
Bangladesh Mahila Parishad (BMP) a lobby and advocacy organisation for Women's Human Rights



Introduction

Bangladesh Mahila Parishad (BMP) is the oldest and largest women's organization in Bangladesh. Having grown out of the liberation war in 1972, BMP values secularism, multi-culturalism, and democracy. BMP is a social movement organization different from most civil society organizations funded by donors. As a membership organization BMP has over 100 000 members organized in 2400 primary committees throughout Bangladesh. The large majority of those that work for BMP are volunteers. BMP is a social movement with nation-wide outreach, a strong network with professional organizations and well networked with civil society organizations. BMP has also close working relations with government.

BMP has adopted the CEDAW platform as the basis for its work. CEDAW offers a broad framework for working on most aspects of women's human rights, and serves as a guide for legal and policy work. Members of BMP include minorities and its aim is to be inclusive of minorities and to defend the rights of minorities.

The Mid-term review

Norad commissioned a mid-term review of the contract between the Norwegian Embassy in Dhaka and BMP in 2012. The review was carried by three consultants; Marit Haug, NIBR, team leader, Salma Akhter, University of Dhaka, Nurul Wahab, partner Wahab &co. The project activities, results, and impacts of BMP's work were assessed. This summary summarizes programme effectiveness according to the five outcome areas identified in the programme document.

1. Violence against Women

BMP has been successful in its advocacy work for legal change, and contributed to the law on domestic violence, the Hindu Registration Marriage Act, the Anti-trafficking Prevention and Control Act. BMP also advocated for a new law against sexual harassment, not yet passed. BMP's most important objective is to advocate for a universal family law. At the community level, BMP is visible as a women's human rights organization combating VAW through its legal programme, with protests against fatwas being one element. BMP's role in mediating family disputes and in filing cases in court has made it known in the communities in which it is active. Victims of sexual harassment have been an important target groups for BMP.

2. Political empowerment of women

The campaign ahead of the latest national elections for direct elections of women to 1/3 of the parliamentary seats, produced awareness among political parties, some of whom adopted the demand. Yet, the government that came to power did not implement the demand. The adoption of 1/3 remains BMP's most important objective for political change. BMP pushed for this in collaboration with other civil society organizations. In the area of local governance, BMP has initiated a new project with Danish funding to strengthen women's representation.

3. Women's human rights movement

BMP has its own network of volunteers and members. In addition BMP has a strong network of organisations and persons from the legal, medical, academic, and teaching professions. It serves as

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the secretariat for the Social Action Committee (SAC) and is well networked with civil society organizations. Through its networks BMP produces action and information on women's rights issues in a consistent manner. Over the last few years, BMP has given priority to developing media relations to ensure a more comprehensive coverage of gender issues. This work has contributed to changing media's discourse on gender.

4. BMP as a lobby and advocacy agent

The advocacy work undertaken by BMP is knowledge intensive and requires sustained efforts and long term commitment. BMP's advocacy success has been based on its expertise, experience, and consultations with resource persons and its own volunteers in the districts. BMP has achieved legislative change, policy change and increase in awareness on women's rights issues. It has been active on VAW issues, health- and education issues. The combination of expertise, its networks, and its own volunteers and members places BMP in a uniquely strong position and this potential could be utilized even further.

5. BMP is further strengthened

BMP has employed more paid staff at head office and in the districts. The new staff in the districts has received training in office management, accounting and computers which has increased effectiveness considerably. As a nation-wide organization with over 100000 members, the needs for training of its own volunteers and members is high, and there is a continuous demand.

The full report can be downloaded here:

<http://www.norad.no/no/resultater/publikasjoner/norads-rapportserie/publikasjon?key=399396>

