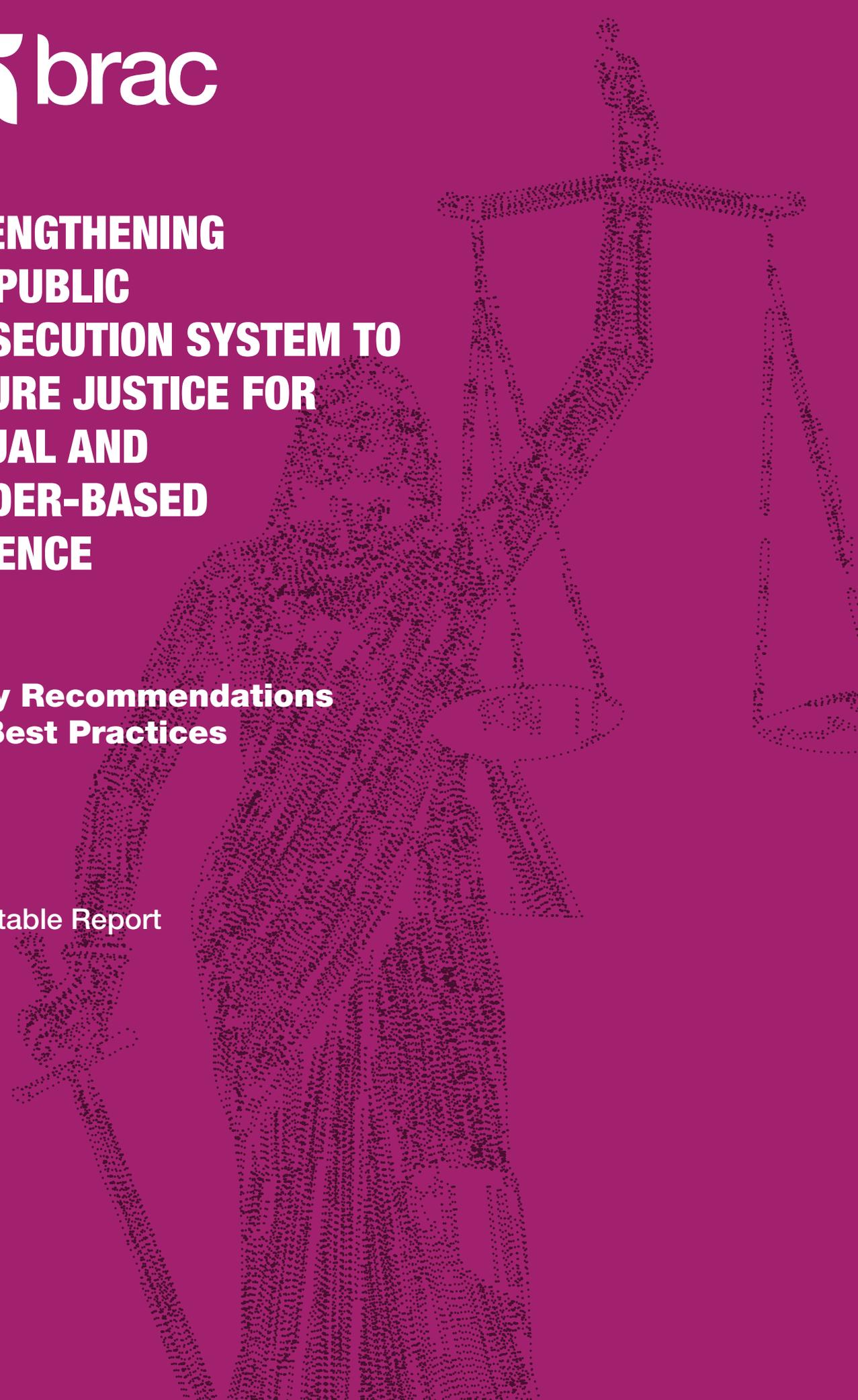




**STRENGTHENING  
THE PUBLIC  
PROSECUTION SYSTEM TO  
ENSURE JUSTICE FOR  
SEXUAL AND  
GENDER-BASED  
VIOLENCE**

**Policy Recommendations  
and Best Practices**

Roundtable Report



**Published by**

**Gender Justice and Diversity, BRAC**

BRAC Centre, 75 Mohakhali,

Dhaka-1212, Bangladesh

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First Published May 2022

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Progressive Printers Pvt. Ltd.

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BRAC's Gender Justice and Diversity Programme is supported by the Government of Australia and Government of Canada.

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# List of Acronyms

ADR	Alternative Dispute Resolution
BBS	Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics
CDMS	Crime Data Management System
GJD	Gender Justice and Diversity
FIR	First Information Report
JATI	Judicial Administration and Training Institute
MOHFW	Ministry of Health and Family Welfare
MOWCA	Ministry of Women and Children Affairs
MSPVAW	Multi-Sectoral Programme on Violence Against Women
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NLASO	National Legal Aid Services Organisation
OCC	One Stop Crisis Centre
PP	Public Prosecutor
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
SELP	Social Empowerment and Legal Protection
SGBV	Sexual and Gender-Based Violence
VAWC	Violence against Women and Children

# Introduction

Ensuring that victims and survivors of sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) are able to seek justice is a basic cornerstone of gender justice. In the past 40 years, Bangladesh has introduced a number of laws and policies to ensure justice for SGBV, while *Nari O Shishu Nirjaton Doman* (Suppression of Violence against Women and Children) Tribunals (hereinafter referred to as ‘VAWC Tribunals’) have also been established across the country. In order to achieve Goal 16 of the Sustainable Development Goal (SDGs), countries must ‘provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels’. More specifically, under SDG Target 16.3, countries must promote the rule of law at the national and international levels and ensure equal access to justice for all. SDG Indicator 16.3.1 measures the proportion of victims of violence who reported their victimisation to competent authorities in the past 12 months.

Since 2000, the Government of Bangladesh has also been establishing One Stop Crisis Centres across the country as part of its Multi-Sectoral Programme on Violence against Women, in an attempt to ensure that SGBV survivors are able to receive all necessary services under one roof, including medical treatment, counseling and all the support needed in taking legal action, such as assistance from the police, DNA testing, legal assistance from lawyers and shelter. So far, 12 such centres have been set up in all eight administrative divisions in the country. Yet data from these centres shows that out of the 49,047 survivors of physical assault, sexual assault and burn violence who sought treatment from its centres across the country until July 2021, only 14,284 chose to file cases.<sup>1</sup> This means 71% of survivors who went to these centres to seek medical treatment or other support services, opted for one reason or the other, to not file cases against their perpetrator.

Even more alarmingly, a multi-country study conducted by the United Nations which surveyed perpetrators of rape found that in Bangladesh 95% of men from urban areas and 88% of men from rural areas who reported raping a woman or girl said they faced no legal consequences (such as arrest or jail).<sup>2</sup> According to the Violence against Women Survey, only 1.1% of women who faced partner violence sought help from the police.<sup>3</sup> Even where SGBV survivors are able to file cases, investigations are delayed, and trials

<sup>1</sup> ‘OCC clients up to January 2022’, Multi-Sectoral Programme on Violence Against Women, accessed 20 December 2021, <http://mspvaw.gov.bd/contain/22>.

<sup>2</sup> Emma Fulu et al., *Why Do Some Men Use Violence Against Women and How Can We Prevent It? Quantitative Findings from the UN Multi-country on Men and Violence in Asia and the Pacific*, (Bangkok: UNDP, UNFPA, UN Women and UNV, 2013), 45.

<sup>3</sup> *Report on Violence Against Women (VAW) Survey 2015* (Dhaka: Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, Statistics and Information Division, Ministry of Planning, Government of the People’s Republic of Bangladesh, 2016), xix.

are prolonged, and ultimately there are very few convictions. For instance, a 2015 study by BRAC University found that the conviction rate in VAWG cases in three districts was as astonishingly low as 0.86%.<sup>4</sup>

The vast majority of SGBV are thus precluded from seeking justice, for one reason or another, including the institutional protection gaps within the public prosecution system. Therefore, advocacy to strengthen the public prosecution system to ensure justice in VAWG cases is essential, but building up to date and robust evidence on survivor-centric reform proposals to support such advocacy must first be generated.

These statistics demonstrate that the vast majority of SGBV survivors are unable to seek justice for the crime committed against them, and therefore point to the inaccessibility and inefficiency of justice institutions, such as the public prosecution system. That is precisely why strengthening the public prosecution system has been selected as one of the core advocacy areas in BRAC's Strategy (2021-2025) and BRAC's Gender Strategy as well as BRAC's Strategic Partnership Agreement (SPA). BRAC aims to sensitise stakeholders on the need to reform and strengthen the public prosecution system in order for justice in VAWG.

Therefore, on 8 December 2021, a roundtable discussion on strengthening the public prosecution system to ensure justice for sexual and gender-based violence was organised by BRAC's Gender Justice and Diversity Programme with support from the Social Empowerment and Legal Protection (SELP) Programme, on December 08, 2021, from 10:00 AM to 2:00 PM at the BRAC Centre Inn Auditorium in Dhaka. This report outlines over fifty key policy recommendations and best practices highlighted by the speakers at the roundtable, which can serve as entry points for future advocacy in this area. The designations of the speakers listed in the report are as at the time of the roundtable.

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<sup>4</sup> Atia Naznin and Tanjina Sharmin, *Reasons for the low rate of conviction in the vaw cases and inconsistencies in the legislative framework*, (Dhaka: BRAC University Press, 2015), 42.



**Shashwatee Biplob**  
Programme Head (In-Charge)  
SELP  
BRAC

## Context

“For most sexual and gender-based violence survivors in Bangladesh, access to justice remains a distant dream and challenges within our justice institutions are often unaddressed. The objective of this roundtable is to address such challenges and come up with some effective recommendations on how to strengthen the public prosecution system. Through this discussion, we hope to identify best practices in reporting and investigation by police, in the collection of medico-legal evidence by forensics, in the prosecution and legal representation by public prosecutors, in trial and sentencing by judges and in providing legal aid and support services by service providers.”



**Taqbir Huda**  
Lead, Advocacy  
GJD  
BRAC

## Keynote Presentation: The urgent need to strengthen the public prosecution system to ensure justice for SGBV

The public prosecution system can be said to comprise of four important stages: investigation, medico-legal examination, trial and sentencing. Additionally, the availability of support services such as legal aid and shelter homes also play a decisive role in the success of the prosecution. The Suppression of Violence against Women and Children Act 2000 was enacted to strengthen prosecution of SGBV cases. However, various studies have shown that conviction rates in SGBV cases are very low. For instance, a 2015 study by BRAC University found that the conviction rate was lower than 1% in cases disposed by VAWC Tribunals in Dhaka, Comilla and Pabna between 2009 and 2014. A 2018 study published by Prothoma found the conviction rates to be less than 3% in cases disposed by VAWC Tribunals in Dhaka between 2002 and 2016.

## Six key legal safeguards

There are several safeguards in the Suppression of Violence against Women and Children Act 2000, which, if properly enforced, would go a long way towards strengthening the public prosecution system and ensuring justice in SGBV cases. These are:

1. **VAWC Tribunals:** Section 26 of the 2000 Act requires each district to have a VAWC tribunal, which is a special court to exclusively deal with SGBV cases.
2. **Speedy investigation:** Section 18 of the 2000 Act requires police to complete the investigation within 15 days from date of arrest or within 60 days from filing of the FIR, with an extension of up to 30 more days.
3. **Speedy trial:** Section 20 of the 2000 Act requires VAWC Tribunals to complete the trial within 180 days from the date of admission of case for trial. If the trial is not completed within 180 days, Section 31 of 2000 Act casts an obligation on judges, police and public prosecutors to report the causes of delay to the Supreme Court within 30 days.
4. **In-camera trial:** Section 20 (6) of the 2000 Act allows in-camera trial for rape cases.
5. **Duty to summon witnesses:** Section 24 of the 2000 Act establishes the police's duty to ensure presence of witnesses in the trial of cases under the Act.
6. **Immediate medical examination and certificate:** Section 32 of the 2000 Act establishes the doctor's duty to conduct immediate medical examination and produce certificate. Furthermore, the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare issued guidelines on the medical examination of SGBV survivors, prohibiting the use of the two-finger test and use of the term 'habituated to sexual intercourse' in medical certificates.

## Six key reforms proposals

In addition to the six key legal safeguards, there are a number of other reforms which can further strengthen the public prosecution system:

1. **Introduce an online complaints mechanism:** SGBV survivors do not usually wish to file cases due to the misplaced social stigma. Introducing an online complaint mechanism, as mandated by the Supreme Court in 2016 in the *Naripokkho vs Bangladesh* case, could enable SGBV survivors to bypass some of the socio-institutional barriers and file cases more easily. The National Emergency Helpline (999) is the closest service we have to an online complaints mechanism, but it usually still requires the survivor to physically lodge a complaint in the nearest police station.
2. **Institutionalise One Stop Crisis Centres (OCCs):** Since 2000, OCCs have played an essential role in providing integrated support services to SGBV survivors under one roof, including legal aid and support to initiate criminal prosecution. Currently, there are 12 OCCs have been established in medical college hospitals and other public hospitals in district cities. However, the largely foreign funded Multi-Sectoral Programme on Violence against Women (MSPVAW), which established and funded the OCCs in 2000, is currently in its last phase, which makes the future of even the OCCs uncertain. OCCs must be expanded across the country and made a permanent fixture of our prosecution system, so that they remain functional even after the MSPVAW ends.

- 3. Introduce a victim and witness protection system:** SGBV survivors who often face repeated threats to their safety from the perpetrator's side (who are typically at a power advantage) after seeking justice. They constantly live under fear of reprisals and revenge due to the lack of an institutionalised victim and witness protection system. Therefore, the draft Victim and Witness Protection Act (first proposed by the Law Commission in 2006) must be enacted. This law would allow for institutional protection, emergency shelter, psychosocial support and/or relocation, as required, of survivors and witnesses.
- 4. Maximise use of virtual court procedures in VAWC Tribunals:** SGBV survivors typically wish to avail a quick and discrete legal remedy. Filing court cases does the exact opposite: it goes on for years, if not decades, due to seemingly endless adjournments and deferred hearings due to non-appearance of witnesses and it has a tendency to generate publicity. Introducing virtual court procedures in VAWC Tribunals will save time, hassle and cost, while also minimising risks to the safety and privacy of SGBV survivors.
- 5. Ensure gender sensitisation training of justice sector actors:** our justice institutions, which serve as the entry point for SGBV survivors who wish to seek justice, require gender sensitivity. Currently, JATI provides training for VAWC Tribunal judges. Thorough gender sensitivity training should be institutionalised for all prosecution sector actors so that SGBV survivors are dealt with gender responsiveness and sensitivity throughout the justice-seeking process.
- 6. Introduce a state compensation fund for SGBV survivors:** SGBV survivors need immediate financial assistance, not least because even accessing justice and basic support services, can be costly. Perpetrators often able to exploit this vulnerability by offering SGBV survivors or their families paltry sums of money touted as "compensation" in exchange for the latter abandoning the prosecution case. This is precisely why the government should establish a state compensation fund for SGBV survivors, such as the through the enactment of the draft Crime Victims Compensation Act proposed by the Law Commission in 2007. This laws mandates the establishment of a fund which will enable victims of violent crime, including SGBV survivors, to apply for compensation from the state as a matter of right, independently of the prosecution case.

## The scope of GO-NGO partnership in strengthening public prosecution system



**Mohammad Maruf Hasan**  
Team Lead  
Policy Research and Evidence  
Advocacy for Social Change  
BRAC

- **Introduce GO-NGO collaboration platform to overcome case load:** According to the Supreme Court’s Annual Report for 2019, there are 3,309,799 pending criminal cases in 457 courts. There are 1440 public prosecutors in our country, including Additional Public Prosecutors, Special Public Prosecutors and Assistant Public Prosecutors. Therefore, on average each prosecutor would have 1054 cases. Apart from various government institutions, several NGOs are contributing to the prosecution system at the grassroots level. GO-NGO collaborations can be a great support to lessen this overwhelming burden. The government has directed all ministries to work in a coordinated manner to achieve the SDGs. In order to achieve the indicators under SDG 5, there is a need for collaboration between government institutions and NGOs as well. Bangladesh is known as the land of NGOs. If the government wants to overcome and find a solution to the large caseload, and stand out as an example for achieving the SDGs, then it must create a collaboration platform and action plan involving the NGOs and experiences from the grassroots level and publish a gazette in this regard.
- **Introduce cadre service for recruitment of public prosecutors:** There is uncertainty regarding the recruitment of public prosecutors, which is still managed by the Ministry of Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs. There are no cadre services related to the recruitment of public prosecutors, and it is worth exploring whether initiating a cadre service as such would help to meet the requirements for public prosecutors.
- **Make Crime Data Management System (CDMS) Publicly Accessible:** The Bangladesh Police has been using a crime database called CDMS, which has a section containing data on SGBV cases, including data on the current stage at which the cases are pending and number of cases where a conviction has been successfully obtained etc. Until 2018, the CDMS data was open to all under a United Nations Population Fund project. However, since 2019, the

data is no longer publicly accessible. The Bangladesh Police should consider making the data publicly available again; at least to such an extent that allows civil society organisations to utilise the data for research, advocacy and reform efforts.

- **Ensure standardisation of NGO Data:** We know that NGOs and civil society organisations generate a lot of data, and in many cases, the authenticity of these data is questioned. However, there are no initiatives from the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics relating to the standardisation of data from NGOs for wider use. Due to the lack of standardisation, only government data can be used officially. Standardisation of NGO data will enable the government to recognise the impactful work being done at the field level by NGOs, which will eventually create a lot of anecdotal evidence and data to capture results.

## Waiting for Justice: Hearing from survivors' families



**Mohammad Mozibur Rahman**

“My son-in-law and his mother threw acid on my daughter’s face over dowry. When we came to know about it, I first took her to the doctor and got her treated in Ishwardi hospital in Rajshahi. After I brought my daughter back home, I filed a case at the Ishwardi police station which is still pending at the court. During the investigation, the Ishwardi police station removed the name of my son-in-law’s mother from the charge sheet so we filed a naraji petition at the court. I would like to bring my daughter’s case to everyone’s attention and I request justice for my daughter.”



**Mohammad Abdul Mannan**

“My daughter who is disabled was raped over two years ago. After the incident, I admitted her at a hospital with support from BRAC. I did not receive any support from the police. The case has been pending for two years now. I hardly get a chance to speak to my public prosecutor. He keeps asking me to come back in three to four months. Our next hearing is on 26<sup>th</sup> December 2021 but they only keep deferring the hearing. My case is being handled by the public prosecutor but he pays no heed to our case. Every time I ask him why the date has been extended; he rudely asks me to come back a few months later. And just like this, two years have passed while we await to receive justice. In the meantime, the perpetrator is out on bail. I am anxious about these seemingly endless adjournments and deferred hearings, and I’m not sure what will happen after that.”

## Identifying best practices and solutions



**Mohammad Tabarak Ullah**  
Additional Deputy Inspector  
General (DIG) of Police,  
National Emergency Service,  
Bangladesh Police

### Reporting and investigation

- **Increase investment for the National Emergency Service (999):** The National Emergency Service (999) rescues victims in emergency situations, and also accompanies them to the police station to file complaints. If the 999 team is able to identify any relevant evidence at the scene, then they also collect it and submit it to the concerned investigation officers in the respective police station, to support the case. Till date, the 999 helpline has received 26,850 VAWC related calls and provided holistic support such as suggestions, collection of evidence, rescue in emergencies, encouragement to file FIR cases, investigation support etc. If we can increase the capacity of 999, it will definitely play an essential role in supporting and strengthening the public prosecution system.
- **Conduct training and capacity building of Investigating Officers on evidence collection:** evidence collection is the main duty of Investigation Officers. It is not just about producing evidence before the Court; it has to be admissible evidence. An Investigation Officer may collect a lot of evidence but if it does not help prove the essential ingredients of the offence complained of – then there is no scope for ensuring justice. Oftentimes ensuring a victim’s family’s cooperation during evidence collection can also be very challenging. Therefore, an Investigation Officer requires a lot of training and capacity building to be able to overcome these challenges, particularly to know what counts as admissible evidence, and what counts as inadmissible evidence, for different types of offences against women and girls.
- **Conduct specialist training of police on cyber-crimes:** Cyber-crimes in Bangladesh are very Facebook specific. We have seen that 999’s cyber investigation team are not able to obtain evidence from Facebook authority. Whatever we are able to collect the evidence, we give it to the police. This is because cyber related crimes require huge amount of technical knowledge. Therefore, a specialist training for cyber-crimes is the need of the day.

- **Enhance use of virtual court procedures to ease witness testimonies:** In addition to investigation, one of the other main duties of the police is to summon witnesses in court during trial. Yet in practice, day after day we see that witnesses are not available. Notice after notice is given but still witnesses cannot be brought to court. Due to fear of harm and reprisals, the victim and/or the victim's family may hesitate to go to court to testify, day after day. We have heard the sufferings of two justice seekers at this very roundtable: how they have gone to court day after day facing many difficulties but have not yet been able to receive any justice. Allowing victims and witnesses could to provide information remotely while remaining in the safety of their own home will help address this common challenge.



**Anna Minj**  
Director, Integrated  
Development Programme;  
Advisor, SELP and Protection  
Cluster, HCMP, BRAC

- **A national level community led reporting mechanism for SGBV:** SGBV statistics published by most NGOs rely on news reports of SGBV incidents. At BRAC we rely on reporting by our grassroots level community members like Palli Shamaj members – because most incidents do not get reported in the news. Our experience shows that if the reporting mechanism is community-based and community-led– only then will we get the real picture. Involving people from the grassroots level can be very effective for a faster reporting mechanism because they are the first ones who can get information and respond to SGBV crimes in their area. While scaling up an online mechanism such as 999 is deemed to be a good solution, we must not forget to incorporate the reporting potential and needs of those at the grassroots. For example, in the grassroots communities very few women have access to digital devices (i.e., mobile devices owned by family members), and to access services they need to travel a long distance at the district level or avail of the OCC services at divisional level. Therefore, we need to establish a national-level community-led reporting mechanism for SGBV, which can also then act as a database for SGBV. At the same time, there is a lack of coordination among all the existing GO/ NGO reporting mechanisms for SGBV. This needs to be streamlined to ensure coordinated support in the community as well as establishing a comprehensive reporting mechanism.



**Dr. Sohel Mahmud**  
Head, Department of  
Forensic Medicine, Sir  
Salimullah Medical Dhaka

## Collection of medico-legal evidence

- **Introduce swab testing facility at the *upazila* (sub-district) level:** After a case is filed with the police, the police send the survivors to the forensic medicine departments for medical investigation. The medico-legal examination of SGBV survivors typically involves collecting the samples from the survivor to run medical investigations and conducting physical examinations, based on which a final report is published with our opinion. The results on the final report are significantly dependent on when the survivor comes for the medico-legal examination. Most upazilas do not have sufficient sample collection, testing and preservation facilities that are needed for medico-legal examinations of SGBV survivors. Therefore whenever the survivor approaches their nearest upazila health complex or hospital, they will usually be referred to the district level hospital. As travelling to the district hospitals from upazila level takes a significant amount of time, the chances of the biological evidence being lost or diminished from the survivor's body are high. Delay in conducting the medico-legal examination is a major reason why survivors do not receive favourable medical reports which then weakens the prosecution case. Therefore, as a stop gap measure I usually suggest that when the survivor goes to an upazila hospital which at least has a sample collection facility (even if not testing or preservation), their swab samples should be put in a test-tube and then sent to the nearest district level hospital. We must also ensure quality of preservers to appropriately preserve the samples and prevent them from being damaged. We need to introduce adequate swab collection, swab testing and preservation facility at the upazila level, so the process of medico-legal evidence collection can be ensured without delay.
- **Expand DNA testing facilities:** DNA testing can play an important role in filtering out false cases which remain a major concern. Earlier, just evidence of sperm was seen as evidence of rape. With the introduction of DNA evidence, this is no longer the case, since it carries total individuality. Therefore DNA testing facilities need to be expanded and ensured in particularly sexual violence cases.

- **Ensure compliance with Supreme Court directive mandating female examining doctors for survivors:** The Honourable High Court Division of the Supreme Court of Bangladesh has directed us that only women doctors should examine rape survivors, which can reduce risks of re-traumatisation. Previously rape survivors could be examined by doctors of any gender but due to the recent directive, the examination has to now be conducted by female doctors in the presence of a third female who acts as a witness. Compliance with this directive should be ensured in practice.
- **Ensure isolation rooms for medico-legal examinations of SGBV survivors:** Medico-legal examination procedures entail very sensitive inquiries which require privacy. Most hospitals do not yet have a separate designated space for victim examination. These are often done in a crowded environment which can often be a very gender insensitive environment. Therefore, hospitals should have isolated examination rooms for female victims so that the trauma wouldn't intensify. These rooms should consist of a table and have ample lighting.



**Dr. Md. Shahadt Hossain Mahmud**  
Director General (Additional Secretary), Health Economics Unit, Ministry of Health and Family Welfare

- **Ensure implementation of the Ministry of Health's Protocol for Gender Based Violence:** During the process of seeking justice, a rape victim is forced to relive the trauma repeatedly due to the nature of probing and questioning. Our society still holds a mindset where a survivor is blamed and doubted while the perpetrator has absolute impunity. Our medical professionals get limited training on much-needed skills to provide medico-legal care in a victim-centric approach. Moreover, all doctors have yet not received the training which enables them to provide medico-legal care, in addition to medical care. In 2017, the Gender, NGO and Stakeholder Participation Unit of the Health Economics Unit of the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare developed a protocol titled 'Health Sector Response to Gender Based Violence: Protocol for Health Care Providers'. Under the protocol a survivor is entitled to three forms of service from a medical service provider- medical care, medico-legal care, and psychosocial service. However, due to being unaware, many doctors do not abide by the protocol. At the same time, doctors often feel hesitant to examine SGBV survivors as they have to produce reports and, if required, speak to the police and appear in front of the court as a witness which comes with inconveniences such as multiple visits and long waiting times at the court. Moreover, all doctors are not trained on providing medico-

legal care and basic psychosocial support. In 2018, the High Court Division of the Supreme Court of Bangladesh recognised this protocol and directed the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare to implement this training to all healthcare institutions and providers. Therefore, we need to ensure the implementation of this protocol and sufficient training of the concerned doctors so they can provide gender sensitive services to survivors. The Health Economics Unit works as the gender focal point of the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, and conducts training on this protocol with support from UNFPA. The training is provided to doctors as well as members of the law enforcement, judiciary and relevant officers of the Ministry of Women & Children's Affairs. We have already given ToT twice at the divisional level, and plan to extend this to all district levels.

- **Resolve issue regarding a doctor's duty to inform police irrespective of survivor's consent:** The protocol on Health Sector Response to Gender Based Violence adopted many internationally recognised standards and places a lot of consideration on the social and psychological status of the survivor and the overarching importance of ensuring their consent throughout the process. These standards suggest that that a medical personnel should only inform the police of an SGBV case if the survivor consents to it. However, our law states that when survivors of non-compoundable crimes such as sexual violence, attempt to murder and murder seek treatment from a hospital, the concerned medical personnel must report the case to the police. Therefore, our protocol suggests that apart from these cases, the consent of the survivor must be sought before reporting to the police. However, in many cases, survivors of sexual violence do not wish to report their case to the police worrying about the social stigma. Therefore, this puts us in a value dilemma: on the one hand we ought to uphold the consent of the survivor, but on the other hand, medical officers are legally obliged to report certain crimes to the police, and if a rape case is not reported, the perpetrator may simply get away after committing the heinous crime. The Ministry of Health and Family Welfare must therefore come together with the judiciary and other legal stakeholders to bring about an acceptable solution to this dilemma.
- **Disseminate Ministry of Health's module on clinical Management of Rape:** The Ministry of Health has also developed an audio-visual module in Bangla on Clinical Management of Rape (CMR), which is publicly accessible on the websites of the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, and the Health Economics Unit. The core aim of this module is to train doctors to provide services to rape survivors in a more humane manner. The video is divided into ten phases. The viewers need to answer a few questions at the end of each phase, and if they can answer 80 percent of the questions correctly, only then can they can move on to the next phase. If a viewer completes all ten phases, they will receive a web generated certificate for completion of the course. We have given training using the web-based module to doctors, nurses, and midwives, but I believe the training should be extended to law enforcing agencies, judiciary, and members of the Ministry of Women & Children Affairs. We are also in the process of developing a Standard Operating Procedure for the Clinical Management of Rape.



**Ali Asgor Swapon**  
Special Public Prosecutor,  
Violence Against Women and  
Children Tribunal, Dhaka



**Reena Debnath**  
Special Public Prosecutor,  
Violence Against Women and  
Children Tribunal, Narsingdi

## Prosecution and legal representation

- **Formulate Rules for Nari o Shishu Nirjaton Domon Ain 2000:** it has been over 21 years since the Nari o Shishu Nirjaton Domon Ain 2000 was enacted but the accompanying rules for the said Act is yet to be formulated. The rules should be urgently formulated to address the procedural gaps and ensure justice in SGBV cases.
- **Conduct research into identifying success stories of existing prosecution system:** We should learn from both the positive and negative experiences of justice seekers to formulate the best reforms to strengthen our prosecution system. Research should be conducted to capture major success stories where prosecution was successful and conviction was secured, based on which the strengths and best practices of the public prosecution system can be further magnified.
- **Avoid summoning irrelevant witnesses in high numbers:** As a prosecutor, I do not need 10 to 20 witnesses listed in the charge sheet to prove a case. If only the main witnesses were summoned then the trial period would reduce substantially and it would be possible to dispose the case much more quickly.
- **Ensure preparatory session between the public prosecutor and complainant:** As a prosecutor, if I could discuss the details of the case with the victim right away, then I could identify key witnesses whose testimonies could bring a favourable outcome for the case. If the victim and prosecution witnesses are brought to the public prosecutor two to three days ahead of their scheduled witness testimony in court, then I could help them memorise the key facts so they are able to give a stronger testimony. Usually, they arrive moments before the court hearing and I have little to no time to brief them before they have to testify in court. As a result, their testimony becomes very weak.
- **Introduce TA/DA for police involved in summoning witnesses:** Summoning the witnesses is the police's duty. There is no TA/DA allowance for police officers connected with summoning witnesses. If a TA/DA allowance was introduced for such police officers, then they would do this task more heartily.

- **Introduce victim and witness protection system:** We need to ensure that witnesses can return home safely after testifying in court. We also need to ensure safety of public prosecutors. For this reason we need a witness protection system, which would also extend to the prosecutors. Additionally, ahead of court hearings, the the victim and their family have to wait in the court balcony alongside the accused's side, which can be an intimidating experience for the victim and her family, since the accused's side always outnumbers the victim's side. Therefore we should also ensure that there is a separate waiting space in court for victims in SGBV cases.
- **Increase investment in judicial sector:** As public prosecutors, we also feel good when we can ensure conviction. However, we have so many cases in any given day. More judges and prosecutors need to be appointed, and more courts need to be established to overcome the backlog of cases. Out of court settlements takes place due to the delay caused by the court process.
- **Enhance use of virtual court procedures:** If we could conduct at least the Investigating Officer and Medical Officers' testimonies virtually, then that would strengthen and expedite the process. Currently, many days are wasted as they as these two crucial witnesses may not be available to attend court hearings.



**Monjurul Basit**  
Senior District and Sessions  
Judge (Retired), Rangpur;  
Advocate, Supreme Court of  
Bangladesh

## Trial and sentencing

- **Orient investigation officers on admissible and inadmissible evidence for SGBV cases:** investigation is the most important stage of the prosecution. If the victim complains about the occurrence of crime to any family member – that is also a piece of vital evidence, as per Section 8 of the Evidence Act 1872. In 80% cases the accused confesses to committing the crime, while in the police station. For instance, five people who are unconnected to a particular crime, went to the police station for some other purpose and heard an accused confessing to the crime. Then these five individuals are produced before the court as prosecution witnesses. However, according to Section 26 of the Evidence Act 1872, this evidence would be inadmissible. The difference between admissible and non-admissible evidence needs to be defined and mainstreamed so only admissible evidence is collected by the police.
- **Introduce monitoring mechanism for Public Prosecutors:** Public Prosecutors are appointed by the Ministry of Law. However, as judges we cannot hold them accountable in any meaningful sense, and that is not our duty either. However, there is no

monitoring mechanism to hold them to account, and this is a major problem. In order to strengthen public prosecution system for SGBV cases, we need to introduce an effective monitoring mechanism for public prosecutors.

- **Increase use of camera trials in SGBV cases:** Oftentimes a victim is in a state of fear. For instance, in one case I saw a rape victim shaking frantically due to accused being in front of her in the same room. By seeing her shaking I knew she would not be able to testify truthfully. So, I arranged for camera trial, and instantly she was in a more composed state. She was able to testify. In her testimony, she was able to corroborate her complaint.
- **Ensure victims have clear knowledge of court hearing dates:** Victims are often unaware of the court hearing dates. I have given my bodyguard the duty to call victims and remind them to attend court hearings. For instance, once my bodyguard called a witness asking why they have not been coming to court and then they responded saying that they had not received summon to appear for over three years. Although I asked her to come with one witness, she came with five other witnesses. That in itself shows the eagerness of victims and their witnesses, if only they know when to show up in court.
- **Ensure sentencing discretion and introduce sentencing guidelines:** Under the current law, the judge's discretionary power is severely curtailed. If it is a case of gang rape then judges have the option of giving life imprisonment or the death penalty. As a judge, if the evidence is not entirely convincing, I will order an acquittal because the lowest punishment I can give is life imprisonment. Due to this fear and lack of sentencing discretion, many judges will often hesitate to convict. This in turn will reduce conviction rates. The more severe the punishment, the more evidence the court will want. If the law only allows judges to give two severest penalties such as the life imprisonment or the death penalty – then the judge will demand a threshold of evidence that the prosecution in most cases will not be able to satisfy. Additionally, there is a need for concrete sentencing guidelines. since sentencing is highly subjective and in many cases mitigating circumstances may exist. Therefore, sentencing guidelines would help increase fairness and reduce contradictions in judicial sentencing.
- **Remove medical certificate requirement for cases filed under Section 11(c) of the 2000 Act:** Most of the cases are filed under 11(ga) of the Suppression of Violence against Women and Children Act 2000 are compounded. Due to the high number of false cases filed under this section, the High Court Division of the Supreme Court of Bangladesh had issued a direction stating that no case can be filed under this section without a medical certificate. Furthermore, if the case is later compounded between the parties, then the victim is required to say in open court that the case has been compounded. I have to disagree with the Supreme Court's reasoning in this regard. While I agree that countless false cases do take place, a complainant should need a doctor's prescription for the case to be filed as it violates their constitutional right to seek justice. Even if a woman's hair is pulled or she is punched lightly for the purpose of obtaining dowry, she has the right to seek justice but in such cases the nature of the injury will not require medical intervention, and therefore she will not have a medical certificate.

- **Enforce safeguards under Children Act 2013:** Under Children Act 2013 it has been specified who can remain in court during trials of cases involving children. It is for the Court to decide. The law even anticipates that if the police appears wearing their uniform – then the child victim might be afraid. That is why civil dress is ordered.



**Md Golam Kibria**  
Director (Training)  
Judicial Administration  
and Training Institute

- **Increase institutional capacity of JATI:** JATI has been established by an Act of Parliament (Judicial Administration Training Institute Act, 1995) with the mandate of training all judges, as well as public prosecutors, advocates enrolled in the bar and government pleaders. However, training of investigating officers and police officers is outside JATI's mandate and their training should be ensured from the respective authority. However, one of the major limitations is that our existing resources are not enough to provide training to around 1800 judges and a few thousand public prosecutors across the country. In order to ensure that we are able to ensure proper training for all judges and prosecutors across the country, JATI's institutional capacity should be increased.
- **Encourage use of gender sensitive safeguards in existing laws through training:** We give due focus to gender sensitisation in our trainings. For offences under the Suppression of Violence against Women and Children Act 2000, Prevention and Suppression of Human Trafficking Act 2012 and Children Act 2013 – we emphasise that all victims are women and children (since VAWC Tribunals often also operate as Children's courts), and therefore ask the judges and prosecutors to conduct themselves with due sensitivity. Gender sensitive provisions are already present in these laws, so we try to highlight those. For instance, there is provision for in-camera trial for rape survivors. So in our training we sensitise judges by emphasising that at least for rape survivors the in-camera trial should be used. Furthermore, there are 48 women help desks in police stations across the country. Police magistracy meetings and case management meetings are held in every district, where these issues can be raised.
- **Ensure use of closed door trials:** When the victim has to express the facts related to the rape in her own words in open court – in front of so many people –

they will become shaky. As Monjurul Basit has said, that due to the presence of the accused in the court, the victim shakes in fear – this happens all the time. This is a natural biological reaction. There is scope to do closed door trial. The judge can ask everyone to leave, even by asking only the concerned defence lawyer who is conducting the case to remain and all others to leave.

- **Encourage compounding cases filed under Section 11(c) of the Suppression of Violence against Women and Children Act 2000:** Section 11(c) of the Suppression of Violence against Women and Children Act 2000 has the highest number of cases and 99% of the cases under 11(c) gets settled eventually, as the victim herself requests the judge to settle the case. The offence under Section 11(c) has been made compoundable through the legal amendment of the Act in 2020 – so the Court will encourage to compound the case. What happens in these cases is that the husband has a fight with the wife, and ends up slapping his wife once or twice or he engages in extramarital affair, and so in order to bring him to the right path a dowry violence case under Section 11(c) is filed. The VAWC Tribunal gives order for investigation and then the husband is sent to prison for seven days without bail. Within those seven days the wife herself starts regretting the fact that her husband is in prison. In such cases I have seen that the husband and wife end up coming to the court hearing by travelling in the same rickshaw. Both parties want the case to be settled. However, I have also seen that the concerned advocates do not want them to come anywhere near the court – as they will stand to lose if the case is settled.
- **Conduct research to identify different categories of rape cases:** Always as judges we are confronted with questions about why the conviction rate in SGBV cases is so low. I agree that the conviction rate is low, but from my 34 years' experience as a judge – including in VAWC Tribunals – I must emphasise the need to understand the social structure and the nature of these cases. There are many categories of rape so we cannot lump them all together. For instance, in one case, a 13 year old girl had an affair and engaged in sexual intercourse. Her consent is not valid in the eyes of the law as is below the statutory age of consent. The case that was filed was of abduction and rape – making it a very serious offence. However, the girl broke down in court and said 'I went with him willingly. He has no fault'. If you are the judge in this situation, what will you do? We call these 'mutual' cases. Therefore, if you look at the actual rape cases by excluding these 'mutual' cases (where there is a love affair) then the conviction rate will be much higher. Therefore, we need research to be conducted that analyses different rape cases and categorises the cases according to the similar facts and nature of the case, rather than simply categorising the cases as per the section of the 2000 Act under which it was filed. Through we would be able to identify the number of rape cases which do not relate to love affairs or elopements. In such cases, the victim herself says 'I am also at fault', 'we will get married', and if the victim has become pregnant then how can I give conviction in such a case? This is our society. We must recognise our social reality.



**Md. Habibur Rahman Chowdhury**  
Deputy Director (Finance),  
Joint District & Sessions  
Judge, National Legal Aid  
Services Organization  
(NLASO), Law and Justice  
Division, Ministry of Law,  
Justice & Parliamentary  
Affairs representing

Md. Saiful Islam, Director  
(Senior District & Sessions  
Judge), NLASO

## Legal aid and support services

- **Activation of Legal Aid Committees and collaboration with One Stop Crisis Centres:** The National Legal Aid Services Organisation (NLASO) was mandated by the Legal Aid Services Act 2000 to provide legal aid to the distressed and poor, particularly individuals whose annual income was below one lac taka, freedom fighters whose annual income was below one lac and fifty thousand taka, with a focus on women, children, and persons with disabilities. NLASO was finally established in 2009 and while we have not achieved tremendous success, we are gradually building our capacity. Since 2009, we have provided legal support to 238,000 people, 60 percent of whom are women. We have formed legal aid committees at the district level, upazila level and union level, and we are developing a system to utilise these committees so that cases at the union level can be brought smoothly to the legal aid officer at the district level. We are also collaborating with the 12 One Stop Crisis Centres so that our panel lawyers at the district level can provide legal aid to the survivors who seek services from the Centres.
- **Ensure Alternative Dispute Resolution for civil cases and compoundable offences:** In addition to providing legal aid to individuals, NLASO conducts alternative dispute resolution (ADR) between parties in civil cases and compoundable criminal cases, which can include some SGBV cases. Family disputes cannot go to court without first attempting ADR. In the 8th Five Year Plan, ADR by NLASO has been given most priority, and for this fiscal year the government has assigned NLASO a target to resolve 20,000 cases through ADR. If civil cases and compoundable criminal cases are solved through ADR by District Legal Aid Committees then the burden on the courts will be lessened.
- **Software for online dispute resolution:** In the context of Covid-19, we have officially begun developing a software for an online dispute resolution. If we are successful in activating this software then many of the challenges survivors face when seeking justice can be mitigated, such as being threatened and fearing for their safety when going to the police station or to the court and the costs associated with long distances. However, the people we are serving come from the

most grassroots level and they often do not have access to much technology, and in many cases, they do not even own a phone. So, it will be very difficult to reach them using conventional methods of technology. Men in such rural communities are more likely to own or have access to technology, so we must target them and sensitise them, so they act as reporters whenever SGBV incidents occur in their communities.

- **Compensation for rape survivors:** Recently, the High Court Division of the Supreme Court issued a judgment relating to compensation for rape survivors, and the Court inquired whether NLASO is capable of disbursing compensation to the survivors if the government takes steps in this regard, and we responded to it by saying that we are capable of doing so.
- **Remove double burden on VAWC tribunal judges:** the question always arises why SGBV cases are not being disposed. Why are we not being able to ensure justice for survivors? It is due to the crisis of courts. The Sessions Judges in charge of the VAWC Tribunals must also act as the judge of Children Courts, which are special courts set up under the Children Act 2013 to deal with cases where either party is a child. Therefore, the time the judge was meant to provide to the VAWC Tribunal, they are now having to provide it to the Children's Court. As a result, the disposal of cases is becoming slow. Bangladesh has 1800 laws, but we only have 1200 judges. So, on average, each judge has the sole responsibility for 1.5 laws. Therefore, this double burden on VAWC Tribunal judges should be addressed if the case disposal is to be fastened.



**Jenefa Jabbar**  
Advocate  
Supreme Court of Bangladesh  
Director, Social Compliance &  
Safeguarding, BRAC

- **Reduce minimum punishments to increase sentencing discretion:** We must remember that the standard for proof in prosecution cases is beyond reasonable doubt. Oftentimes during reform discourse we propose changing this standard but this should never be the case. This standard was created to ensure that no innocent person is convicted. Therefore, the change needs to be in increasing sentencing discretion of judges. We must reduce the minimum punishment to make sentencing more flexible.
- **Engage NGOs in fact finding:** In rural areas, victims and survivors do not even know about the need to preserve *alamot*. They shower right away. There is a caseload of 3000 for each Public Prosecutor. So NGOs like BRAC can help ease burden on the public prosecution system with fact finding.
- **Invest in One Stop Crisis Centres:** currently we have 12 One Stop Crisis Centres, primarily in divisional cities – is this enough? Hundreds and thousands of girls are being violated across the country. We have One Stop Crisis Cells in 20 Upazila Health Complexes. We often

tell survivors of SGBV to preserve the evidence and seek justice but is this number of OCCs even enough to ensure they are able to provide their evidence and seek justice? A higher allocation needs to be there for One Stop Crisis Centres in the government's annual budget.

- **Reduce discrepancy in budgetary allocation between police and judiciary:** There is a 3.3 million case backlog, and if NGOs had not given legal aid, this backlog would have been even worse. We must remember that justice delayed is justice denied – because there is a cost to seeking justice. The Justice Audit 2018 showed that the total amount invested in police and in the judicial system had a huge discrepancy. While the police received a lot of money, the judiciary received very little. That is why such a huge case backlog exists. We have seen that it is possible to rule in a rape case within 17 days. But then we have also seen that in many cases over 17 years has elapsed without any sort of judgment. There is no alternative to increasing government's budgetary allocation for the judiciary and public prosecution system, so that witness protection, providing TA/DA for police and all other factors perpetuating this case backlog can be mitigated.
- **Invest in constructing shelter homes for SGBV survivors:** The constant struggle of a survivor is that the husband's house will not take her in, her father's house will not take her in and her brother's house will not take her in. So the survivor needs to find a shelter home. There are currently 8 Victim Support Centres across the country which provide short term, immediate shelter for a maximum of 6 days. However, whenever a victim goes to complain, the police officers think 'where will I keep this girl?'. Additionally, there are only 13 longer-term government shelter homes run by Ministry of Women and Children Affairs, as well as the Ministry of Social Welfare. Is this number enough to support thousands of survivors nationwide? The lack of adequate shelter homes is a major reason behind the reluctance on part of SGBV survivors in relation to filing cases.



**Nobonita Chowdhury**  
Director, GJD & PVAWI,  
BRAC

- **Ensure gender sensitivity:** We need to ensure gender sensitivity in all stages of the prosecution system. We want anyone working to combat SGBV to have the clarity to consider violence as violence, not something that happens because of anything that the survivor can be held responsible for. Therefore, dialogues are necessary, working in collaboration is necessary. We all need to diagnose our scope of improvement together, utilise our strengths together and create a gender-sensitive society.”
- **Compile Data from National Emergency Helpline and National Helpline on Violence against Women:** When we discuss about SGBV, it is important that we focus on all the different forms that SGBV may take and not just focus on the most grievous forms, such as rape and murder. Therefore, it is important to have

transparent and holistic data on VAWG. As NGOs cannot conduct surveys at a large nation-wide scale, we must collect data on VAWG cases from the National Emergency Helpline (999) and National Helpline on Violence against Women (109) to understand the number of VAWG cases reported and how they were responded to.

## Insights from the open discussion



**Sayedur Rahman**  
Programme Manager, Health Economics Unit

- Our training module on “Health Sector Response to Gender-Based Violence” focuses on three key service delivery areas: medical care, medico-legal (forensic) care and basic psychosocial support. It is designed in such a way that any frontline support providers, whether they are police, nurse, or health care providers, can undertake primary psychosocial support to SGBV survivors. Our web-based module on “Clinical Management of Rape” is an excellent e-learning platform for health care providers, which is accessible at public domain in both HEU and DGHS website. It contains audio-visual materials, a quick learning tool as well as a reference. We have also created a directory on services for SGBV survivors at the root level of the country. I believe we need more structured support services on these issues. In order to tackle the challenge of hospitals not having appropriate equipment to conduct medico-legal examinations, we have developed a toolbox which contains 22 essential components so that doctors can collect samples from a victim at the upazila level. We have distributed the box in 19 districts until 2021.



**Advocate Abdur Rashid**  
Ain O Salish Kendra

- “We talk a lot about the survivors who do not want to seek justice for one reason or another, but much less is said about those survivors who do take the decision to seek justice and experience a lot of challenges within the existing prosecution system. Corruption is also a reality, which causes investigation bias. We have heard from survivors’ family members today, who have faced a world of challenges within the prosecution process. One of them has said they hardly get the chance to speak to the public prosecutor. Therefore, one key challenge is the negligence of public prosecutors. When private lawyers such as myself go to support a

prosecution case, sometimes the public prosecutor gets displeased. Public prosecutors are not held liable if they fail to provide their services sincerely. Survivors must be dealt with honesty and respect, and to ensure these we must quality control of service providers, such as public prosecutors.”



**Advocate Rambal Saha**  
Bangladesh Mohila Parishad

- “In SGBV cases, the perpetrator can easily assign a lawyer of their choice but the survivors cannot which puts them at a disadvantage. If the survivor wishes to appoint their own lawyer, they must go through a very complicated process. According to the law, the judge has the discretionary power to allow this. If that does not happen, then the solicitor can also give permission, but through a very complicated process. This complicated process must be simplified so that survivors can appoint a lawyer of their choice if needed.”



**Advocate Robiul Mazumdar**  
Capacity Building Coordinator  
BLAST

- “The form given to a rape survivor when conducting the medico-legal examination is very lengthy and includes many intrusive questions that are irrelevant. I would suggest modifying the form to only require information that is directly relevant to prosecution of the case. Although the two-finger test has been prohibited, its use is not being stopped in practice. Additionally, there should also be coordination between all the sectors working on providing services to SGBV survivors such as the judiciary and the health sector. At the government level various coordination meetings, such as the police magistracy conference and case coordination meetings, are not held regularly. In this year, the police magistracy conference only took place in one district as per our knowledge. Only if such coordination meetings are held, will these gridlocks be solved. Therefore there is a need for more accountability and coordination between the various stakeholders working together.”



**Nasima Akter Jolly**  
Secretary, National Girl Child  
Advocacy Forum (NGCAF)

- “The Ministry of Women and Children Affairs has a welfare fund to support SGBV survivors based violence who experience challenges in seeking justice. I am one of the trustee members of the welfare fund and we have meetings every three months. One of the common financial challenges that have come to our attention is that survivors often have to reimburse prosecution witnesses who appear in court to testify in support of their case. This is a huge financial burden on them, and in many cases survivors do not have the financial means to be able to pay this cost. Therefore this fund would allow survivors to apply to receive financial assistance so they may be able to bear this cost. In order to receive assistance from this fund, SGBV survivors can submit an application to or contact the nearest Department of Women Affairs office at the union or upazila level, and service providers, such as NGOs, can also apply on their behalf.”

# Annex I: Schedule

10:30 AM – 10:35 AM	Opening remarks and moderation	<b>Shashwatee Biplob</b> , Programme Head (In-Charge), SELP, BRAC
10:35 AM – 10:45 AM	Presentation: The urgent need to strengthen the public prosecution system to ensure justice for SGBV	<b>Taqbir Huda</b> , Lead, Advocacy, Communication and PVAW, GJD, BRAC
10:45 AM – 10:50 AM	The scope of GO-NGO partnership in strengthening public prosecution system	<b>Mohammad Maruf Hasan</b> , Team Lead, Policy Research and Evidence, Advocacy for Social Change, BRAC
10:50 AM – 11:00 AM	Waiting for justice: Hearing from survivors' families	<b>Md. Abdul Mannan</b> <b>Md. Mojibur Rahman</b>
<b>Roundtable discussion: Identifying best practices and solutions</b>		
11:00 AM - 1:30 PM	Best practices in reporting and investigation	<b>Mohammad Tabarak Ullah</b> , Additional Deputy Inspector General (DIG) of Police, National Emergency Service, Bangladesh Police
		<b>Anna Minj</b> , Director, Integrated Development Programme; Advisor, SELP and Protection Cluster, HCMP, BRAC.
	Best practices in the collection of medico-legal evidence	<b>Dr. Sohel Mahmud</b> , Head, Department of Forensic Medicine, Sir Salimullah Medical Dhaka
		<b>Dr. Md. Shahadt Hossain Mahmud</b> , Director General (Additional Secretary), Health Economics Unit, Ministry of Health and Family Welfare
	Best practices in prosecution and legal representation	<b>Ali Asgor Swapon</b> , Special Public Prosecutor, Violence against Women and Children Tribunal, Dhaka
		<b>Reena Debnath</b> , Special Public Prosecutor, Violence against Women and Children Tribunal, Narsingdi
	Best practices in trial and sentencing	<b>Monjurul Basit</b> , Senior District and Sessions Judge (Retired), Rangpur; Advocate, Supreme Court of Bangladesh
		<b>Md Golam Kibria</b> , Director (Training), Judicial Administration and Training Institute
	Best practices in legal aid and support services	<b>Md. Habibur Rahman Chowdhury</b> , Deputy Director (Finance), Joint District & Sessions Judge, National Legal Aid Services Organization (NLASO), Law and Justice Division, Ministry of Law, Justice & Parliamentary Affairs
		<b>Jenefa Jabbar</b> , Advocate, Supreme Court of Bangladesh; Director, Social Compliance & Safeguarding, BRAC
		<b>Nobonita Chowdhury</b> , Director, GJD & PVAWI, BRAC
	1:30 PM - 1:55 PM	Open discussion
1:55 PM - 2:00 PM	Closing remarks	<b>Shashwatee Biplob</b> , Programme Head (In-Charge), SELP, BRAC

# Annex II: List of Participants

S/L	Name	Designation and Organisation*
1	Abu Said Md. Juel Miihah	Team Lead, Partnership and Capacity, Advocacy for Social Change, BRAC
2	Adv. Abdur Roshid	Senior Staff Lawyer, Ain o Salish Kendra
3	Adv. Rabiul Hossain Majumder	Coordinator, Capacity Building, BLAST
4	Ali Asgor Swapon	Special Public Prosecutor, Women and Children Repression Prevention Tribunal, Dhaka
5	Alpona J. Kujur	Manager, Integrated Development Programme, BRAC
6	Amrin khan	Technical Advisor, Research and Policy Reform, Role of Law Programme, GIZ Office Dhaka
7	Anna Minj	Director, Programmes, BRAC International
8	Asif Kashem	Senior Program Manager, Australian High Commission, Bangladesh
9	Azizur Rahman	Programme Manager, Social Empowerment and Legal Protection, BRAC
10	Chiraranjan Sarker	Advocacy Analyst, Advocacy for Social Change, BRAC
11	Daisy Akter	Lead, Disability Inclusion, Gender Justice & Diversity Programme, BRAC
12	Dr. Mohd. Shahadt Hossain Mahmud	Director General (Additional Secretary) Health Economics Unit, Ministry of Health and Family Welfare
13	Dr. Sohel Mahmud	Head, Department of Forensic Medicine, Sir Salimullah Medical Dhaka
14	Iffat Anjum	Policy Analyst, Advocacy for Social Change, BRAC
15	Jenefa Jabbar	Director, Social Compliance & Safeguarding, BRAC
16	Kazi Faria Muntaha	Deputy Manager, AR NA Pilot Project, Gender Justice & Diversity Programme, BRAC
17	Khaleda Akhter	Manager, Integrated Development Programme, BRAC
18	Komal Debnath	Special Public Prosecutor, Narshingdi
19	Md Habibur Rahman Chowdhury	Deputy Director (Finance), Joint District & Sessions Judge. National Legal Aid Services Organization, Law and Justice Division, Ministry of Law, Justice & Parliamentary Affairs
20	Md Golam Kibria	Director (Training), Judicial Administration Training Institute
21	Manjurul Basit	Senior District and sessions Judge (Retired), Rangpur and Advocate, Supreme Court of Bangladesh
22	Mohammad Tabarak Ullah	Additional Deputy Inspector General (DIG) of police, National Emergency Service
23	Maruf Hasan Khan	Team Lead, Policy Research and Evidence, Advocacy for Social Change, BRAC

24	Md Abdul Mannan	Father of a rape survivor
25	Md Mojibur Rahman	Father of a domestic violence survivor
26	Md Quamruzzaman	Programme Coordinator- Strategy and Technical, Social Empowerment and Legal Protection, BRAC
27	Md Saidur Rahman Khan	Program Manager, Health Economics Unit, Ministry of Health and Family Welfare
28	Md Shahjahan Hossain	Lead, Monitoring and Evaluation, Gender Justice & Diversity Programme, BRAC
29	Mir Shamsul Alam	Deputy Manager, Social Empowerment and Legal Protection, BRAC
30	Nadira Begum	Panel Lawyer, Gazipur Judge Court, BRAC
31	Nasima Akhter Jolly	Secretary, National Girl Child Advocacy Forum (NGCAF)
32	Nazia Islam	Policy Analyst, Advocacy for Social Change, BRAC
33	Nobonita Chowdhury	Director, Gender Justice & Diversity programme, Preventing Violence Against Women Initiative, BRAC
34	Nurunnahar	Manager, Advocacy, Gender Justice & Diversity Programme, BRAC
35	Pritiza Pratima	Partnership Analyst, Advocacy for Social Change, BRAC
36	Ram Lal Raha	Senior Advocate, Bangladesh Mahila Parishad
37	Razia Begum	Manager, Gender Responsive Education and Skills Project, Chittagong Hill Tracts, Gender Justice & Diversity Programme, BRAC
38	Reena Debnath	Special Public Prosecutor, Narsingdi Judge Court
39	Riful Jannat	Senior Development Advisor, High Commission of Canada to Bangladesh
40	Saeda Bilkis Bani	Lead, Organizational Development, Gender Justice & Diversity Programme, BRAC
41	Shaikh Shahanur Rahman	Investigation Officer, Gulshan Police Station
42	Shashwatee Biplob	Programme Head, Social Empowerment and Legal Protection Programme, BRAC
43	Sheikh Shariful	Panel Lawyer, Supreme Court of Bangladesh
44	Shrabana Datta	Knowledge Management & Monitoring Analyst, UN Women Bangladesh
45	S.M. Nazmul Hoque	Senior Staff Lawyer, Social Empowerment and Legal Protection, BRAC
46	Supti Diba	Assistant Project Director, Naripokkho
47	Tanzima Zaman	Manager, Gender Justice & Diversity Programme, BRAC
48	Taqbir Huda	Lead, Advocacy, Communications and PVAW, Gender Justice & Diversity Programme, BRAC
49	Zarfisha Alam	Manager, Communication, , Gender Justice & Diversity Programme, BRAC

\*The designations of the participants listed in this list are as at the time of the roundtable dialogue.

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