to become a significant constituent in policy regime. Thus, a fundamental issue that affects lives and livelihoods of millions of people across the country remains beyond the purview of the politicians, academics, CSOs or law makers.

NU and BDERM through their joint works have come to underscore the necessity of statistics and data to inform policy and development programmes. Accurate and disaggregated data on Dalithood and social exclusion can pave way to greater democratization and accelerated social development in Bangladesh.

### **1.3. Objectives and Components of the Project under consideration**

In appreciation of the complex nature of the social reality, this project has been conceived and designed by NU and BDERM with a view to address deep rooted structural asymmetries in Bangladesh society. Before undertaking this project both the organizations worked together and achieved some success despite extreme resource constraint.

Based on their earlier experience and understanding, two organizations initiated the project with some particular goals and objectives.

#### **Goal of the project**

Dalit and excluded communities would enjoy improved life through the reduction in discrimination based on work and decent.

#### **Objective of the project**

Increased awareness, organizational capacity and income level of Dalit and socially excluded communities.

#### **Specific Objectives**

The following specific objectives will be address through project implementation.

5. Strengthen the organizational capacity and enhance human rights understanding of the key actors in Dalit and Excluded Rights Movement, both at individual and organizational level;
6. Influence the policy, practice and development programmes of the government, donors and institutions through advocacy, campaign and research;



7. Protect and promote Dalit and excluded people's human rights, through fact finding, mediation, provision of legal aid and improvement of access to justice;
8. Implement skill training programmes for the purpose of bringing in occupational diversity; undertake social development programmes with a view to tackle poverty and exclusion faced by Dalit and socially excluded communities; programmes and practices to be carried out in a way that best practice models for future use might be provided.

In light of the project objectives and proposed activities, the **main components of the project activity** might be identified as follow:

- Strengthening the leadership capacity of key actors in Dalit and Excluded Rights Movement – at both individual and organization level;
- Enhancing the human rights understanding of both individual leaders and organizations
- Undertaking advocacy, campaign and research with a view to influence the policy, practice and development programmes of the government, donors and other institutions
- Protection and promotion of human rights through activities such as fact finding, mediation, legal aid provision and improvement of access to justice;
- Expanding occupational diversity among the Dalits by imparting skill training programmes
- Carrying out different social development programmes with an aim to fight poverty and exclusion faced by Dalits.
- Sorting out models of best practices for future use.

#### **1.4. Objective of this evaluation and methodology**

The main objective of this evaluation of the project is to study and assess the success of the project in achieving the goals. At the same time, it is also tasked to examine the appropriateness of the project design for achieving the set objectives. Its purpose also is to identify key opportunities and constraints that have arisen in the project areas in relation to upholding Dalit human rights and reducing caste, work and descent based discrimination as well as gender discrimination.

**In keeping with the TOR, specific evaluation objectives are:**

- a. To assess the implementation and success of the project in achieving its set objectives (as well as to examine and assess appropriateness of the project design for achieving the set project objectives);
- b. To assess the effectiveness of the project governance and management systems and process including the competency of its staffs for the jobs assigned to them and looking into possible reasons for elevated number of staffs quitting the project;
- c. To assess relevance and effectiveness of monitoring and evaluation system followed by the project;

- d. To assess the strengths and weaknesses of the management systems, procedures and practices;
- e. To evaluate sustainability of the effects and impacts of the project, assessing how far the community organizations (BDERM at national level and district level; four other Dalit organizations at local level) have become capacitated to carry on community mobilization activities and manage local level programmes;
- f. To identify key opportunities and constraints in upholding Dalit human rights and reducing caste, work and descent based discrimination as well as gender discrimination;

For the convenience of organized presentation of our findings and analysis, **we divide these objectives outlined in the TOR into two sets.** The discussion of this evaluation report will be presented in line with these two sets of evaluation objectives.

**First set** of Evaluation objectives:

**Assessing project implementation success; evaluating sustainability of the impacts of the project; and identifying key opportunities and constraints**

- Assessing implementation of the project in terms of set objective achievement and examining the suitability of the project design [evaluation **objective ‘a’** as outlined above following the evaluation TOR].
- Evaluating whether the impacts of the project have reached a level of sustainability by making Dalit organizations adequately capacitated. [evaluation **objective ‘e’** as outlined above following the evaluation TOR].
- Identifying key opportunities and constraints in upholding Dalit human rights and reducing discrimination [evaluation **objective ‘f’** as outlined above following the evaluation TOR]

**Second set** of Evaluation objectives:

**Evaluating effectiveness of both project governance-management system and monitoring-evaluation mechanism**

- Assessing the effectiveness of project governance and management systems and process including the competency of the staffs [evaluation **objective ‘b’** as outlined above following the evaluation TOR].
- Assessing both strengths and weaknesses of the management systems, procedures and practices [evaluation **objective ‘d’** as outlined above following the evaluation TOR].
- Assessing relevance and effectiveness of project monitoring and evaluation system [evaluation **objective ‘c’** as outlined in the evaluation TOR].

These are the two sets of objectives that have guided the evaluation process, and the discussions, observations and arguments of this paper have also evolved surrounding these objectives.

In terms of **methodology**, this evaluation report is based on data and information gathered from both primary and secondary sources. As part of field level observation and data gathering process, we visited organizations, programmes and communities in Moulvibazar and Jessore; and, in Dhaka, we talked to BDERM central executive members and volunteers as well to project beneficiaries.

In **field trips** we observed the activities of Dalit and excluded peoples' organizations; we talked with different stakeholders; we conducted group discussions with the community leaders and project beneficiaries and gathered ideas and insights regarding different social development interventions.

**Individual interviews** and **group discussions** were arranged with the members of Dalit communities. I also talked extensively with the regional and local leaders of BDERM and its partner organizations. We also engaged in both focused group discussions and **informal conversations** with general members of the communities.

The papers and documents related to the project were reviewed in detail. We have examined the reports on different training sessions as well as minutes of meetings at both national and local levels. All the reports relating to exposure visits, advocacy meetings, conferences and field level activities were examined.

Though the report does not go for presenting the findings fully in quantitative terms, we carried out '**questionnaire survey**' among the project beneficiaries to assess the impact of the project particularly to examine the consequences of livelihood related components of it. In Moulvibazar survey was conducted among 18 individuals, in Jessore among 20 individuals and in Dhaka among 10 beneficiaries.

We conducted number of Focus group discussions (FGDs) among different stakeholders. Here is the list of the FGDs:

Purpose of FGD	No. and venue	Participants
To understand aspects of organizational capacity, leadership issues and to assess level of knowledge and understanding of leaders and activists associated with BDERM and also to evaluate the impact of training programmes	3 FGDs taking place in Dhaka	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Selected members of central working committee</li> <li>- Young volunteers and human right defenders</li> <li>- Women leaders from Dalit Women Forum (DWF)</li> </ul>

Purpose of FGD	No. and venue	Participants
To assess the impact of right-based awareness meetings at community level as well as to have understanding about the level of knowledge and understanding of the community people	2 FGDs in Srimangal, Moulavibazar and Jessore	- Men and women from the communities; particularly those who are respected by the community
To assess community's attitude toward the project, BDERM and its respective partner organization and also to understand overall state of community level collective efforts	2 FGDs in Srimangal, Moulavibazar and Jessore	- Both elderly and young members of the community who have ideas about the programmes and interventions undertaken by BDERM and its respective partner organization
To particularly understand the plight of Dalit women facing different segregation and sufferings	1 FGD conducted in Jessore with this particular view	- About twenty women gathered and talked about different aspects of their lives as well as about their everyday struggle
To assess the impact of BDERM run informal school	1 FGD in Alinagar tea-garden in Moulavibazar	- the school teacher, guardians, local community members and students took part in discussion
To have understanding about the project in detail and to assess aspects of project management, monitoring and evaluation	2 FGDs – one in the early stage of the work and one before final write-up	- With NU and BDERM project staffs project staffs present in Dhaka office

We did not carry out any FGD with the beneficiaries of the project's livelihood intervention as it was difficult to have them together in a place. However, along with conducting 'questionnaire survey' we conducted in-depth interviews with 10 men and women who got skill trainings of different types from the project. We also collected narratives on life history of around 20 beneficiaries so that case studies could be developed based upon those narrations. We had thus taken exclusive effort to understand the affect that the project was having on the lives of the beneficiaries.

In three of the project locations [Dhaka, Moulavibazar and Jessore] we identified a number of key informants with whom we engaged in long informal conversations on number of occasions.

In Jessore we also talked to government officials and local CSOs to glean in their views about Daits in general and BDERM in particular.

### IMPLEMENTATION REVIEW

#### Assessment of objective achievement, appraisal of sustainability and identification of key opportunities and constraints

##### Outline of the Chapter

This is one of the two major chapters of this report- chapter 3 being the other. The purpose of this chapter is to concentrate on the *first set of evaluation objectives* pinpointed in section 1.4 of the preceding chapter.

Thus, the discussion in this chapter deals with three main issues:

- a) assessing whether the project implementation has been successful in terms of set objectives achievement;
- b) examining whether the impacts of the project have reached a level of sustainability by making Dalit organizations adequately capacitated;
- c) identifying key opportunities and constraints in upholding Dalit human rights and reducing discrimination.

The chapter is divided into four main sections (2.1, 2.2, 2.3, and 2.4) where each of the sections deals with one of the project objectives.

First section (2.1) looks into the issues of capacity building and human rights understanding enhancement that is the objective *one* categorized in the project proposal. It has four two major sub-sections; first sub-section (2.1.1) briefly presents the activities that were outlined in the proposal and second sub-section (2.1.2) analyses the finding with a view to shed light on three aspects. First, it assesses whether the target of works have been fulfilled, second, it discusses the prospect of sustainability, and third, it zeroes on identifying major constraints and opportunities.

Subsequent three sections (2.2, 2.3, and 2.4) are also organized in the similar way to assess the achievement of the projects. Second section (2.2) looks into issues related to advocacy, campaign and research. Third section (2.3) organize discussion on legal aid and access to justice whereas the last section (2.4) collate facts and finding relating to Dalits' livelihood and social development.

## 2.1. Strengthening organizational capacity and enhancing human rights understanding

[Specific project objective-1: *Strengthen the organizational capacity and enhance human rights understanding of the key actors in Dalit and Excluded Rights Movement, both at individual and organizational level*]

As it has been identified above, main activities of the project revolved around the objectives set earlier. Main components of the project were organized with a clear view to achieve the agreed objectives. In the evaluation process, therefore, main focus was on the components that focused on achieving goals. “How far the project components were implemented successfully and how much impact this could have on the community?” – was the question that formed core of enquiry.

The first objective of the project was “To strengthen the organizational capacity and enhance human rights understanding of the key actors in Dalit and Excluded Rights Movement, both at individual and organizational level”.

This objective had two components:

- i) strengthening capacity of both community leaders and national, regional and local organizations;
- ii) Enhancing human rights understanding of the key actors at both individual and organizational levels.

This report elaborates discussion on these components in the sub-sections 2.1.1, 2.1.2 and 2.1.3.

### 2.1.1 Overview: leadership building and knowledge base enhancement

This objective was conceived exclusively keeping the Dalit movement and Dalit organizations in mind. And, in the process of evaluation work it was evident to us that this leadership building was one of the central and important interventions of the project.

It was envisaged that priority will be given to building the capacity of Dalit led NGOs to implement campaigns, advocacy and poverty alleviation programmes. The organizations that were in focus included:

- *Bangladesh Dalit Human Rights (BDHR)* – the organization works mainly among the Dalits living in Dhaka and Narayanganj;
- *Choroibetee Scheduled and Indigenous Welfare Organisation* – an organization that is based in Jessore and works among different ‘untouchable’ communities living in greater Jessore region.

- *Mouloveebazar Tea Community Indigenous Front* – this organization concentrates on advancement of condition of tea garden workers in Shreemongol area under Mouloveebazaar district;
- *The Dalit Women Forum* – Dalit women’s organization working particularly among Dalit women in Dhaka;
- *Bangladesh Dalit and Excluded Women’s Federation (BDEWF)* – a newly formed platform of Dalit women that comprises 10 community based women’s organisations from across the country.

However, the essence of the project proposal was that initiatives would not remain limited only to these organizations. Along with strengthening these organizations and their leaders, the project was to focus on building leadership amongst the Dalits by promoting more organizations and by undertaking many other effective ways too. And, besides developing leadership qualities and organizational capacities, the aim of the project was also to expand knowledge-base, awareness and commitment amongst Dalit leaders and activists across the country.

The goal also was that extensive number of Dalit NGOs and CBOs would be brought in to collaborate and support the campaigns undertaken by BDERM and to successfully organise and implement grassroots programmes. Not only at national level, it was envisioned that BDERM would become fully active only at local or national levels, it would gain capacity to work effectively even at regional and international levels too.

### 2.1.2. Expected outcomes and impacts, and planned activities

Under this component of project objective-1, the **outcomes** expected were:

- Trained and confident actors would become active at both national and local level. Seven Divisional co-ordination teams would become fully operational for providing support to their members to organize and implement grassroots programmes;
- Dalit NGOs/CBOs would actively involve in activities of BDERM;
- BDERM would have 2,000 members;
- BDERM would be linked and contribute to regional and international Dalit organizations and movements.

Expected **impact** included the following:

- Stronger co-operation, interaction and unity amongst Dalits and excluded communities;
- Developed and successfully implemented national advocacy and lobbying.
- Human Rights of Dalits and excluded communities are better protected and promoted with increased access to basic services.

For achieving these outcomes and making these impacts the **activities planned** included the following:

- Human Rights Training

It was planned that 2 residential training sessions, each of three days duration, would be arranged for national Dalit leaders. There would be 30 participants per training and thus all together 60 leaders would receive training.

- Follow-up training on Human Rights

The plan was that two follow-up training events will be organized with extended focus on advocacy techniques and contemporary issues.

- Training for women groups

2 training sessions, each 3 day long, for women groups at national level were part of plan. 30 participants were intended to take part in each session.

- Quarterly Coordination Meeting

8 quarterly coordination meetings was planned to take place with key actors, Dalit headed NGOs and project staffs.

- District Level Discussion Meetings

48 (in main proposal it was planned that the number of meetings would be 36; later on it was revised) discussion meetings at the district level were planned.

- Exposure visit and international lobbying

It was planned that 8 persons would get opportunity to learn through training and exposure visits in south Asian countries.

On the other hand, **verifiable indicators** listed in the project proposal under this objective included the following:

- About 150 capable volunteers and community members to become active.

- 124 rallies, procession and other events to be organized at local, upazila, district, division and central levels by BDERM.

- BDERM and other 20 organizations to meet with appropriate government authorities at least 4 times during the project period for lobbying their causes.

- BDERM and associated organizations make sure that government representatives of different levels remain present in at least 15 of the events or programmes organized by them in the project's operational areas during the project period;

- At least 40 districts bodies of BDERM become fully operational with active bodies and democratic organizational structures;

- 30% of BDERM leaders are women;

- 20% of national and local level Dalit leaders are more competent in managing projects.



### 2.1.3. Findings

At this stage main issue for evaluation was to see *whether the capacity and strength of key actors in Dalit and Excluded Rights Movement have increased substantially or not.* 'Key actor' here refers to both individual leaders and organizations who are concerned about the exclusion and deprivation that Dalits and other excluded peoples experience and are engaged in activities to bring in a positive shift in this regard.

In consideration of overall gamut of Dalit movement in Bangladesh, it might be assumed that the principal purpose of activities at this level was to strengthen BDERM as an apex body for Dalits' collectivism in Bangladesh as well as to increase strength and capacity of its partner organizations. In keeping with this understanding, the main questions that we delved into were:

- How far BDERM has become more acceptable and influential as a platform for seeking rights and entitlements for Dalits of Bangladesh?
- How far it has gained capacity to promote the causes of the Dalits and excluded communities in Bangladesh?
- What about the leadership quality, organizational skill, and knowledge-understanding of Dalit leaders who are steering BRERM and its partner organizations? Has there been any significant improvement in this respect by virtue of this project activity?
- Have the organizations been able to have strong community base? Have they been successful in having strong appeal to the community people as well as emerging as important actor for advocacy, lobbying and campaigning?

Other supplementary questions that we looked into included:

- What are the constraints and opportunities that DRERM and other Dalit organizations experience while trying to become a platform for Dalit and excluded people's movement and activism in Bangladesh?
- How much opportunities and potentials the project has created for these organizations and its leaders to promote and advocate the issues relating to deprivation and exclusion of Dalits in Bangladesh?
- What are the possible ways in which the organizations and leaders can become more effective actors?

Before presenting the findings to these queries we first look into the success of the project in achieving the tangible targets set in the project proposal and its work-plan.

#### 2.1.3.1. Achieving the targets set in the work plan

From our analysis of the reports and other documents as well as from our field level explorations, it was clear that Nagorik Uddyog and BDERM undertook project work sincerely and successfully to make sure that they perform all the activities outlined in the project proposal. To be precise, both the organizations carried out all the project activities with highest level sincerity and commitment. However, they could perhaps

act in more innovative and positive ways in some cases – a point that we elaborate in the next section (in section 2.1.3.2).

In this section we look into the extent to which activities have been implemented whereas in following section we give attention to the question as to whether the implementation of these activities has brought in substantial change in situation.

- *Achieving the Quantitative Targets*

As of October, 2013, NU and BRERM are successful in achieving all the quantitative targets of organizing different training sessions, meetings and visits. Arranging training sessions and meetings in accordance with schedule in itself is a big success though what impact it makes is a different question.

- *Successful arrangement of training sessions on Human rights*

It was envisioned that two human rights training sessions and two follow-up trainings would be arranged with a view to impart proper understanding among the Dalit leaders as regards organizational leadership and human rights issues.

First of such **residential** training session was arranged in from June 1-3, 2012 in 'Base Training Centre' in Narayangonj. The title of the training was 'Training on Human Rights Leadership Building'. A total of 29 Dalit leaders took part in it.

Another such residential training session was organized in second year. At the end of each training sessions, leaders actively participated in outlining the ways in which they would make use of their newly acquired knowledge and understanding.

Two **follow-up trainings** on human rights were also part of plan. The trainings took place in due time. Along with refreshing the issues of original training, the follow-up training sessions emphasized on imparting understanding as regards advocacy techniques and contemporary social and political issues.

These were more participatory sessions in which leaders from different levels shared their experiences and tried to make sense of what they go through. Thus, the follow-up trainings worked as means for experience sharing and view exchanging.

- *Training for women groups took place successfully*

2 training sessions, as it was there in the plan, for women groups were organized at national level. Each of these residential sessions was of 3 Days length.

In first such training was organized from 28-29 November 2012. "Social Movement and Organization Building among the Grassroots Women" was the title of the training in which 25 Dalit women took part.

- *Specific information about different training programmes conducted by the project:*

SI.	Name	Issues covered	Date and Venue	Comments
01	Training on Human Rights Leadership Building	Basic concept of HR and national and international obligations of Human rights and use of this instruments to address case based discrimination	1-3 June 2012 BACE Training Centre, Sonargoan, Narayangonj	29 (3 female and 26 male) attended in the training
02	Training on Building Women's Organization at Grassroots	Better management of the women headed CBOs, access to resources and important of networking and alliance building	28-29 November 2012, ASOD Training Centre, Dhaka	25 female participated from women headed organizations
03	Regional Dalit Women Leadership Training on International HR Mechanisms	To build capacity of Dalit women to use international HR mechanism, to develop a regional platform in South Asia, to initiate joint action and prepare actual interventions for upcoming UN events by Dalit themselves, to train Dalit young leaders who can represents their movement at the national and international levels.	9-12 April 2013, YWCA, Asad Gate, Dhaka	12 women from India and Bangladesh, 2 young women leaders got opportunity to attend UN HR council session in April 2013
04	Human Rights and Gender Development Training for Dalit Women	Sex and Gender and its nature, social discrimination, contribution of women in family and society, women rights practice, HR of women, equity, violence, Role of HR activist, Nari O Shishu Nirjatan Damon Ain, family law, CEDAW, UN HR declaration etc.	1 <sup>st</sup> batch on 24-25 August and 2 <sup>nd</sup> batch on 26-27 August in 2013, Nagorik Uddyog Conference Room, Dhaka	35 Dalit women participated (20 in 1 <sup>st</sup> batch and 15 in 2 <sup>nd</sup> batch)

- *Quarterly Coordination Meetings organized with due importance*  
Up to October, 2013 all the quarterly meeting of BDERM have taken place in time. In first year the dates of the meetings were: January 27, April 20, September 7, and November 29. In second year all the quarterly meetings have been organized in due course.
- *District level discussion meetings arranged*  
District level discussion meetings have worked as a medium for raising awareness and fostering unity among the Dalits. It is one of the most important field level activities. 48 such meetings were scheduled to take place during the whole project period. In first year BDERM was successful in arranging 20 such meetings at district levels. These meetings were attended not only by the leading activists from the respective communities but also by the members of local civil society as well as government and non-government officials.

These district level meetings were instrumental in identifying major problems of the local communities along with reflecting on the possible ways of solution. Moreover, it was through these forums that the forums that district level

committees of BDERM were formed. With committees becoming active it was possible for them

- *Exposure visits arranged successfully*  
Visits were organized in accordance with plan and they were successful in instilling new knowledge and understanding among the leaders and activists.

In May, 2012 a delegate comprising four Dalit leaders – three female and one male – visited Gujrat, India to gather experience from what ‘Navasarjan Trust’ was doing there for empowering the Dalits there. This visit helped a lot in bringing in new understanding and knowledge as well as opening opportunity for building network at regional level.

### **2.1.3.2. Overall assessment of achieving objective of leadership building and knowledge base enhancement**

- *BDERM and this project: Stories of challenges and successes*

NU played a role of catalyst in launching BDERM as a platform for social movement of Dalits’ and excluded people in Bangladesh. It was back in 2008 that effective cooperation between NU and BDERM started. While both the organizations were carrying out their path-breaking initiatives on their own or with limited support from other donor agencies, this project surely provided them with much needed support and impetus. This project supplied BDERM the ground for moving forward and for manoeuvring spaces at both national and community level.

At different stages of the project work – starting from conceptualization of the project proposal to different phases of programme implementation – the office bearers and other activists associated with BDERM have faced number of challenges and they then overcame those. Their process has made them learn things and has poised them to grow in confidence.

It is true that throughout the whole process NU and its staffs were there to provide support and assistance to BDERM. Since leadership among the Dalit people is still in the process of making and the leaders are yet to become fully capable in dealing with projects of this volume and complexity, it is understandable that they had to take support from NU. In consideration overall situation there is no room for questioning this.

Thus, the implementation process of the project has given the leaders of BDERM important breakthroughs and it has contributed significantly in enhancing the capacity of BDERM as an organization.

However, the question is whether BDERM and its leaders have been able to seize the opportunity in full and whether there could have been better ways to mobilize people and communities. In what follows we look into these issues in critical ways; however, from my engagement with the organization and its

leaders and from community level observation, I am convinced that the project has already achieved the best of the results in terms of the possible outcomes that it was duelling for. Had the situation on the ground been different and particularly had the funding been more extensive and generous, the project could have easily been more successful and yield more tangible achievements.

Most important aspect of BRERM's struggle is that in Bangladesh context they are engaged with a social and political terrain that has never been adequately explored, examined or challenged. As they tread into a fully uncharted terrain, they mostly depend on the experience that they gain through their journey. They learn from their own doings and they get inspiration from own successes.

In some ways, BRERM's journey with this project has rather been more like carrying out an 'action research'. This 'action research' has been mostly about finding out effective ways for making a group of people aware about their sufferings as well as mobilizing them to challenge the system and structure that sustain that sufferings. BDERM as an organization has been passing through stages of learning; the work that they have been undertaking within the purview of this project have kept on feeding this process of knowledge building and awareness improving. And, it is important to bear in mind that these are the very early days of Dalits' movement in Bangladesh and what BDERM is currently doing is potentially laying the foundation of a long journey.

- *BDERM's pursuit to become a national platform and the challenges of fostering leadership among the Dalits*

BDERM started with a vision to emerge as a national platform for Dalits and other excluded communities in Bangladesh. From that point of view, it is important for the organization to work more as a coordinating body than as an independent organization; it would be more congruent to the purpose of the organization to take as many grassroots and community level organizations into its fold as possible.

Over the project period – in the years 2012 and 2013 – BDERM has taken initiatives to yield success in this respect. In spite of all the efforts, it would be somewhat difficult to appreciate the success the organization has achieved in this regard. As one looks into the profiles of the organizations that are currently in cooperation or in partnership with the BDERM, it appears to be rather 'not good enough'. One would surely expect that more community level organizations, perhaps, could have been taken on board.

However, the 'failure' of BDERM in bringing together more number of organizations does not emanate exclusively from the weaknesses or limitations of the organization or project-work itself. The issues need to be viewed from a broader perspective and such broader viewpoint would at the same time shed light on overall Dalit movement in the country as well as on the state of people on the ground.

First of all, it is a daunting task for anyone to mobilize those groups of people who have accepted and lived with this 'fact' for decades and centuries that remaining in the lowest rank of the society is their 'destiny'. Generations after generations these people have come to know that nothing changes about their sufferings and deprivations and that all their efforts are designed to fail.

Secondly, division and mutual suspicion at community level, overwhelming presence of beliefs and practices relating to purity and pollution, inter-group physical discrimination, ubiquitous practices of 'untouchability' within the castes and sub-castes etc. have been among the dominating factors that have given shape to social system and cultural practices amongst the Dalits for centuries. Dominance of these anti-unity forces impedes efforts of bringing people together at both community and national levels.

Thirdly, historically different collective movements undertaken by marginal people in different parts of the country (such as *santal bidroho* or *tong movement*) had been brutally suppressed by the ruling class. As one of the leaders of BDERM was putting to me, "Though many of these movements are considered as heroic and full of bravery in our national history, to the communities themselves these upsurges and movements did not provide anything positive – they did rather contribute in deteriorating their distresses." Thus, negative views as regards the historical movements, including those of colonial time, set off people to remain discouraged and pessimistic about the prospect of any collective effort.

Fourthly, in contemporary context, rivalry and mistrust emanate not only from the differences that exist between the Dalit organizations themselves. The ways the mainstream civil society organizations or donor agencies play role in promoting Dalit causes also contribute in paving ways to unity or division among the organizations. To put it in simplistic way, though the real situation is far more complex than this, it might be said that the CSOs, NGDOs or donor agencies that are coming forward to give support to Dalit movements in the country are not always paying full attention to the multiple facets of Dalithood, casteism and social exclusion. In the same vein they are also failing to forge unity and build trust amongst the groups. They are giving support to different groups and platforms but are not actively encouraging networking and cooperation among them. It would not be fair here to go into the issue in detail; neither would it be justified here to appear like laying too much burden to a particular dimension of a complex matter. However, to have a proper assessment of the dynamics of Dalit movement in the country one has to take this issue into serious consideration. Whereas the 'antipathy' of Dalit communities as regards collective movement one can easily identify, it is very much possible that the complexity that arises because of the role played by different CSOs and other 'external' actors might remain fully unnoticed. It is against the backdrop of this complex reality that success and failure of BDERM in organizing Dalit communities need to be understood.

Fifthly, as the socio-economic distresses of these most marginal communities overwhelms any other consideration, a leader or social worker who tries to mobilize these people cannot elude the 'most urgent' and 'immediate' issues. When the basic requirements of a person remains unmet for long, a benefactor or a leader has to prove before everything else that (s)he bears serious concern about the grave reality on the ground. In case of this project, BDERM had taken this issue seriously into account and tried to have components that would contribute to improve the livelihood situation of the community people. However, as we will see later on, in light of extreme hardship and destitution of the Dalits, these programmes did not prove to be adequate in most of the cases. If the leaders could steer more development interventions, they would be in better position to get people mobilized.

Along with the reasons that we outline here there are many other reasons, particularly the ones specific to an area or a community, that make efforts of BDERM to organize people more difficult than what one might assume from outside. However, our discussion with Dalit leaders at national and district levels as well as our interaction with the general members of the communities suggest that, notwithstanding all these odds, BDERM and its partner organizations have gained remarkable ground at both national and local level. Had the situation been more supportive, the organizations surely could have achieved more.

- *Capacity enhancement of BDERM and its partner organizations*

Whereas in the preceding subsection we explain the greater context which shapes BDERM's success and failure in cultivating new leadership and in promoting new partner organizations at community level, here we focus on the issue of capacity enhancement of BDERM itself and of the organizations that have already become operational and are in partnership with BDERM.

As of BDERM's own strengths and weaknesses, the organization clearly gets affected by the greater context that we have just talked about. The organization's endeavour to become a broad-based organization that encompasses highest number of organizations representing Dalit communities is fraught with number of difficulties. We have discussed about different aspects of Dalit movement in detail with different level executives and members of BDERM. We have focused particularly on the challenges and opportunities of the organization itself. The leaders and volunteers participating at individual level conversations and group discussions were candid in evaluating the overall movement as well as their achievements and drawbacks that they see to be attached to their own organization.

Appreciation and satisfaction was the dominant tone of the leaders and volunteers whereas some forms of discontent was also possible to make out. However, on the whole almost everyone agreed to the point that it was because of their engagement with BDERM that they could make an impact on the Dalit communities as well as on the way in which these communities were viewed and treated by the greater society. They emphasized on the positive changes

that occurred in recent years as result of collective efforts. Achievements of recent years are quite remarkable particularly in comparison to past. The social and economic condition of communities are still very much appalling, however the change that has happened in recent time toward positive direction is quite encouraging. In the same vein, the attitude of greater society regarding untouchability and systematic exclusion has also started to change in positive direction – though it is still far from satisfactory level.

Had an organization such as BDERM not been there, the communities would not been able to achieve the successes that it has already achieved. In that case, the level of deprivation and suffering would have remained at far more deplorable level. It is a matter of satisfaction for the leading persons that whereas in past change would come very slowly, in recent time the process of transformation has become accelerated. On the other hand, it is a matter regret that despite this acceleration the communities are still in limbo to have their rights and entitlements fulfilled and the movement is yet to have greater impact on policies and programmes at both national and local levels.

In the midst of all the mixed senses of appreciation and discontent, one positive aspect was highlighted by almost everyone. This aspiring aspect of BDERM's endeavour is that the organization is currently grooming number young leaders with extensive trainings, exposure visits and other practical engagements. By undertaking programmes such as *human rights defender* training and by actively promoting ideas of placing young men and women in its district committees, the organization is creating space for young leaders to emerge as more influential and effective change makers of the future.

Here we will first reflect on strengths and limitations of BDERM based on our discussions, conversations and reviews. After that, we will briefly discuss on different aspects of its partner organizations.

- *BDERM, its leadership, central committee and other pertinent issues*

I have talked with persons who have closely observed BDERM to mature up as an organization. Today's BDERM is very much an outcome of the journey that BDHR started with the inspiring leadership Starting with inspiring leadership of BG Murtee Members of BDERM's 'National Working Committee' are quite capable to carry out national level advocacy, campaigning and networking activities. Many of the leaders can easily be identified as 'seasoned campaigner' as they have been engaged with the cause for years now.

Currently, national working committee of BDERM comprises of 14 members and I have personally talked to 10 of them. Almost all the leaders are very much aware about the issue that are engaged with and they have very good idea as to what they want to achieve. Most importantly, they are deeply connected to the respective communities. However, as the overall scenario is overwhelmed with tough challenges, some senses of helplessness at times come to haunt them.



Different trainings, exposure visits, community meetings, campaigning for resolving practical problems, national and district level participation in seminars, workshops and discussion sessions have contributed in enhancing their knowledge and understanding as well as boosting their confidence.

The leaders have extensive knowledge about the plight of the people they represent and they also have serious concerns about the distresses that their fellow Dalits go through. However, my extensive discussions suggest that in some cases they also are at times distracted by the financial constraints and difficulties that they face in personal life.

Persons like Moni Rani Das (Vice-chairperson), Sunil Kumar Mridha (Treasurer), Bibhutosh Roy (Secretary, Information and Research) or David Raju (Secretary, Campaign and Publicity) devote their working hours almost in full for the organizations. However, in case of other leaders the level of dedication and engagement may not be similarly visible as they have to overcome a number of practical issues.

As we talked to the members of central working committee in different sessions, it was quite evident that over the years they have become rich in experience and understanding and have become innovative in their strategies. Certainly the training programmes, exposure visits, advocacy and campaigning activities, opportunities of socializing with civil society members as well as deeper deliberation about the issues of exclusion, untouchability or active thinking about pathways of social change have made these people become more practical and insightful. At the same time they have also grown up in firmness and resolution. As much as they have faced difficulties and become aware of the adversities associated with their venture, they have reassured themselves about the genuineness of their undertaking.

It is not only through the trainings, meetings and visits that a person matures up as a leader. And, neither is it only through one's level of knowledge and understanding that one becomes acceptable to the community as an organizer or a leader. What we have observed at local level is that a person's leadership quality is best expressed through his/ her ability to practically provide support to community members in dealing with their everyday practical problems. A community lives with a issues that require intervention and mediation from persons who have got wisdom, experience and capacity to step in and mediate.

Having good relationship with neighbouring communities, effectively dealing with the municipality, City Corporation or other government agencies, making best use of an NGO intervention, resolving community's internal issues of order and discipline are the things that provide opportunities to a person to express his or her leadership quality. When an organization or its leaders succeed in proving their relevance on such occasions, they start to gain good ground. From this point of view, BDERM leaders got good chance to establish their credence to the community as this project provided a window to introduce social development interventions to the community. These 'social development' or

'livelihood-related' interventions were very much effective as we will see later. However, compared to vast requirement of the community, these interventions proved to be 'less than adequate' in many cases. This 'inadequacy' had played role in holding back the organizations from becoming most effective. It was not, therefore, the limitation of the organization in itself, it was rather limitation in its interventional capacity that it could not become more effective.

- *Forming BDERM central committee as well as divisional and district committees in democratic way: A commendable achievement*

With the efforts of years, BDERM has become able to embed in democratic norms within the organization. It was appreciable that it has started to elect its central committee in democratic way. Along with central committee, the organization is gradually practicing the norms at both divisional and district levels. These practices have introduced a form of healthy competition among the activists and increased their eagerness to be part of programme implementation process.

- *Expanding BDERM membership base*

As the organization (BDERM) kept up its efforts to bring in new members into its fold it was successful in having new members who are eager to learn and contribute. The organization had a target of having 2,000 members and by December, 2013 it has successfully overreached its target.

To become a member one has to express his or her willingness clearly and has to fill in a form. Mere expression of willingness is not enough, one has to prove his/ her willingness by taking up community issues seriously and engaging with them. The organization is preserving the hard copies of the forms; it is also entering the data into its computer system. It is making sure that the computerized membership system incorporates gender segregated information.

- *Trained and confident actors at national and local levels*

Through different trainings and other grooming mechanisms (such as divisional and district level discussion sessions, community level advocacy meetings, exposure visits and others) the organization has prepared number of volunteers and community members who are rich in knowledge base and are capable to deal with community problems as well as carrying out campaigning, lobbying and advocacy activities. Though the target was that it would have 150 such volunteers, evidence shows that the number has already crossed 200. I have talked to more than a dozen of such volunteers – both men and women and I found them to be very much committed to their duties whereas the level of their understanding and knowledge-base is definitely praiseworthy.

On the whole, it was clearly evident that BDERM has already walked a significant way forward. However, the journey is likely to be long and arduous for which gaining strength and capacity would involve enduring efforts at international, national and sub-national levels.

### 2.1.3.3. Appraisal of Sustainability

- *Failure to reach grassroots Dalit people in comprehensive way*  
Upazilla and community level committee formation might be seen as an imperative for BDERM; however, the organization has not been successful in gaining the necessary ground in effective way and community level organization still remains quite weak.
- *BDERM should focus more on emerging as an apex platform than working only as a single organization*  
It is still a challenge for BDERM to reach the grassroots full effectively as well as to establish effective networking and connection with the organizations that are working at national level. It is a young organization and a lot of work is still to be done to get its base and network expanded. Achieving protection for the excluded people would involve lot more work and by doing that the organization would be in position to take increased number of smaller and community level organizations into its fold.

### 2.1.3.4. Key Opportunities and constraints

- There is a lot more to do for increasing the capacity of the organization. The organization should start working actively with a target to become 'self-reliant' and to have greater acceptance at community level.
- Focus might be given particularly for building community leaders' capacity.
- Enhancement of human rights understanding
- It is not fully convincing that trained and confident actors become active at both national and local level. Trained actors should be motivated to do more.
- Greater civil society movements are to be taken on board. That is the way BDERM can become more a broad-based platform of the Dalit and excluded people than mere a single organization.
- BRERM, as an apex organization of Dalit people, needs to be more forceful, vigorous and visible at community level. The much acceptance it will have among the community people, the much it will have the prospect of having success.
- The project period is not lengthy enough. Therefore, focus should be on strengthening capacity of the partner organizations. This need could be given more priority to. Along with targeting more organization to have their strong base at local level, BDERM can work for taking in more activists and leaders in its national level committees and programmes.
- Generating more disaggregated data and doing more elaborate mapping is the call of the time and BDERM and its partner organizations can carry out some of the research works and surveys in their own initiatives.
- BDERM is yet to establish stronger cooperation among the communities – this is an issue that is quite difficult but to be successful in fostering a 'Dalit movement' in the country there is no alternative to building bringing different Dalit communities into dialogue with a view to form unity.

- Increased access to basic services remains a big challenge that would require careful and more vigorous engagement with central government, local government and non-government agencies.

## 2.2. ADVOCACY, CAMPAIGN AND RESEARCH WITH A VIEW TO INFLUENCE POLICY, PRACTICE AND PROGRAMMES

[Specific project objective-2: *Influence the policy, practice and development programmes of the government, donors and institutions through advocacy, campaign and research*]

### 2.2.1. Expected outcomes and impacts, and planned activities

Under this component the **outcomes** expected were:

- A mapping and comprehensive study of Dalit communities – starting with 27 colonies in Dhaka – to provide a model for future national research to inform lobbying and to understand current priorities and communities’ needs.
- Specific research on manual scavenging practices in Bangladesh.
- An anti-Discrimination Act/Law proposed/placed to relevant authority.

#### Impact:

- Increased visibility, knowledge and understanding of the existence of Dalits and socially excluded communities in Bangladesh.
- Specific programmes and budget lines established by key Ministries and donors to support Dalits and excluded communities.
- Increased access to basic services and uptake of government schemes by Dalits and people of excluded communities.
- Confidence and voice of Dalits and excluded communities increases as a result of recognition, understanding and action. As a result more individuals and communities come forward to the social movement against discrimination based on work and descent.

For achieving these outcomes and making these impacts happen, the **activities planned** included the following:

- Issue Based National Seminars
- Advocacy Meetings  
Issues based divisional meetings would be held with local parliamentarians, activists and journalists.
- Observation of International Day for Elimination of all Racial Discrimination
- Observation of International Human Rights Day & World Dignity Day
- National Convention  
Annual national convention will be organized with all listed stake holders, attended by representative/s from each district.
- South Asian Convention

- A south Asian convention on social exclusions and dalit will be organised having representation of key human rights and dalit organization in south region.
- **Short Study**  
2 short studies will be conducted on water and sanitation and another is forms of discrimination.
- **Media advocacy/ Press conference**
- **Right Based Cultural Events**  
One national level cultural events (right based awareness based drama, folk song etc.) will be organized per year.
- **Website maintenance**  
All activities and project progress will be documented in the developed website.
- **Research and Mapping**  
A research team to conduct a pilot study of the 27 Dalit communities in Dhaka with a purpose to generate information on demographic features and other aspects of excluded people's lives.
- **Newsletter**  
A quarterly BDERM bulletin to be published and disseminated.
- **Fact sheet, Poster, Leaflet**  
2 fact sheet and poster, leaflet will be published.
- **Annual report**  
A popular and accessible annual report of activities, successes and challenges will be produced by BDERM each year.

On the other hand, **verifiable indicators** listed in the project proposal under this objective included the following:

- Existence of research and mapping studies (including extensive mapping of 27 Dalit colonies in Dhaka);
- Reference to work and descent based discrimination, Dalits and excluded communities in minimum one government development plans;
- Existence of quotas in academic institutions and government employment;
- Around 30,000 people of public reached through media, events and publications (assessed through surveys before and after project);
- Increased number of media coverage
- Anti-discrimination law has been proposed to the relevant authority.

### **2.2.2. Findings**

Since the public understanding in Bangladesh in relation to caste based discrimination is overwhelmingly characterized by unawareness, silence and indifference, it is of utmost importance that the 'ugly' facts about the related practices are brought to the forefront and made unequivocally visible. Dominant class in Bangladesh need to be made aware about the asymmetrical practises that they live out without showing sign of much engagement or concern. As the society at large is fully apathetic about the discrimination based on work and descent (WDBD), policies and programmes undertaken by both government and non-government organizations also remain unresponsive about the deprivation and exclusion that these people go through. Government initiated censuses and studies have neither produced any disaggregated data about the population size of Dalits

nor have these shed any light on their socio-economic conditions. Issues relating to Dalithood have similarly remained unrepresented in non-government development discourses; even right-based programmes have not given much attention to these people in the margin who have so far been unable to raise their voice in considerable way.

It is in the backdrop of this reality that this particular component of current project carries significance aplenty. Significance of research, campaigning and advocacy in relation to caste based discrimination in Bangladesh cannot be overstated. Substantial research can reveal the facets of structure and system, and can bring about reliable data with a potential to contribute toward proper profiling of caste-segregated population of the country. Based upon the facts gathered thus, strong arguments can be made for shift in policy regime; movements and campaigns can also hinge on pieces of evidence collated this way.

On the whole, BDERM and Nagorik Uddyog have made good progress so far in investigating and systematically representing the grassroots situation with regards to lives of Dalits in different parts of the country.

NU and BDERM have carried out substantial research about the practical situation of Dalits' lives. At the same time the campaign and advocacy programmes undertaken by the organizations have made good use of the evidences thus divulged.

There is no denying of the fact that BDERM's campaign has played good role in making both print and electronic media in Bangladesh become more aware and proactive about structural exclusion that we live through. Members of civil society, academicians and professionals are now more responsive about the existence of caste based discriminations. Politicians and bureaucrats have also been reached out to in a good number. Some of the government programmes and position statements reflect considerable awareness about the situation of these most marginal people. And, this also is an impressive achievement that key national commissions – i.e., NHRC and NLC – have already sincerely appreciated the requirement of enacting an anti-discrimination law.

### **2.2.2.1 Achieving the targets set in work plan**

NU and BDERM have been quite meticulous in executing the activities that they proposed in the project proposal for having increased influence on policies and programmes. In consideration of the acute oblivion that educated class in Bangladesh exhibit about the Dalit population of the country, there certainly is scope and necessity for taking up more rigorous research and fact finding efforts that would crush the blatant display of indifferences.

The state and society in Bangladesh need to shake off the pretentious homogeneousness that in effect creates scope for the hegemony of dominant class. For questioning this pretention and highlighting the asymmetrical heterogeneity of the society, BDERM's campaign and advocacy have contributed to pave way, though not to adequate extent yet. The activities performed under this project have created ground for achieving more. Most importantly the success, albeit limited, of the campaign accentuates the necessity of taking up more broad-based efforts. The point that the success of the programmes further highlights is that unfair structures and practices can be challenged if sustained efforts are made.

Here is brief reflection on how the project has executed it planned activities:

▪ *National seminars organized*

As of June, 2013, NU and BRERM have organized 5 issue based national seminars at national level. 3 of the Seminars took place in first year and 2 in second year.

In the first year the seminars highlighted on the following issues:

- Role of state in upholding the rights and entitlements of Dalits;
- The ways national budget can allocate resources for development of Dalits and excluded communities; and
- Social Justice and Legal Measures for combatting Dalit Vulnerability

In second year one of the seminars focused again on budgetary allocation and the other one, organized in collaboration with National Human Rights Commission, addressed the question of anti-discriminatory law framing in Bangladesh.

▪ *Divisional advocacy meetings organized*

The project had the target of organizing a total of 14 divisional advocacy meetings. It was planned that 7 meetings would be organized each year. In keeping with the plan seven meetings were held in the first year, and in second year, as of October 2013, five of the meetings have already been arranged successfully. Issues such as housing, water supply and sanitation, patterns of socio-economic deprivation, pathways to development were taken up for deliberation in the meetings. Elected representatives, members of local civil society, government officials, media personalities, and politicians were among the guests and discussants.

▪ *Details on Advocacy/Discussion Meeting at Divisional level:*

- Shylet: The meeting was held at Nagar Bhaban Meeting Room of Shylet City Corporation on 12 February 2012. Mayor of Shylet City Corporation Mr. Bador Uddin Ahmed Kamran participated in the meeting.
- Rangpur: The meeting was held at Rangpur Raja Rammon Club Auditorium on 11 October 2012. Administrator of Rangpur District *Parisad* Advocate Rejena Begum participated in the meeting.

- Rajshahi: The meeting was held at Rajshahi Chamber of Commerce and Industry Auditorim on 14 October 2012. Panel Mayor of Rajshahi City Corporation Mr. Shariful Islam Babu participated in the meeting.
  - Barisal: The meeting was held at Barisal Celebration Point Auditorium on 12 November 2012. National Parliament Member Advocate Talukdar Mohammad Yunus (Barisal-1) participated in the meeting.
  - Khulna: The meeting was held at Khulna Press Club Auditorim on 14 November 2012. Administrator of Khulna District *Parisad* Shekh Harunur Rashid participated in the meeting.
- *Observing International Day for Elimination of all Racial Discrimination, International Human Rights Day and World Dignity Day*

On 21 March 2012 International Day for Elimination of all Racial Discrimination was observed in 29 district head-quarters. In second year, i.e., in 2013, the day was observed in 27 districts. Though in the original proposal the target was of observing the day in 30 districts, in light of the overall situation the achievement is quite appreciable. On the other hand, International Human Rights Day and World Dignity Day were also observed in different districts with due importance. Significant number of participants from the grassroots took part in the gatherings. Sincere gathering in these occasions have evidently played role in infusing the spirit of collective undertaking among Dalit men and women. Local and national news media have covered the gatherings and have thus conveyed the messages to the greater society.

- *National convention and South Asian Convention*  
The South Asia Convention held in December, 2012 was an important event in the history of Dalit movement in Bangladesh. Guests and speakers in the consultation session of the convention reflected upon the urgency of enacting a law against untouchability in Bangladesh. They also emphasized on building a regional mechanism on human rights and Dalit rights issues. It was agreed that organizations need to work together across the borders for abolishing caste and work based discrimination in South Asia.

The South Asian convention could open a new epoch in BDERM's venture for fighting caste prejudices. However, it is not fully clear yet whether NU and BDERM have been able to make use of the opportunity in full.

The project had the target of organizing one national convention. The convention took place on 30<sup>th</sup> November, 2012. By and large, the convention was successful in cementing the sense of collectivism amongst the members of the organization.

- *Short studies, issue based research and mapping*  
In 2012 BDERM conducted a research on occupational risks of sweepers in Dhaka city. It was a short study that enquired about the condition of those who are employed by Dhaka City Corporation for its cleaning work. In 2013 another



short study was carried out. Another research has already mapped the Dalit communities in Dhaka city.

The studies brought in facts that have strengthened advocacy and lobbying with the government for ensuring better living conditions in the colonies. The findings also give rationale to advocacy work in favour of anti-untouchability law enactment.

- *Media Advocacy, website maintenance, poster-leaflet and newsletter publishing*  
The project was sincere about having good relationship with media so that issues of deprivation and maltreatment are covered with increased attention. It has already published two issues of the newsletter with very good content. Because of budgetary constraint, they could not publish the newsletter quarterly. Posters and leaflets have also been published by BRERM.
- *Right based cultural events*  
At national level a cultural event was organized in *Gonoshastho Kendro, Savar* in presence of distinguished guests from home and abroad.
- *Publication of annual report*  
In first year (2012) the project has published a comprehensive annual report which has also been made available on the website.

#### **2.2.2.2. Overall assessment of objective achievement:**

- *Bringing reliable facts and narrations to people's attention*  
Project activities have achieved considerable success in generating reliable facts and narrations as regards the lives of Dalits in the country. With reliable facts in hand BRERM is gradually reaching a position to substantiate their demands for rights and entitlements.
- *Building good network with civil society and media*  
The situation now is far better than years back; however, there needs to be more coverage in mass media about the situation of the Dalits.
- *Divisional advocacy meetings work as good means for networking*  
The advocacy meetings at divisional levels worked as successful forum for building network with the local civil society, politicians and government officials.
- *National and international seminars and conferences*  
At national level seminars were organized with considerable participation from the wider society while the regional conference was a remarkable gathering considering the profiles of guests and speakers who presented their viewpoints. Most important for BRERM was to keep the momentum gained from these gatherings.

- *Quotas in academic institutions*  
There have been some important achievements, particularly in case of two public universities. Given the time and resource constraint as well as the limitation BDERM's reach, these achievements deserve to be lauded.
- *Dalit issues being referred to in government policies and programmes*  
There have been quite worthy achievements in terms of lobbying and advocacy with the government agencies and bodies. In two of the national budgets, the urgency for addressing Dalit housing problem was taken into consideration. In its National Budget Government of Bangladesh has allocated fund to include them the Dalits and excluded peoples into the social safety net programmes.

In fiscal year 2012-2013 the government allocated 146.1 million taka for improvement of situation of the Dalits, gypsies and other excluded communities. Ministry of Social Welfare has taken up particular project for the advancement of excluded people.

In the previous fiscal year (2011-12) GoB had allocated 100 million taka for providing improved housing to the Dalits; it was done as a direct response to BDERM memorandum. Besides, Dalit situation was also featured the Budget Speech made by the Finance Minister in the Parliament in June, 2012.

Regular communication and lobbying with the politicians and policy makers concerning the Dalits' right deprivation made it possible that the graveness of the reality was reflected in the State UPR report for the 2<sup>nd</sup> cycle review of Bangladesh at UN. It is also important to note that the incumbent Prime Minister has already shown her keen interest about the plight of Dalits in the country which was reflected in the instruction issued by her office on May 29, 2012 as regards creating adequate employment opportunities for Dalits in all sectors.

- *Anti-discrimination law in the process of enactment*  
NU and BRERM have lobbied vigorously for convincing the policy makers on the importance of enacting a law that prohibits discrimination based on work and descent. The activities undertaken during the first project year created a responsive environment in which attention of national institutions such as NHRC, Law Commission and others was attracted about the significance of such a law.

### **2.2.2.3. Appraisal of Sustainability**

- On the whole, what NU and BRERM have achieved so far in terms change in policy regime is the beginning of long journey. There cannot be any room for complacence; neither should there be any reason for disappointment. Given the facts that the key Dalit organization is still in its formation years and resource available is quite limited, the people steering the initiatives should feel encouraged to take up greater initiatives for achieving more and they should make use of the experience they have already gone through.

- In a society that has endured the discriminatory practices for ages, it is not unexpected that the process of framing a law for combating those practices would be arduous and painstaking. Therefore, the difficulties that the organizations are facing should be appreciated in relation to the context. Frustration or a sense of resignation may turn up recurrently, still for making the effects more sustainable, it is important to keep up the efforts. Support from the friends and donors is important; however, the people's organizations need to develop own capacities so that they can keep the impetus going on. In case of BRERM, it is true that the organization is yet to reach a level of full self-sufficiency; however, the point cannot be turned down that it is pursuing right cause whereas the strategy it has undertaken proves to be very much effective against the overriding odds.
- Having the government agencies frame policies for affirmative action is equally arduous an effort. The limited success that the organizations have achieved in relation to quota based admission in tertiary level institutions does not appear to be fully sustainable yet. However, what they have achieved thus far should provide them good platform for attempting more.
- Research and representation of fact also is an ongoing process that needs to be quite relentless. In Bangladesh data and information as regards caste discrimination has been almost non-existent for decades. Therefore, any effort taken at this point for illuminating the facts should be extensive, long lasting and forceful. NU and BRERM have been bringing the facts to the greater audience in successful way and it is important that the efforts are kept on track in persistent way.

#### 2.2.2.4. Key Opportunities and constraints

- Rationales and justifications that one can put in support of this project activities are abundant. What else could be more rewarding or judicious than an effort that challenges centuries-old practices of treating a segment of population as 'non-human'? Therefore, the undertaking of the project in itself constitutes a great 'opportunity' that the people involved with it should make the most of. So far the level of engagement on part of project people has been very much remarkable in utilizing the prospects that the project offers. Now, it is important that they keep on the good work already initiated with meaningful reflection and deliberation from time to time.
- '**Learning from doing**' is a trait that projects like this should constantly fall back on. Since there are not many past instances of successful initiatives of such kind in Bangladesh context, it would be most rewarding to review and learn from own successes and failures. Up to this level, the project has done it well. However, it could get such practices more systematically embedded within its day to day procedure.
- It is quite evident, though not articulated in the documents, that **the project has worked in the mode of an action research**. In consideration of the greater

reality, this has been a good move. However, the project should gradually pin down both its strengths and weaknesses so that time and resource can be utilized in best possible way.

## **2.3. FACT FINDING, MEDIATION, PROVISION OF LEGAL AID AND IMPROVEMENT OF ACCESS TO JUSTICE WITH A PURPOSE TO PROTECT AND PROMOTE DALITS' HUMAN RIGHTS**

[Specific project objective-3: *Protecting and promoting Dalit and excluded people's human rights, through fact finding, mediation, provision of legal aid and improvement of access to justice.*]

### **2.3.1. Expected outcomes and impacts, and planned activities**

Under this component of object 3, the **outcomes** that were expected are as follows:

- Systematic legal mechanisms are to be developed for doing research and conducting fact finding. And, women and men who have experienced discrimination and abuse to be more confident to seek justice, and a system for providing legal aid would be in place.
- Improved confidence and awareness amongst Dalit and excluded communities of rights, entitlements and responsibilities.

Expected **impact** included the following:

- Increased confidence amongst people who have experienced violations or abuse to live normal life.
- Perpetrators brought to justice.
- Increased confidence and acceptance of the participation of Dalit women in public life.

For achieving these outcomes and making these impacts the **activities planned** included the following:

- Investigation and Legal Support
- Rights Based Awareness Meetings with Community

On the other hand, **verifiable indicators** listed in the project proposal under this objective included the following:

- 30 atrocity cases to be documented and followed up and action taken thereof;
- A number of cases related with attacks against Dalits and Excluded Communities to be filed before the court;
- 2,551 Dalits and excluded people trained up about the rights and entitlements of the Dalits;
- Increase in mobility and confidence of Dalit women.

## 2.3.2. Findings

### 2.3.2.1 Achieving the targets set in work plan

Allocated budget for achieving this particular objective appears to be quite meagre. Making people raise voice against oppression and seek justice is difficult in a context in which enduring injustice in muted way has been the norm for centuries.

This project is quite loaded with different kinds of activities, and this particular component of the project appears to get lesser attention from the project executives or from the BDERM leaders.

Here is a brief discussion on implementation of activities planned:

- *Fact investigation and provision of legal support*  
In project proposal it was stated that about 12 cases [of physical segregation, oppression and injustices] would be documented in course of project period. It was also envisioned that at least four to five specific cases of atrocity and violence would be dealt with at national and divisional levels. Provision of legal aid and mediation support was also part of plan.

In first year the project had engaged with four incidents of atrocity and violence whereas in second year - up to June, 2013 – the number was such incidents was three. An examination of the nature and extent of the incidents show that Dalits at the grassroots are yet to reach a position to raise voice in substantial manner.

- *Community level right based awareness meeting*  
It was planned that 192 half day long awareness meetings would be organised. The plan was that in every month 8 meetings would be organised within communities in four districts: Dhaka, Narayangonj, Jessore and Moulloveebazar. As the project progressed, NU and BDERM agreed to expand their work to another area, that is, Barisal – one of the divisional headquarters. So, meetings for creating right based awareness were organised in five places instead of four. However, still the project could not reach the target of 96 meetings in first year; they could manage to organize a total of 79 such meetings in 2012. In second year, as of October, 2013, the project has arranged meeting in keeping with plan.

Our discussion with community people who attended these meetings reveals that the meeting have been successful in inspiring them to think seriously about the deprivations and prejudices that they continuously are subjected to.

### 2.3.2.2. Overall assessment of objective achievement:

- *Community level leadership coming to the front*  
It cannot be said that the level community awareness has reached any satisfactory level. However, it was clearly felt that communities where having some impact with such discussions becoming frequent in their yards.

- *Encouraging resistance and scaling up legal support*  
It has already been observed that the project is already quite burdened. However, resource permits NU can enhance its capacity with a view to encourage more resistance at field level. In such venture increased capacity of BDERM would be very vital. BRERM has to become more visible and acceptable at community level, for doing that they should take lead in registering more challenges and refusals.

### **2.3.2.3. Appraisal of Sustainability and reflection on future prospect**

- BRERM, as an apex organization of Dalit people, needs to be more forceful, vigorous and visible at community level. The much acceptance it will have among the community people, the much it will have the prospect of having success.
- Efforts have to be more pointed to make community level mediations more democratic, participatory and just.
- BDERM should focus on strengthening the capacity of local organizations and partners so that they can bridge the gaps and mistrust that exist at community level.
- Awareness raising meetings should have increased budget so that they can engage in more people in meaningful way. Dalit youths and women should take up driving role in such meetings and sessions. For doing that, their capacity enhancement is also a key.
- Documentation and follow up of cases of atrocity and violence need to be intensified.

## **2.4. SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT AND SKILL TRAINING PROGRAMME FOR TACKLING POVERTY AND EXCLUSION OF DALIT AND SOCIALLY EXCLUDED COMMUNITIES**

[Specific project objective-4: Implemented skill training for occupational diversity and social development programme to tackle the poverty and exclusion faced by Dalit and socially excluded communities that will provide a model for future best practice.]

### **2.4.1. Expected outcomes and impacts, and planned activities**

Under this component of project objective 4 the **outcomes** expected were:

- Men and women from Dalit and excluded communities would get developed professional skills and trades.
- Tangible improvements would take place in income level of Dalits and excluded communities in target areas.

Expected **impact** included the following:

- Improved access of Dalit and excluded communities to basic services - focusing on livelihoods, housing and education.
- A change in women's position in the household due to increased confidence and wider community changes.
- Dalit women are able to organise and mobilise outside their homes.

For achieving these outcomes and making desired impacts the **activities planned** included the following:

- Skill training on professional driving for 30 unemployed young people. The project will link up with employer to get the job
- 2 skill trainings on making shopping bags with 40 unemployed youth in Jessore and Moulloveebazar.
- 8 skill trainings on Block-Batiks and karchupee for Dalit and excluded women in Dhaka (3), narayangonj (2), Jessore (1) and Moulvibazar (2). A total of 260 women will receive the training.
- Skill training on sewing and dress making. A total 120 women receive the training.
- Water and sanitation support At total of 50 sanitary latrines and 15 tube well will be installed.
- 10 informal schools will be set up at Dalit colony. 300 students will be benefited

On the other hand, **verifiable indicators** listed in the project proposal under this objective included the following:

- 1,850 Dalits and excluded people reached through training and poverty alleviation programmes;
- 1,285 women and 665 men increase income by 30%;
- Increase employment opportunities in GoB and non-GoB offices.

## **2.4.2. Findings**

Though this is basically a right centric programme, the success of this particular project component (under project objective-4) in providing livelihood support to the Dalit men and women have proved to be most acclaimed and appreciated by the vulnerable people at community level. Field level observations reinforce this idea that when provision of basic livelihood is at stake, talks of right and resistance might appear to be quite empty and distant. Therefore, in the context of extreme marginality and deprivation, it is crucial to complement and substantiate right talks with bread provisioning efforts.

### **2.4.2.1 Achieving the targets set in work plan**

- *Achieving the Quantitative Targets*  
As of October, 2013, NU and BRERM have been fully successful in achieving all the quantitative targets of organizing different training programmes, providing water and sanitation support to community and setting up schools for the children.
- *Skill training on professional driving, shopping bag making and sewing and dress making*

We have visited the spots of training at district level and talked to both the trainers and beneficiaries. A lot can be said about the success of these programmes. However, in precise way it can be said that any compassionate observer would be overwhelmed with the positive impact that the interventions have caused in the lives of the beneficiaries. These surely have given much footing to the organizational efforts of BDERM and its partner organizations in the communities.

- *Providing water and sanitation support*

It was observed physically that NU was on track in achieving the targets of providing tube-well and sanitary latrine to the communities. Though the budgetary provisions for setting up latrine and tube-well was rather inadequate compared to market price, the project people managed to get their target fulfilled.

- *Setting up schools in Dalit colonies*

It was heartening to see how the schools were providing literacy and education to those who would otherwise remain illiterate and ignored. It would not be an overstatement to say that these schools were worthy of note in any standard.

#### **2.4.2.2. Overall assessment of objective achievement:**

- A lot have been told about the success of these programmes in the inspection reports undertaken at different phases on behalf of the donors as well as in reports submitted by NU and BRERM. NU has collected case studies and narrations that also bring about same impression. We have carefully gone through reports and documents along with conducting field level observation. We did not find any reason to disagree to the observations put in the reports and documents. Clearly, the activities undertaken for enhancement of Dalits livelihood have brought in good results for the communities and the programmes need to be carried on and scaled up.
- NU and BRERM can take up concerted efforts to generate more fund and resources so that flow of support to the communities in increased and strengthened.

#### **2.4.2.3. Appraisal of Sustainability and reflection on future prospect**

- It was amazing to observe how effectively NU and BRERM were running schools for Dalit children though they had only limited resource to do so.
- NU and BDERM might conceive an independent project with adequate resources that will establish more schools for the most disadvantaged children living in places such as tea gardens in Moulovibazar.
- More alternative ways for providing education to Dalit children and for creating job opportunities for Dalit men and women should be contemplated by Dalit leaders and NU in consultation with civil society members. Why shouldn't



initiative be in place to train up Dalit girls and women so that they can take up more mainstream jobs with least possibility to be ostracised or stigmatized? What if a girl grown up in tea garden can migrate to the cities and takes up job as garment factory worker, hospital nurse or insurance office executive? Such works can allow them to become part of greater society with being indemnified in undignified ways. And, whereas remittance earning is the basic mode of income earning in Bangladesh society, why should Dalit men and women acquire the capacity to go abroad and work there?

- Income earning and livelihood options need to be considered in way that households can break the shackle of both poverty and untouchability.
- More community level livelihood interventions would provide BDERM with platform for intensive movement with the individuals and issues at ground level.

### **INSTITUTIONAL CAPACITY OF NAGORIK UDDYOG, PROJECT GOVERNANCE MANAGEMENT, AND MONITORING-EVALUATION SYSTEM**

This project did not have any stated goal regarding strengthening of NU's institutional capacity. However, in course of our exploration our attention was drawn to some issues that we would like to put here briefly.

- It appears that there was a gap in understanding and communication between NU and partner organizations at grassroots and community level. It was more about the capacity enhancement of BDERM partner organizations.
- NU did not arrange any specialized programme for the programme staffs apart from the training that were arranged for the BDERM leaders. NU has been working for long for promoting human rights at different levels. We feel that the organization could have some manuals and readings prepared that one newly recruited staff might go through.
- Orientation as regards international and national human rights regimes might be done by inviting guest speakers from time to time. ]
- Both NU and BDERM would do well if they reflect closely on how more effectively collaboration might take place between NU-BDERM and field level staffs.
- Reporting and documentation should be considered as among the main activities of the programme. Give the dearth of knowledge and understanding about WDBD, it is very important to document the nature and extent of Dalit exploitation as much as possible.
- BDERM partners should be brought into the fold of the system by providing them clear understanding about the goals of the programmes. They should have unambiguous knowledge about the purpose of their engagements.

- Monitoring through monthly and quarterly progress reports should perhaps be more interactive and fruitful. There is scope for improving both field operation and finance monitoring.
- The project period is not lengthy enough. Therefore, focus should be on strengthening capacity of the partner organizations. This need could be given more priority to.
- Doing 'Case Studies' could be used in more effective way to gather narratives on the situation on the ground. In case studies field staffs get the opportunity to document the particular event in fuller detail. Such case studies would provide the staffs with opportunity to have greater insights regarding complex dynamics of Dalithood in Bangladesh.
- At the start of the project, NU and BDERM developed an operational strategic plan and monitoring and evaluation framework for the project which will included outcome and impact indicators, measurement tools and required frequency of reporting. These tools and mechanisms could be fallen back on more frequently.

### GENERALIZED OBSERVATIONS

Nagorik Uddyog has graduated over the years as an organization with serious commitment toward human rights education. It has also been working for building collectivism amongst the marginal people. On the other hand, BDERM has gained remarkable momentum as a platform for Dalits to fight back together for realizing rights and entitlements.

This current project is one major programme collaborating through which both the organizations – NU and BDERM - have treated into a domain of right violation that no other organization or agency has ever went to unveil or challenge in Bangladesh context.

The effort itself is novel and courageous; and, it speaks a lot about the commitment of those who had conceived it. Till the point of evaluation, the project was very much on track. It was fully convincing that the fund was being utilized for best possible purpose. There were ample rationales and justifications in favour of continuing the work. What we felt further was that more resources needed to come in to give support to the project so the purview of both leadership building and livelihood support components could be extended.

#### General Recommendations

##### **Organizational capacity enhancement and leadership development**

- Building and reinforcing the leadership quality of a movement is a formidable task that requires continuous renewal with adequate supply of inspiration and motivation. A strong base amongst the Dalit communities and strong support from the grassroots can provide BDERM with the much needed impetus and capacity of regeneration. BDERM has moved forward significantly in establishing broader bases in the Dalit communities in Bangladesh. However, one cannot take it for sure that the BDERM has become fully sustainable and self-reliant yet. For reaching a level of sustainability the organization would require more concrete planning as well as support and facilitation from outside.

- Once has to appreciate the advancement already achieved with regards to organizational capacity and leadership. However, we feel that there is a lot more to do for increasing the capacity of the organizations – BDERM and its partners. The organization should start working actively with a target to become ‘self-reliant’ and to have greater acceptance at community level.
- The organizations and their leaders should work more intensively for building confidence so that they can raise fund even from domestic sources. Currently they are not fully confident that they can raise fund and manage it effectively. If they can overcome this shakiness they would be able to plan direct initiatives at community level to have positive impact on members’ lives.
- More focus might be given particularly for building community leaders’ capacity and confidence. Local civil society leaders, academics and activists might be included in more exclusively for conducting seminars, workshops or discussion sessions with a view to boost community leaders’ understanding and spirit.
- In some cases the leaders and activists who have got training were not fully active. Trained actors should be motivated to become more active at both national and local levels and the organizations can define roles through which this engagement can be increased.
- Since the duration of the project is not long, much focus should be drawn on ways for strengthening capacity of the partner organizations. This is an issue that needs to be prioritized. Along with targeting more organizations to have their strong base at local level, BDERM can work for taking in more activists and leaders in its national level committees and programmes. Particularly, the size of the ‘central executive committee’ of BDERM might be expanded and new activists might be taken in for the sake of leadership development.
- BDERM is yet to establish stronger cooperation among the communities. As we have discussed, this is quite difficult an issue; but, to be successful in fostering a ‘Dalit movement’ in the country there is no alternative to bringing different Dalit communities into dialogue with a view to forge cooperation and network – if not unity.

### **Increasing knowledge and understanding of Dalit activists and leaders**

- Knowledge base amongst Dalit leaders and activists has expanded considerably. However, creation of a level of knowledge and awareness only among limited number of district and divisional level leaders would not be adequate. Upazilla and community level leadership building should be one of the main concerns of BDERM at this phase and these level activists should be provided with more training and exposure.
- Awareness raising meetings should have increased budget so that they can engage in more people in meaningful way. Dalit youths and women should take up driving role in such meetings and sessions. For doing that, their capacity enhancement is also a key.

### **Advocacy, campaigning and research**

- Generating more disaggregated data and doing more elaborate mapping is the call of the time and BDERM and its partner organizations can carry out some of the research works and surveys in their own initiatives. BDERM can take up initiatives involving own volunteers and activists to conduct comprehensive

mapping at community, upazilla and district levels and also to conduct surveys and brief studies. This can be done even with limited budget.

- Documentation and follow up of cases of atrocity and violence need to be intensified and networking with local and national media should be strengthened so that more sensitivity is raised among the reporters and journalists about such atrocities.
- The limited success that the organizations have achieved in relation to quota based admission in tertiary level institutions does not appear to be fully sustainable yet. However, their achievements should provide them good platform for further advancement.
- NU and BRERM have been bringing the facts to the greater audience in successful way and it is important that the efforts are kept on track in persistent way.

### **Fact finding, mediation and legal aid provision for improving access to justice**

- The issue of improving access to justice does not get adequate attention from the project executives or from the BDERM leaders.
- At grassroots level community members should be given systematic encouragement for seeking remedies of misdeeds.
- It would be encouraging to the project scaling up it legal support to the victims of atrocities.
- People are not satisfied with community level mediation process. Efforts need to be taken to make such mediations more democratic, participatory and just.

### **Social development and skill training programmes**

- Though this is basically a right centric programme, the success of this particular project components in providing livelihood support to the Dalit men and women have proved to be most acclaimed and appreciated by the vulnerable people at community level. It is crucial that NU-BDERM continue to complement and substantiate right talks with bread provisioning efforts.
- The activities undertaken for enhancement of Dalits livelihood have brought in good results for the communities and the programmes need to be carried on and scaled up.
- More alternative ways for providing education to Dalit children and for creating job opportunities for Dalit men and women should be contemplated by Dalit leaders and NU in consultation with civil society members. Here are some questions that Dalit leaders and NU can seriously reflect upon: Why shouldn't initiative be in place to train up Dalit girls and women so that they can take up more mainstream jobs with least possibility to be ostracised or stigmatized? What if a girl grown up in tea garden can migrate to the cities and takes up job as garment factory worker, hospital nurse or insurance office executive? Such works can allow them to become part of greater society with being indemnified in undignified ways. And, whereas remittance earning is the basic mode of income earning in Bangladesh society, why should Dalit men and women acquire the capacity to go abroad and work there?

- NU and BRERM can take up concerted efforts to generate more fund and resources so that flow of support to the communities in increased and strengthened.
- Increased access to basic services remains a big challenge that would require careful and more vigorous engagement with central government, local government and non-government agencies.

### **Project Management and Monitoring**

- Both NU and BDERM would do well if they reflect closely on how more effectively collaboration might take place between NU-BDERM and field level organizations.
- NU may develop have some manuals and readings that newly recruited staff might go through. Orientation for staffs as regards international and national human rights regimes might be conducted from time to time by inviting guest speakers from time to time.
- Reporting and documentation should be considered as among the priority activities of the programme. Give the dearth of knowledge and understanding about caste based discrimination in Bangladesh, it should be appreciated that every bit of detail documentation on the nature and extent of Dalit exploitation would be an asset.

Participatory Evaluation of the project on

**Reduce Discrimination through Protecting and Promoting the Rights of Dalit and Socially Excluded Groups**

January 2011 to December 2013

**Terms of Reference (ToR) for the Evaluation Team**

**1. Background and salient information about the project**

**1.1 Background**

The Constitution of Bangladesh declares equal rights for all citizens and prohibits discrimination on the grounds of religion, race, caste, sex or place of birth. Despite this constitutional guarantee, the social and economic exclusion on the basis of caste is practiced almost all over the country and is manifested in social practices and people's behaviour at both rural and urban areas of the country. Dalits are not allowed to rent in or build houses outside the localities that they are designated to live. They are regularly denied entry to the temples and religious activities of non-Dalits, to tea shops and restaurants, and to houses of non-Dalits.

Prejudice and practice against so-called "untouchables" is a part of caste system which is traditionally regarded as a part of hinduism. However, in Bangladesh some of these practices have also been adopted by sections of the Muslim majority. Here, the use of the term 'Dalit' is relatively newly picked; members of the "low castes" increasingly refer to themselves as Dalits – the "downtrodden" people – to emphasize the fact that they have been exploited, oppressed and excluded through generations.

It is estimated that there are about 6.5 million Dalits in Bangladesh, although there is no official statistics. Proper data collection and research is a key requirement for future action. Till now there is relatively little awareness at both national and international level regarding the extreme poverty and exclusion that Dalits in Bangladesh face. In fact, there have no systematic effort been made to identify and implement actions for inclusion of Dalits in greater society; neither have there been adequate development interventions or public policy measures for improving their livelihood conditions.



The Dalit and excluded communities in Bangladesh face vast scale of poverty and desperate destitution. Particularly they suffer from the lack of income, poor health and nutrition, crowded and inadequate housing, lack of adequate water and sanitation, limited access to or exclusion from land ownership and inaccessibility to government supports and benefits. Dalits experience complex and multidimensional forms of discrimination, exclusion from the wider society whereas the self-exclusion, mutual repulsion and violence that they go through among different communities is also of quite remarkable. Particularly the women members of Dalit community face these harsh realities in very painful way.

Lack of facilities for having education, prevalent illiteracy and high dropout rates from schools feature the lives in Dalit communities. Since realistically they don't perceive any chance of getting a job, education is not always valued to them. Particularly for girls education does not bear much significance as they usually are encouraged to marry young. As many of the Dalit children don't speak Bangla, they either don't attend school or struggle in coping up with mainstream schools.

Early marriage of Dalit girls (generally at around 12-13 years of age) and lack of access to family planning/birth control are other factors that undermine the capabilities of women. Altogether, women lack control over their fertility or child bearing related decisions, and they don't have say regarding family size either.

Dalit communities also face recurrent discriminations in relation to employment, housing, health and sanitation and other rights and entitlements. The communities are yet to have good leadership at local or grassroots level.

Another substantial issue pertaining to the miserable condition of the Dalits is the division and mistrust that mark leadership and collectivism in the communities. Some of the communities or community members do not feel comfort in identifying them with the word Dalit; there are others who want to maintain decent based occupations and wish for going only with jobs allocated on the basis of caste (e.g. sweepers); this they do as they feel that traditional system provides them with at least some level of job assurance. The tea plantation workers have specific problems of isolation and exploitation.

## **1.2 Project's thematic and operational areas**

In appreciation of the grave reality outlined above, Nagorik Uddyog (NU) started its work for promoting and protecting the rights of Dalit and socially excluded communities in 2008. As part of its continuous efforts to protect and promote Dalit rights, in 2011 NU initiated a project titled 'Reduce Discrimination through Protecting and Promoting the Rights of Dalit and Excluded communities'.

The first six months was utilized as preparatory phase; thereafter organization formulated a full project titled 'Reduce Discrimination through Protecting and Promoting the Rights of Dalit and Socially Excluded Groups'. This fuller project was based on preparatory phase experience. The duration of the project was from 2012-13.

The project has been implemented with the support of Bread for the World (BftW).

**Thematic and operational areas** of this project are:

**National level**

1. Strengthening national campaign on Dalits human rights, organisational capacity building and enhancing human rights understanding of key actors both at individual and organisational level,
2. Advocacy and lobbying at both national and international level with a view to influence the policy, practice and development programmes of the government, donors and institutions – implementing in collaboration with BDERM & Dalit Women’s Federation;
3. Fact finding on mediation system within the dalit communities and providing legal aid; improving access to justice;

**Local Level**

4. Promoting occupational diversity and ensuring social development through provision of skill training; community mobilization to tackle the poverty and exclusion in Dhaka, Narayangonj, Jessore and Mouloveebazar – being implemented by 4 Dalit Organisations.

The detail of areas and associating organizations are as below:

<b>Organization</b>	<b>District</b>	<b>Name of Upazila</b>	<b>Specific area</b>
Bangladesh Dalit Human Rights(BDHR)	Dhaka	City Corporation Area	Sayedabad, Wari, Gopibagh, Pangu, Gabtoli, Rainkhola, Lalbagh Postogola, Mitford, Tongi, Shoshanghat, Kanchpur, Malibagh and Sutrapur
	Narayangonj	Narayangonj Sadar and Bondor	Tanbazar, Ekrapur
Dalit Women Forum	Dhaka	City Corporation Area	Nazirabazar, Hazaribagh, PWD Sweeper Colony, Gonoktuly Pilkhana City Sweeper Colony.
Charoibetee Scheduled and Indigenous Welfare Organisation	Jessore	Jessore	Gorapara, Mathpara, Kholadangapara, Rail Station Sweeper Colony, Khulna Stand Dompara, Baghdipara and Laldighi.
Moulovibazar Tea Community Indigenous Front	Moulovebazar	Shreemangal	Kalighat, Rajghat and Shreemangal.
		Kamolgonj	Alinagar, Shamshernagar, Madhabpur and Munshibazar.

**1.3 Donors to the project:** The project is funded by the Bread for the World, Germany. Whereas total project period is 2 years, about one and a half years of project length has already passed. It has been decided by the project holder that an evaluation of the project would be undertaken by external consultants with the object of assessing the achievements of the set project objectives and others.

**1.4 Beneficiaries:**

The direct and indirect beneficiaries of the project are as given below:

*Direct beneficiaries:* The direct beneficiaries of the project are around 10,051 Dalit people who would be benefited through awareness campaign, leadership building programmes, skill training for occupational diversity and overall social development initiatives.

Interventions/ Objectives	Sex		Total
	Male	Female	
Capacity Building	1,503	928	2,431
Awareness Raising	3,000	2,750	5,760
Legal Support	5	5	10
Skill Training and social development	790	1,060	1,850
<b>Total</b>	<b>5,298</b>	<b>4,743</b>	<b>10,051</b>

*Indirect beneficiaries:* A total of 15,300 persons are to be benefited by this project. This project will be a catalyst to develop the Dalit leadership and raise the issues at national and international level effectively. It is expected that through this work, more development interventions and favorable policy will be in place, which will have indirect positive implications for all the Dalit population.

**Intervention-wise number of indirect beneficiaries**

Interventions/ Objectives	Sex		Total
	Male	Female	
Advocacy, Campaign	4,930	2,690	7,620
Research and Publication (Leaflet, poster, newsletter and website visit)	3,680	4,000	7,680
<b>Total</b>	<b>8,610</b>	<b>6,690</b>	<b>15,300</b>

**2. Project Goal, Specific Objectives and OVIs of achievements**

Project goal, its specific objectives, objective-wise outcomes and OVIs (Objectively Verifiable Indicators) of achievement are mentioned below. These are in line with the approved project proposal and its logical framework.

**2.1 Goal of the project:** Dalit and excluded communities would enjoy improved life through the reduction in discrimination based on work and decent.

## **2.2 Specific Objectives:**

9. Strengthen the organizational capacity and enhance human rights understanding of the key actors in Dalit and Excluded Rights Movement, both at individual and organizational level;
10. Influence the policy, practice and development programmes of the government, donors and institutions through advocacy, campaign and research;
11. Protect and promote Dalit and excluded people's human rights, through fact finding, mediation, provision of legal aid and improvement of access to justice;
12. Implement skill training programmes for the purpose of bringing in occupational diversity; undertake social development programmes with a view to tackle poverty and exclusion faced by Dalit and socially excluded communities; programmes and practices to be carried out in a way that best practice models for future use might be provided.

## **2.3 OVIs and Outcomes**

### ***OVIs against overall goal of the project***

- a- Increased income level, enhanced confidence and access to GO-NGOs service of about 370 targeted persons from Dalit and Excluded Communities
- b- Increased organizational capacity of about 186 persons from Dalit and Excluded Communities
- c- About 1600 persons got water-sanitation facilities and informal education.

### ***Outcomes under Objective - 1:***

- a. Trained and confident actors become active at both national and local level. 7 Divisional Co-ordination teams become fully working for supporting their members to organize and implement grassroots programmes;
- b. Active involvement of Dalit NGOs/CBOs in BDERM;
- c. BDERM has 2,000 members;
- d. BDERM is linked and contributing to regional and international Dalit agencies and movements.

### ***OVIs of Outcomes under Objective- 1***

- About 150 efficient/capable volunteers and community members become active.
- BDERM have successfully organized 124 rallies/ procession/ movement against discrimination based on work and descent at local, upazila, district, division and central (capital) levels and minimum 6% of their community members have actively participated in each of such events during the project period;
- BDERM and other 20 organizations have met for at least 4 times with appropriate government authorities during the project period for lobbying their cause and establishing their human rights/ fundamental rights.
- BDERM and other 20 organizations have been able to ensure presence of government representatives of different levels in at least 15 of their rallies/

processions/ movements/ meetings/ seminars and their (Govt. officers') positive role in favour of the Dalit and excluded communities for elimination of discrimination based on work and descent in the project's operational areas during the project period;

- BDERM has about 40 districts bodies with effective representatives and democratic organizational structures;
- BDERM has 30% women leaders;
- 20% of national and local leaders are more self-assured in managing projects - assessed in survey before and after project.

### ***Outcomes under Objective - 2***

- a) A mapping and comprehensive study of Dalit communities – starting with 27 colonies in Dhaka – to provide a model for future national research to inform lobbying and to understand current priorities and community needs;
- b) Specific research on manual scavenging practices in Bangladesh;
- c) An anti-Discrimination Act/Law proposed/placed before the relevant authority.

### ***OVI of “Outcomes” under Objective- 2***

- Prepared and proposed a draft law against untouchability to be submitted to the government's relevant authority;
- Dalit rights issues included in the strategic action plan of National Human Rights Commission. Comments taken from GO-NGOs policy makers, Civil Society and Political Activists;
- Successful completion of valid and credible research and mapping studies (including extensive mapping of 27 Dalit colonies in Dhaka);
- Making sure that government project/ program and policies are undertaken in which Dalit issues are addressed;
- Reference to work and descent based discrimination, Dalits and excluded communities in minimum one government development plans ;
- Introduction of quotas in academic institutions and government employment;
- Around 30,000 people of public reached through media, events and publications (assessed through surveys before and after project);
- Increased coverage on Dalit issue from media outlets.

### ***Outcomes under Objective - 3***

- a) Systematic legal mechanisms are developed to research, conduct fact finding, and accompany women and men who have experienced discrimination and abuse and to provide legal aid;
- b) Improved confidence and awareness amongst Dalit and excluded communities as regards rights, entitlements and responsibilities.

### ***OVI of achievement of “Outcomes” under Objective- 3***

- 1800 men and women have got increased awareness on their basic human rights;
- 5760 persons belonging in Dalit and socially excluded communities have got increased level of awareness and are able to claim their rights ;
- 30 cases of atrocity are documented followed up, and proper action taken;

- A number of cases related to attacks against Dalits and Excluded Communities have been filed before the court;

#### ***Outcomes under Objective – 4***

- a) Men and women from Dalit and excluded communities have developed professional skills and trades;
- b) Tangible improvements in income level of Dalits and excluded communities in target areas.

#### ***OVI of achievement of “Outcomes” under Objective- 4***

- 30% increase in income level of 370 women and men in Dalit communities;
- About 1000 persons got facilities of safe drinking water;
- About 300 persons able to use sanitary latrines.
- 370 women and men gain 30% increase in case of their mobility, confidence and income;
- 300 children from Dalit communities are encouraged to have education;
- 1,850 Dalits and excluded people are reached through training and poverty alleviation programmes;
- Increase employment opportunities in GoB and non-GoB offices.

### **3. Objectives of project evaluation**

The main objectives of this evaluation include, among others, the following:

- a- To assess the implementation and success of the project in achieving its set objectives (To examine and assess appropriateness of the project design for achieving the set project objectives);
- b- To assess the effectiveness of the project governance and management systems and process including the competency of its staffs for the jobs assigned to them and looking into possible reasons for elevated staff turnover;
- c- To assess relevance and effectiveness of monitoring and evaluation system followed by the project;
- d- To assess the strengths and weaknesses of the management systems, procedures and practices;
- e- To evaluate sustainability of the effects and impacts of the project, assessing how far the community organizations (BDERM at national level and district level; four other Dalit organizations at local level) have become capacitated to carry on community mobilization activities and manage local level programmes;
- f- To identify key opportunities and constraints in upholding Dalit human rights and reducing caste, work and descent based discrimination as well as gender discrimination;

### **4. Scope of work for the consultants**

The scope of work for the consultants are, but not limited to, the following-

- a) To review of all project related documents made available to the consultants;
- b) To receive detail briefing including clarification of all issues deemed necessary from the management of the Nagorik Uddyog (project holder) and the project before start of the fieldwork and obtain necessary data and information from them for proper evaluation of the project;
- c) To carry out the evaluation of the project including assessment of its objectives keeping in mind that the project is completing its 1 and half year in June 2013;
- d) To assess/ evaluate sustainability and strengths and weaknesses of the community's development through this project in the project operational areas;
- e) To assess the appropriateness and effectiveness of project management process followed;
- f) To prepare and submit draft and final reports incorporating all important findings, suggestions and recommendations, etc to the project holder and the donors;
- g) To carry out all other activities for achieving the objectives of evaluation mentioned above;
- h) To apply best judgement of the consultants wherever felt necessary;

## **5. Approach and methodology of evaluation study to be followed**

**5.1 Approach:** The consultants will undertake a participatory approach in carrying out the evaluation of the project. The evaluation team will meet and collect required information from the (a) project beneficiaries, (b) community leaders and (c) relevant government officials. In addition, intensive discussions/ FGD will be held with project staffs. The team will discuss with management of project holder as and when felt necessary.

**5.2 Methodology:** The methodology to be followed in carrying out the subject evaluation will include the following-

- a) Critical review of project documents;
- b) Questionnaire survey on project beneficiaries selected on random sampling basis for collection of relevant data/ information from them;
- c) Focus group discussions (FGDs) at community level in project areas;
- d) Identification and analysis qualitative changes and preparation of case stories of significant changes that have taken place in the lives of the project beneficiaries;
- e) Meeting with local key informants like community leaders in project areas;
- f) Intensive and extensive discussion/ FGD with project staffs;
- g) Formal and informal meetings with concerned staffs of Nagorik Uddyog;
- h) Consultants' informal situational analysis and observation on relevant issues of evaluation.

**5.3 Sampling of operational areas and target beneficiaries to be covered:** The evaluation will be carried out in at least 2 districts out of 5 on the basis of random selection. About 40% of project operational areas would be covered.

### **5.4 Sources of information:**

- a) Project staffs;
- b) BDERM national working committee;

- c) BDERM district level committee;
- d) Member of 4 partner organization;
- e) Training recipient;
- f) Relevant govt. Officials in project areas.

#### 5.4 Case stories and meetings

a. **Case stories:** At least 3 (three) case stories on the life of project beneficiary of each covered areas will be prepared. The case stories will be prepared following a checklist to be outlined by the consultants;

b. **Meetings:** The consultants will meet at least ten key informants including local community leaders in project areas. A checklist of issues to be discussed with them will be prepared and used by the consultants. The management of project/ project holder will arrange consultants' meetings with them.

#### 6. Team of consultants and estimated assignment period:

a. **Qualifications and experience of consultants:** It is expected that a team of two consultants (one male and one female) will perform the assignment. The consultants should have advanced university degree in Social Science or relevant discipline. The team leader should possess at least ten years of working experience in development field particularly community driven advocacy, campaign, social development and possess extensive experience of four years in above mentioned project evaluation in participatory process and hands on experience in conducting quantitative and qualitative social research and analysis, be knowledgeable about human rights and economic and social justice issues in Bangladesh and programme management aspects. S/he should possess excellent proficiency in written and spoken in English.

b. **Evaluation period:** The evaluation of the project will be completed in total 45 working days spread over two calendar months. A tentative time distribution among major/ group of activities has been mentioned below.

SI	Major activity	Working days
1	Review of relevant documents made available to consultant.	5
2	Development of data/ information collection tools including checklists for FGD and case stories.	7
3	Field work: Survey, FGDs, case stories preparation, meeting with key informants, etc. including checking and editing of collected information and ensuring total quality control at every stage of performance of the assignment.	15
4	Processing/ tabulation of collected data/ information.	7
5	Draft report preparation.	7
6.	Preparation of final Report based on comments/suggestions of NU and donor partners	4
	<b>Total</b>	<b>45</b>



- a- **information collection tools:** The information collection tools (ICTs) to be developed are:
- i- Checklist for review of project documents;
  - ii- Questionnaire for interviewing the project beneficiaries;
  - iii- Checklist for FGDs with community level beneficiaries;
  - iv- Checklist for Meetings/FGDs with BDERM's central and district level members;
  - v- Checklist for discussion with local key informants like community leaders and relevant government officials;
  - vi- Checklist for preparation of case stories;
  - vii- Checklist for Meetings/FGD with project staffs.

The final evaluation report will be prepared as early as possible by the consultant team on receipt of and according due consideration to comments/ observation/ feedback from the Nagorik Uddyog and the donors.

The consultants will prepare a detail Activity Timeframe for completion of the assignment before start of the work which will be finalised in discussion with the management of the Nagorik Uddyog.

## **7. Supports from the project/ the Nagorik Uddyog**

- a- The project team/ the Nagorik Uddyog will provide all necessary documents, data and information felt necessary and asked for the purpose of carrying out this assignment by the consultants;
- b- The project team/ the Nagorik Uddyog will bear the cost of long travel of the evaluation team members, will arrange (and bear cost of) their accommodation and food and local travel during field work;
- c- The project staffs will extend required cooperation in carrying out the evaluation and arrange all meetings with all concerned as mentioned in this agreement and as required by the evaluation team during the process of performance of the assignment;
- d- The Nagorik Uddyog will extend all necessary cooperation and supports to the consultants/ evaluation team for proper execution of the assignment.

End