

**STORY  
OF  
DISPUTE  
RESOLUTIONS  
THROUGH  
COMMUNITY  
MEDIATION**



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## AKLIMA ESTABLISHES HER MOTHERHOOD THROUGH MEDIATION

Aklima, is the eldest among the three children of a poor rickshaw puller Manik Khan and his wife Rinu Begum. The small income of Manik Khan was not sufficient enough to maintain a family of 5 members. To manage well, Rinu Begum often used to work as a maid to the neighbor's houses. Despite of their poverty and hardship, they had somehow managed to send Aklima in a nearby school and she became a student of class V. In her school off days, Aklima used to assist her mother in conducting neighbor's household chores.

There was Sarmet Banu Bibi among her neighbor who often asked Rinu Begum to work for her instead of money. Aklima at times accompanied her mother and helped her in Sarmet Bibi's house. As Sarmet Bibi had a television set, the young Aklima used to visit the house so often to enjoy television programs.

Thus Aklima became the victim of a perverted fantasy made by Sarmet Bibi's 25 years old son Rafik Sarder. Rafik was attracted by Aklima's young body and beauty. He was planning to enjoy the young girl's body at anyhow.

One day, getting Aklima alone in the house, Rafik forcibly raped her and threatened her to kill if the news would spread out. He also assured Aklima to marry her and take care properly. Thus Rafik started acting with the young Aklima and she with her faith on Rafik's assurance and promise to marry her, often responded to Rafik's invitation for physical encounter.

Time passed and Aklima became pregnant. When she noticed her physical changes, Aklima informed Rafik and requested her to marry. Rafik assured her to marry within the soonest possible time. Thus, another 7 months passed away and Aklima became more tensed. It was really hard for her to avoid the sign of her pregnancy from other people's view.

One day, Rafik called Aklima at his house and gave her an oral medicine to swallow. Rafik told Aklima that the medicine would take care of both the mother's and the child's health. Aklima, without the second thought and having her faith on Rafik swallowed the medicine.

Returning home, Aklima became seriously ill. Her genital started bleeding and she was about to faint. Soon the news spread out rapidly and the relatives and neighbors of Aklima came to see her. Among them, there was Maleka Begum, a NU Woman Leader of Karapur Union. She questioned Aklima on her illness and assured her to provide all sorts of supports and cooperation to punish the criminal and establish her motherhood. Finally Aklima, being assured by the woman leader and others to have Justice revealed the name of Rafik Sarder as the rapist and criminal. Both Maleka Begum and other neighbors of Aklima asked Rafik Sarder about his crime and commitment to marry Aklima; but he denied.

In the meanwhile, Aklima became more ill and she was referred to Barisal Sher-E-Bangla Medical Collage Hospital for better treatment. Woman Leader Maleka Begum took the entire responsibility for transferring Aklima to Barisal Sadar from Karapur union. On her way to the hospital, Aklima became seriously ill and gave birth to a dead child. Maleka Begum put a verbal complaint to the nearby Airport Police Station and the police came to verify the scene where Aklima had been lying faint with an infant but a dead body.

Guided by Maleka Banu, Manik Khan, Aklima's father filed a case in the airport police station against Rafik Sarder for harassing and raping her underage daughter. By this time Aklima was also admitted into Sher-E-Bangla Medical College & Hospital and the concerned police officers of the investigation team visited and investigated Aklima. Aklima informed the investigation team about Rafik Sarder and demanded the recognition of her motherhood from Rafik by marrying her.

In consultation with the police station, the NU Karapur union office invited Rafik Sarder in a mediation meeting for settling the issue. Rafik was also warned to be handed over to the police if he would disagree or ignore the decisions of the mediation meeting. Rafik finally agreed to sit with the elite people of the village to settle the issue.

In the presence and witness of the UP chairman, UP members and other elites, a marriage had been registered between Aklima and Rafik in that

mediation meeting. Upon consents from all, BDT 200,000 was fixed as the maintenance cost for Aklima. Rafik Sarder promised to pay the maintenance within a given time and promised to provide proper honor and dignity to Aklima as his wife.

NU carefully observes the couple for more than one month, even after their marriage. NU follow up report says that, Aklima is happily living with her husband. Rafik also realized his sin. He hopes to be a father soon.

## 2

## DIPA AND JUMMAN GOT BACK NEW LIFE

Dipa from her very childhood was attractive and meritorious too. She was the eldest among the three children of Zakir Mallik of Char Aicha Village at Sayestabad union in Barisal sadar upazila. Zakir Mallik was capable enough to nurture his children with education and others and thus Dipa became a 10<sup>th</sup> class student of a nearby high school. Suddenly Jumman Mridha, a well-off businessman and inhabitant of Chandmari area, adjacent to the Barisal divisional stadium, proposed to marry Dipa. Zakir Mallik decided to respond as Jumman was financially solvent. Ignoring Dipa's appeal, he settled the marriage of her daughter with Jumman Mridha.

After their marriage, Dipa started living with her husband. During the first few days Jumman was quite capable to handle his business in a profitable way. After a few days, there were some problems in his business and Jumman had to spend a large amount of his investment. That created much trouble and Jumman became crazier. He became rude to Dipa and started torturing her for nothing. Days passed and one day Jumman ordered Dipa to visit her father's house and brought BDT 100,000 from her father. Dipa was well-known of his father's financial capacity and she had no way other than staying with her husband even after all the ignorance and violence. Dipa's mother in law was more aggressive and she demanded dowry directly. She even put a condition to Dipa "either 100,00 or out of family". When Dipa showed her ignorance towards their desire, they beat her hardly and told her to leave. Dipa, as she had no other solutions, came back to her parents house at Sayestabad and started living again with her own parents.

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After quite a while, Jumman Mridha came to Dipa's parent's house to bring back Dipa with him. Jumman behaved ill with Dipa and her entire family. Jumman was even attempted to punch his mother in law. In this situation, Dipa's mother told Jumman that Dipa would never join a family with a culprit husband like him. Jumman, out of anger left Dipa's house.

A few days after, the elder sister of Jumman along with his mother came to Dipa's house to bring back her. But again, there rose quarrel between the two family members, and they left away without taking Dipa with them.

Thus, another three months passed. Jumman again came to bring back Dipa. Dipa, that time forgetting all her anger and pain went away with her husband to her in law's family. There was no improvement in Jumman's business and there were frequent disturbance of the money investors from whom her husband used to borrow money. In fear of the money investors, finally Jumman without informing Dipa anything flew away towards Dhaka. In absence of Jumman, her mother started scolding and torturing Dipa. She reminded Dipa about the dowry and told her to manage the money from her father. When Dipa denied to tell her father, her mother in law and others tortured her violently. After that Dipa was unable to live with them and came back again to her parent's house at Sayestabad.

While Dipa was not finding her way out, suddenly she happened to meet Hanufa Begum, a woman leader of Char Aicha village. Dipa told every detail of her story to Honufa Begum. On June 26, 2015 Dipa registered a complain to the Sayestabad Legal Aid Center. NU Community mobilizer registered the complaint and in consultation with the Barisal sadar upazila NU Office, advised Dipa to get herself admitted into OCC (One Stop Crisis Center) in Barisal Shere-E-Bangla Medical College for better treatment. Dipa, with the cooperation of the woman leader Honufa Begum got admitted into the OCC.

After receiving the complaint, the NU Community mobilizer started an investigation and collected necessary information. When she was convinced about the complaint, she issued a legal notice to Jumman for a mediation meeting. She even talked with Jumman over the telephone and Jumman agreed to settle the case with Dipa in a mediation meeting. On the other, after a 3 day long treatment at OCC, Dipa was discharged and she came back to her parent's house at Sayestabad. NU Community Mobilizer met Dipa in her parents house and informed her about the progress of the mediation meeting. Finally, consulting with both Dipa and Jumman the mediation meeting date was fixed on May 31, 2015. Relatives, the local elites and the Ward Shalish Committee members were invited to attend the Shalish. After hearing both Jumman and Dipa, the Shalish Committee finally settled the issues upon the following conditions:

- Jumman will never create any pressure upon Dipa to manage money for paying his own loan.
- Dipa must avail the permission from her husband if she wants to help her family by performing professional jobs.
- Both of them must show their respect and honor to each other and

they will avoid all sorts of conflicts and classes.

- Nobody in Jumman Family would scold Dipa neither physically nor mentally.

After the conclusion of the mediation meeting, Jumman took Dipa along with him. When NU conducted the follow up, it revealed out that Jumman was then working with an organization at Dhaka. Jumman had been earning well and paying back his loan. Jumman even used to send an amount to Dipa to manage the daily expenses. Dipa expressed her feelings with this, “ It was not easy to bring out the solution. NU did it without doing anything wrong. We all are happy now.”



## 3

## DULAL GAZI AND KIRON BEGUM WERE SAVED FROM HILLAH MARRIAGE

Kiron Begum is the eldest daughter among the 04 children of Jalal fakir and Laily begum. They were the inhabitant of Mehendiganj upazila. It was really hard for Jalal Fakir to manage the butter and bread for all the 06 members of his family. Due to the hardship, none of his children were able to go to school. When Kiron became 17, Jalal fakir settled her marriage with Dulal Gazi, a 50 year old small trader and financially solvent person in the nearby West Jangalia village who intended to have a second wife.

Kiron, as a curse of poverty had no other option but to marry Jalal Fakir and live together with his 1<sup>st</sup> wife. Anyway, there had always been misunderstood in their conjugal life. As time passes, Dulal started beating her physically too. When the torture touched its extreme level, Kiron left Dulal's house and started living with her own parents at Mehendiganj. During that time, Dulal all on a sudden and out of anger upon Kiron, sent a divorce letter as she left her without notices. Within a short, Dulal Gazi realized his fault and went to his in-laws home at Mehendiganj to bring back his wife, Kiron with him.

There are always some disputes in man made social culture. Among human, there remains inhumane always in every culture and in every society around the globe. NU aims to free the victims from the trap of man made social norms and bring the procedure according to the existing laws.

A group of Muslim religious activists opposed Dulal Fakir's intention and summoned "Fatwa" (a man made religious obligation) that Kiron must go for a "Hillah Marriage (a temporary marriage with someone other than the previous husband to execute the divorce order made by the previous husband with a purpose to re-marry the previous husband and dismiss the divorce order). Due to the influence of religion and its traditional norms, the decision gained a tremendous support from the villagers too. But neither Dulal, nor Kiron agreed to obey that.

Dulal, on that very night, with Kiron flew away from that village and took shelter to a friend's house at Bukhai Nagar, Charmonai. Dulal shared his bitter experience and all that happened between them and the Fatwa

deciders to his friend Jakir Khandaker.

Hopefully Zakir was a member of the NU Ward Shalish Committee at that time. Being a conscious citizen, Zakir was quite aware of the existing laws and the wrong explanation of social and religious norms. NU possesses a culture to update its staffs with updated information, specially on legislative issues regularly. Zakir assured Dulal to find out the best solution and explained that there is no existence of “Hillah Marriage”. Zakir then discussed the case with Maksuda Begum, the concerned NU Community Mobilizer of Charmonai union. She, after talking with both Dulal and Kiron and having their consents arranged their re-marriage, according to the existing laws in cooperation and consultation with other Shalish Committee members. This time Maksuda and NU Union Shalish committee members were opposed by the Islamic activists of her own village. But they did not leave the battlefield. NU Union Shalish Committee members invited the intellectuals and religious activists to an open mediation.

Finally an instant mediation was held where a group of influential villagers along with the members of Shalish committee. After a long debate, the villagers and Islamic activists were convinced that Dulal and Kiron do not need any Hillah marriage as the official marriage order has no direction on that. Finally, with the consents of all a decision was made that there were no barricade for Dulal and Kiron to remarry and reunite. They also arranged re-marriage of Dulal and Kiron by following the formal and religious procedure. BDT 100,00 was fixed as the maintenance cost for remarrying. Jointly with the NU Shalish Committee members the villagers also advised the couple to live with peace and happiness and never do the same wrong again.

The NU Follow up report says that a short after their remarriage both Dulal and Kiron visited the Kiron’s Parents house at Mehendiganj. Both her parents and the villagers seem to be cooperative as they did not question them anything about that.

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## JESMIN GOT BACKHER ALIMONY

Jesmin is the only daughter of Md. Johur Ali of East aypura village of Magar union in Nalchity Upazila. Johur Ali was a poor day laborer and he had only a small earning which was hardly enough to meet up the family's daily expenses. Having the curse of hardship all around, Zohur Ali did not dare to send Jesmin to school for education.

When Jesmin reached her adulthood, Both Zohur and wife planned to settle their daughter's marriage as soon as possible. One day having proposed from Al-Amin of Barisal City Corporation area, Zohur Ali and wife agreed to settle the marriage of Jesmin with Al-Amin. Johur Ali, after a long trouble, managed to borrow necessary money to arrange the function as well as a pre-fixed amount as dowery.

After their marriage, Al Amin brought Jesmin to his parents house and started living jointly. Their first few days passed well. Jesmin tried her best to manage her in-laws. But Al-Amin's parents were never with the services of their son's bride. Her mother-in-law used to scold her brutally for nothing. More days passed and Al-Amin and his family started torturing her physically beside the mental abuse. For silly reasons, they used to hit and scold Jesmin every now and then.

When the tortue became violent for Jesmin to tolerate, she left her in laws house and went away to her Father's house at Nalchity. She had a hope that hr husband would realize his mistake and come to see her. But Al-Amin was never seen there to be taken care of Jesmin. Though, Jesmin's family was horribly poor, Al-Amin or any one of his family had no botheration on what Jesmin was doing or what she was eating or wearing. With her parents, it became really hard for her to survive. Moreover, there were teased and taunts made by the neighbors and relatives for Jesmin's inability to manage her husband and build up a conjugal life. So Jesmin started working as a housemaid at the neighbors to support her and old parents.

Sajeda Begum is the General Secretary Of Citizen Rights Group of Magor union. She was selected as the "JOYITA" of 2014 in Nalchity union. She had a terrible past in her married life where torture and violence by the in-laws was her everyday companion.

One day Sajeda Begum suddenly met Jesmin and her mother on the village path. After initial greetings, Sajeda in her leadership gesture and responsibility asked Jesmin her whereabouts. Jesmin and her mother told the detail pathetic story to her. Sajeda put her words to Jesmin and her mother to move with the issue and assured them to have proper justice without any cost involvement. She then advised Jesmin and her mother to register a complain against Al-Amin to the NU Community Mobilizer of Magar union. Accordingly Jesmin on September 14, 2014 Jesmin registered a criminal complain against her husband.

NU Community Mobilizer, after having the complaint collected necessary information and issued legal notice to Al-Amin and his parents for a social mediation to settle the issue. They were also invited at Magar union office for the mediation. But Al-Amin and his family denied to sit in Magar Union Parishad office and finally having consents from both the parties, the mediation was held in Barisal regional NU office on October 25, 2014. Beside the officials of the NU Barisal regional office, NU Panel Lawyers, members of the Ward Shalish Committee, local elites, Jesmin, Al-Amin and their families were present. Hearing details from both Jesmin and Al-Amin, the Shalish Committee finally made the following decisions and the case was dismissed upon the consents of all:

- As Al-Amin does not want to continuing his conjugal life with Jesmin, he must pay BDT 40000 as alimony to Jesmin in 03 equal installment.
- The divorce will be effective only once it is made in presence of an official divorce register by following the legal procedure.

NU Folow up report says that Al-Amin failed to pay the first 2 installment in due dates. When the members of the NU Ward Shalish Committee members communicated with Al-Amin and asked, he replied to pay the whole money in the 3<sup>rd</sup> installment date.

On February 08, 2015, Al-Amin came to Barisal Regional Office and paid BDT 36,000 to Jesmin. He also apologized for his inability to manage the rest 4000. Jesmin agreed to forget the rest 4000 and was happy with what Al-Amin had provided her as alimony.

The NU follow-up report says, Jesmin is still living with her parents in her village. Both Jesmin and her mother are trying to start homestead gardening. Some of her money has already been spent for her father's treatment. Jesmin told the NU, "The amount is small... but I have a large hope on it. I never thought of having my alimony. NU made this happen. I am grateful to NU for my new life."

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## THE STRUGGLE OF JHUNU BEGUM

Jhunu Begum, the youngest daughter of Abu Sarder and Amena Begum was married to Monir Hossain in her 18. Due to her family's insolvency Jhunu could not continue her school after class VIII. Her father Abu Sarder of Bisharad village in Tungibaria union of Barisal sadar upazila was a poor day laborer and when Monir Hossain of Norkathi village proposed to marry Jhunu, Abu Sarder did not hesitate to express his consent.

After their marriage, ten years passed away and Jhunu became the mother of two daughters and a son. Monir Hossain used to carry passengers with the rented motorbike and his earning was really poor. Jhunu Begum, to support his husband's finance used to take care of homestead gardening and small scale poultry. She even send her eldest daughter to the nearby school for having education.

After 10 years of their marriage Monir became involved with gambling. With other motorbike drivers, he started to spend his time on gambling. Thus the addiction became extreme and one day, to collect money for gambling, Monir sold his motorbike, the only source of his income. When Jhunu asked him about the motorbike, Monir replied that he had sold the motorbike to start another new business. But Monir had no money left for starting the new business. He even lost his motorbike on gambling and became workless.

As a result, the entire family felt into a terrible situation. Without having any regular income, it became impossible for Jhunu Begum to manage the family. She had to quit the education of her daughter. There were scarcity all around the family and they had to stay without food so often. As time passed, differs and conflicts started to arise between Jhunu and Monir. Monir demanded money for initiating a new business and ordered Jhunu to collect the money from her parents. Jhunu was very well known of her parents financial status and she denied Monir. It made Monir more ferocious and every now and then Monir started to abuse and torture her. Thinking of their children's future, Jhunu decided to tolerate the torture but she could not as Monir one day pushed her out of the house and told her to not come back without money.

Jhunu had no way other than returning to her own parents at Bisharad village in Tungibaria union. Her life became more pathetic as her parents were not also free from the scarcity. With three children and nothing with her to support the family, Jhunu was truly helpless.

By this time, her husband Monir also left his village and went to Dhaka in search of job. After few days, Jhunu heard that her husband Monir had married another woman in Dhaka. Hearing that Jhunu had become speechless. She could not find out where to go with her three children. Her neighbors and relatives advised her to file a criminal case against Monir, but Jhunu did not want to make her husband criminal. She never thought of filing case against her husband. Moreover she had no money to run the file, pay the lawyer's and other fees. Her neighbors then told her about Nagorik Uddyog and informed that NU usually mediate the family issues through mediation. They further informed that, all the legal aid support and the lawyer's suggestions were free of cost and NU does it for ensuring justice to the deprived people. Jhunu was somehow familiar with the social mediation process that were usually organized in rural areas to settle family or social disputes. But those traditional mediation were often under questions as the decisions had not always been according to the legal framework. Sometimes the decisions had been made against and for in exchange of money. So Jhunu was in a hesitation as she had no money to offer. One of the Citizen Rights Claiming Group member then assured her to have justice without bribe and advised her to talk with the NU Community mobilizer to learn about the process.

NU, organized an orientation on Law and Mediation in Tungibaria union at that time, and Jhunu Begum accompanied by the Citizen Rights Claiming Group members met the NU panel lawyers and discussed with his problems. With the prompt effort of NU, a formal criminal complain against Monir was registered.

The NU Community Mobilizer, after the preliminary investigation, issued a legal notice to Monir and invited him in a mediation. But Monir showed no responses. The NU Community Mobilizer then issued the final letter with warning to Manir and copied the notice to the members of the Ward Shalish Committee. But Monir, this time ignored the notification and was not present in the mediation.

The NU Community mobilizer then forwarded a complain to the Union Parishad. The UP Chairman also asked Monir to settle the issue. But without obeying the Chairman, Monir flew away. After that, the UP Chairman asked

NU to file case against Monir and offered his warmest cooperation to find the criminal.

NU then upon the consent of Jhunu Begum filed a criminal case against Monir to Judge Court on Dowry Act:4. After a few days, an warrant to arrest Monir was issued. Another case was filed by the Govt. against Monir on alimony and maintenance for Jhunu Begum. Thus Monir had been pressurized from every corners to settle the issue with Jhunu Begum. Monir, after hiding for a few days, agreed to negotiate the issue through mediation. He proposed the Union Parishad to rearrange the mediation.

By this time, Monir divorced his second wife too. Monir also expressed his willingness to reorganize his conjugal life with Jhunu Begum too. Jhunu, at first wanted to claim her alimony and maintenance, but in consultation with her neighbors and relatives, she finally decided to live with her children's father.

Having consents from both Monir and Jhunu, the mediation was organized in presence of their relatives, UP chairman, UP members, Ward Shalish Committee members and social elites. Both Jhunu and Monir described their detail story. Monir even regretted for his misbehavior and promised to not repeat that in future. Jhunu, being convinced and for the sake of her children, agreed to rebuild her life with Monir too. Finally the mediation was concluded with the following mutual decisions:

- Though both the accused and accusers are in yet relationship, and as the intend to continuing their conjugal life, they would overcome their misunderstanding and would live with peace.
- Monir must put his commitment to manage and maintain his family and children properly.
- Monir Hossain would never claim any dowry from Jhunu and would never torture her.
- Any of Monir's relative would never scold or abuse Jhunu physically, mentally or in any other shape.
- Jhunu and her children will live either with Monir in his house, or Monir must build/manage a separate house for Jhunu and their children to shelter in.
- If Monir does not comply with the decision, or if any further complain

against Monir is registered by Jhunu on violence, Jhunu, in support of NU and local UP, would forward the case to the judge court.

The NU report says that Monir, soon after the Shalish on that day brought Jhunu and their children to his own home. Jhunu and her three children were really happy to live together with their parents. NU observed both Monir and Jhunu in close contact. After three months, when their conjugal life became settle, NU upon consent of Jhunu withdrew the case from the court. During those all three months Monir and Jhunu had been with the counseling to build a successful family life.

When NU team met with Jhunu after three months, she expressed her feelings in these lines, “Monir does not torture me now. But he had lost his everything on gambling. Now we both are working to earn more. If NU did not stand beside me, it would not be possible for me to get back my family.”

Right now Jhunu begum and her husband are living together in Dhaka. Both of them are working in a Garments factory at Uttara. Both of them are trying their hard to save money and purchase a piece of land in their village to pass their rest of life.



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## REKHA GOT BACK HER ALUMUNI AND MAINTENANCE

Rekha Akhter, a 17 year old school going girl was married to Kalam Sarder, a middle east living young man of the same union, Chandshi in Gournadi upazila. Though Rekha at that time was preparing for her upcoming secondary school examination, her father did not want to miss the chance as Kamal Sarder and his family was financially sound. Finally the marriage was registered upon an official marriage registrar in May 2015 and the alumni were fixed at BDT 150,000.

After the social ritual and other necessary traditional formalities, Rekha Begum with huge hopes in her young eyes went away with her husband to restart another life along with her lifelong partner. A few days passed well and one day Kalam Sarder flew away to Dubai, his working place, assuring Rekha to return as soon as possible.

Rekha, with imaginary dreams in her eyes kept on waiting for her husband' news. A few days later, she noticed that her husband Kalam Sarder had been trying to avoid any conversation with her. If Rekha requested her in laws to hand over her the mobile phone, Kalam would switch off the connection from the other end. Rekha tried her best to find out the reasons through her in laws, but they ignored her. She tried to communicate with Kalam with her all the known possible ways, but all those ended fruitless.

Thinking of her husband and the ill fate, Rekha became mentally sick. She had been living with her in laws and everyone around her were cooperative, helpful and gentle but no one explained her about her husband's sudden misbehavior.

On July 14, 2015 just only after 2 months of their marriage, Rekha Begum received a mail from her husband Kalam Sarder. She became out of her own control finding a divorce letter issued by her husband Kalam Sarder. The innocent Rekha, as she could not find out what her fault was, became mentally sick.

Hearing Rekha's misfortune, her relatives brought Rekha back to her parents home. Rekha was given necessary medication and counseling.

During her illness, relatives and neighbors used to meet and console her for the misfortune. Through them, Rekha gradually came to know that, before marrying Rekha, her husband Kamal Sarder was in an affair with his cousin sister. Affair between the cousins was known by the both guardians and the eldest members of the families never agreed to support the marriage. Kalam Sarder, though finally agreed to marry Rekha upon the instruction of his father and to make the old man happy, he had never been agreed to tie a family with anyone other than his cousin sister.

So after the marriage, when Kalam Sarder went to the Middle East, he also carried a divorce notice with him.

Neither Rekha nor her family members knew what to do or where to go in this situation. Rekha, after being recovered from the illness; discussed with her acquaintances for a positive solution. Among her neighbors, there were Lipi Begum and Kulsum Begum, two members of the NU Ward Shalish Committee. After hearing the details from Rekha, they assured her to bring out the probable solution according to the existing laws and in consultation with the lawyers. They invited Rekha's father to the Ward Shalish Committee meeting.

On the Ward Shalish Committee meeting, Rekha's father described the entire story of his daughter's fate. Hearing the details, members of the Ward Shalish Committee advised him to register a criminal complaint against Kalam Sarder and assured him to execute the case within the legal framework.

Finally the complaint was registered on March 12, 2015 and the NU Community Mobilizer after launching a primary investigation, issued a legal notice to Kamal Sarder. In the absence of Kamal Sarder, the notice, along with an invitation to settle the issue through mediation was sent to his father Aziz Sarder. Aziz Sarder after having the letter agreed to settle the issue through a social mediation. He requested NU to execute the mediation neutrally as he was ready to pay the penalty of his son's misdeeds. Aziz Sarder also requested to avoid all sorts of cases and courts and put his commitment to abide by the decision of the mediation.

Finally, having consents from both the parties, the mediation was held on April 3, 2015 in the presence of the UP Chairman and UP members, local elites and the members of the Ward Shalish Committee. Though Aziz Sarder, at first denied to pay the alumni or maintenance, finally he agreed when the NU Shalish Committee members explained him why he was bound to

pay that according to the existing law. After a long discussion, finally the mediation was concluded with the following decisions:

- The divorce will be effective after registering officially.
- Aziz Sarder, on behalf of Kalam Sarder would pay BDT 130,000 to Rekha Begum as alumni and maintenance.
- No parties would involve in filing criminal cases against each other.

NU follow up report says, according to the decision the divorce has been registered officially and Aziz Sarder paid BDT 1,30,000 to Rekha Begum. When NU Follow Up team visited Rekha in her parent's house, she was then preparing for the next year's SSC exam.

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## RESHMA FINALLY GAINED THE JUSTICE AND ESTABLISHED HER RIGHTS

Reshma, the only daughter of Abdur Rahman Akan and Rahima Begum of Chunarchar village in Mehediganj Upazila. From her very childhood, Reshma was intelligent and attractive. As she was the only child, her parents tried their best to bring up Reshma properly. Thus Reshma became a student of class X in nearby Sadekpur Secondary School.

Because of her beauty and glamor, the village young men group used to disturb her on various ways. It became a regular routine for Reshma to being teased every time on her way to school. Some wicked young men even dared to visit Resma's house on false purposes just to disturb her. At the same time, proposal to marry Reshma had also been forwarded to Reshmas parents from far and nearby places too. Thus the situation became out of their grief, and in spite of having a strong urge to complete her education, her parents settle the marriage of Reshma with Maidul Islam of nearby Zangalia union.

Maidul's father was a popular school master of Siinrchar village and Reshmas parents became relief of having an educated family as their relative. They simply believed on Maidul's father and were informed that Maidul had his job in a Govt. organization with a handsome salary and their daughter Reshma would live a happier life as maidul's wife. Hearing of Maidul's qualification and income, finally the marriage had been settled with a maintenance cost of BDT 100,000.00.

After the marriage Reshma went away with her husband to her new address. A few days later, her husband Maidul went back to Dhaka to attend his job. After four months of the marriage, Reshma's mother came to visit her new relative's house to see her daughter with seasonal fruits as traditional Bangladeshi social culture. Reshma's mother stayed there for one day and was informed about the hidden truth regarding Maidul through the neighbors. She, for the first time of her life, came to know that Maidul had an early marriage and his 1<sup>st</sup> wife had divorced Maidul for performing physical torture on her. Reshma's mother was also informed that Maidul was not educated enough and he had been performing his job as a Security Guard in Dhaka.

Reshma's mother after hearing all the stories regarding her daughter's husband could not decide what to do. On the next day, she left the house without telling anything to her daughter as those news might be intolerable for the young girl, Reshma.

But Resma could not escape from the tyranny of her in laws family. They used to torture her for nothing and upon silly reasons. If Reshma complained to her husband, Maidul simply ignored her. Thus another few month passed and Reshma became pregnant. In that physical condition it became impossible for her to tolerate the torture, and finally Reshma one day left the house and came to her own parents house.

There Reshma gave birth to her 1<sup>st</sup> daughter. Hearing the news, Maidul came from Dhaka to see his new born daughter. After staying with Reshma for a couples of day, Maidul went away to his working place. After that, Maidul had no news for a long time. If Reshma wanted to try to talk with her husband over telephone, he used to avoid her by mentioning false.

Another months passed and Maidul's father came to see his grand son. On her arrival, Reshma's mother asked her about Maidul and discussed the things that she heard of Maidul from the neighbors. Maidul's father admitted the truth and advised her to follow the decision of the fate.

After that neither Maidul, nor anyone of the family had seen to communicate with them. If Reshma or her mother used to ask his Father about Maidul, he used to avoid the question by mentioning false.

Some other days passed away, and suddenly one day Maidul send a representative to Reshmas family demanding BDT 200,000.00 as dowry. That representative assured Reshma's parents that, if Maidul had been given with the money, there would be no more conflict and Reshma would live happily with her husband and in laws.

Hearing the demand of dowry, Reshma's father talked with Maidul's father and he too replied the same. Reshma's family was unable to manage the large amount of money. They requested both Maidul and his father to reduce their demand, but neither Maidul nor his father agreed to have the less.

Finding no other alternatives, Reshma's family tried to resolve the issue according to the existing legal procedures. Hearing from a neighbor about the ongoing activities and objectives of Nagorik Uddyog, Reshma's father met with the NU Community Mobilizer of Mehendiganj union. The NU Community Mobilizer, then met Reshma at her house and hearing the

details from her registered a complain against Maidul and his father on performing domestic violence and demanding dowry.

After collecting the necessary information, the NU Community Mobilizer issued legal notices to Maidul and his father and invited them to settle the issue through mediation. Maidul's father also put her words to attend the mediation. During the mediation, Maidul's father showed his rude behavior to Reshma and her family and denied any decision through mediation. He even declared that Reshma would never be able to share her life with Maidul, if she failed to manage the money. He even reminded his social power and influences that he gained as a teacher.

Nagorik Uddyog also reminded him the legal aspects of the complaint, but Maidul's father was not convinced. Finally, when the situation became out of the control and the issue was hard to settle through mediation, Reshma was referred to the Barisal district Legal aid Office for having Govt. legal aid support.

After registering the case, the Advocate Nazrul Islam Chunnu, a panel lawyer of Nagorik Uddyog took the entire responsibility to fight for establishing rights of Reshma. As a result of the strong movement the warrant to arrest the criminals had also been issued from the court.

Hearing of the case and the warrant, Maidul and his father requested the NU Official to withdraw the case from the court and promised to treat Reshma with honor and dignity. When NU informed the proposal of Maidul and his father to the court for mitigating the issue through the mediation, the respected Judge for the first time of the court's history, recommended the existing case to the District Legal Aid Office for a better solution through mediation.

The District Legal Aid Office accordingly issued legal notices to Maidul and his father. Both Maidul and Reshma showed their consents to restart their family life.

Upon the request from Maidul and his father, the case had been withdrawn from the court. Maidul at that time had been working at Patarhat union and he started living together with his wife Reshma and the daughter by renting a house.

Thus a few days passed away, and Maidul along with his wife Reshma again started living with her parents. All the members of her in laws had been looking for the opportunity to take the revenge against Reshma. They

tried Reshma to make her agree to divorce Maidul, but Reshma denied. As a result all the family members of Reshma's in laws started torturing her unless she became faint.

On the next day, when Reshma gathered her consciousness, returned to Patarhat and got herself admitted into the health complex with the support of Nagorik Uddyog office. Reshma, while in treatment, registered a criminal complaint against her husband and in laws to the Patarhat Police station. The NU officials guided her properly to file her case.

After initial inquiry, Maidul had been arrested and was imprisoned for three months. After that, the case was refereed to the Public Prosecutor for settling the issue properly through mediation.

Both Maidul and his appointed lawyers attended at the mediation meeting. As neither Maidul nor Reshma was any more interested to share their conjugal life with, it was decided to effect their divorce through a formal and official divorce registration and before the divorce Maidul would pay BDT 1,00,000.00 as maintenance cost to Reshma and another BDT 1,40,000.00 for the kid.

The Nagorik Uddyog Follow Up report says that Reshma is now happy of making herself free from her in laws torture. She had already received the maintenance cost as per the decision. Reshma deposited BDT 140,000.00 in Bank bearing the educational expenses for her daughter.

Seeing the NU Officials, both Reshma and her father expressed their gratitude to Nagorik Uddyog.

## 8

## SAHERA KHATUN FINALLY RECEIVES DOWER AND ALIMONY

Sahera Khatun is the 2<sup>nd</sup> daughter among the 04 children of Md. Moslem Hawlader of Kamdebpur village at Mollarhat union of Nalchiti Upazila. Moslem Hawlader is a farmer and he needs to work hard to support his family. Due to poverty; Moslem Hawlader was not able to spend for Sahera's education. Rather, when Saleha was a young girl, her father made her marry with Md. Zahidul Islam of the neighboring village.

After her marriage Sahera started living with her husband in her in-maw's house. Zahidul, at that time was fully unemployed and had to depend on his father's income. Within a few days of their marriage, her husband Zahidul Islam and other members of the family used to torture her physically and mentally in demand of dowry. Sahera's parents were unable to pay the dowry and Sahera had nothing to do against her husband. Even after all the tortures, Sahera intended to live with her husband in the same house. As time passes, the torture became so extreme that Sahera had to come back to her parents house. After that, nobody of her in law's family cared about her.

Md. Razzak, a member of the NU Ward Shalish Committee, through an authentic and reliable source informed about Sahera and on her current situation. Out of his own responsibility, Md. Razzak visited and met Sahera to collect more and accurate information with an attempt to help Sahera. After hearing all the details from Sahera, Md. Razzak advised her to register a complaint to the NU Community Mobilizer. Finally, Sahera, encouraged by Md. Razzak registered a complaint against her husband Zahidul on June 2014 at Mollarhat union NU Shalish Center.

After conducting the preliminary investigation and finding out the truth, the NU Community Mobilizer issue legal notice to Zahidul. After having Zahidul's consent to settle the issue through a social mediation, finally the mediation was conducted on June 18 2014. Both Sahera and Zahidul, their relatives, local elites and members of the Ward Shalish Committee were present.



Though Zahidul confessed his mistakes, he denied to continue his marital relationship with Sahera. The mediators tried Zahidul and his family to convince, but they failed.

After a long discussions and debates, finally the mediation was concluded with the following decisions:

- Zahidul must pay BDT 50,000 as maintenance to Sahera. Zahedul must return all the goods that Sahera's father gave him as "gift" for marrying his daughter.

The NU Follow Up report says that Sahera Khatun had received BDT 50,000 and the goods. He never thought of claiming and get her dowers, and maintenance as she said, "I never thought of having this much money together."

Right now Sahera is living with her old father. She is trying to develop her skills and capacity to be a self employer.

## 9

## SHAHIDA BECAME FREED FROM HUSBAND'S TORTURE

Sonia Akhter Shahida is the eldest daughter Mozibur Rahman Hawlader and Maksuda begum of Kalash village in Kashipur union of Barisal sadar upazila. Both Shahida and her three siblings were meritorious since childhood and their parents tried their best to educate them. Shahida passed her Matriculation successfully and was admitted into Kashipur Degree College for higher education.

When Shahdia was a student of HSC, SM Saiful Islam of Chunachor village in Mehendiganj upazila proposed to marry her. Saiful Islam was educated and had his job with a large tele-communication service provider, Banglalink. Due to his job, Saiful used to stay in Dhaka. Having proposed by Saiful, Sahida's father decided to settle her daughter's marriage with Saiful thinking of her education, status and solvency. Moreover, he thought, after their marriage, both Saiful and Shahida would live together in Dhaka and form their own nuclear family.

Finally, the marriage between Shahida and Saiful was settled without any demand or dowry. The Alimony was settled as BDT 150,000. After their marriage, Saiful took his new bride to his elder brother's house at Palashpur, Barisal. A few days later, Saiful left Shahida at his elder's house and went to Dhaka to attend his job. Saiful promised Shahida to take her to Dhaka with him within the next 2 or three months after making initial arrangements like furniture and household apparatus. Shahida with her innocent feelings; believed her husband blindly.

Months passed, but Saiful did not bring her to Dhaka. He used to visit and send money to Shahida but Shahida found, Saiful had been playing hide & seek with her. Whenever she asked him to settle together in Dhaka, Saiful would usually avoid her by demanding a few days more. Thus, another few months passed and Shahida had been living at Saiful's elder's house. Suddenly one day, Saiful informed Shahida that he had left his job and he would manage his own business. Saiful also ordered Shahida to manage BDT 200,000 from her family to support his business.

Shahida denied first, but Saiful threatened her saying that he would never take Shahida with him if she would fail to manage the demanded money. Saiful's elder brother and his wife also created pressure on Shahida to bring the money and support her husband.

Shahida, having no other alternatives, finally went to her parents and told them the details. Thinking of her daughter's future, her father decided to provide BDT 100,000 to Saiful. But Saiful did not agree to get lesser than BDT 150,000. Shahida's parents were quite unable to manage the money and they had no way to compromise. Saiful, at a stage seized all sorts of communication with Shahida. If Shahida would try to communicate with her husband, Saiful, out of anger had talked and behaved rude. Thus, another year passed and Shahida, even her marriage had to remain alone with her own parents.

To see an end, Shahida with her relative one day went to Dhaka and informed Saiful about her arrival. Hearing that Saiful switched off his cellular and Shahida had no other means to communicate with him. After a hard try, Shahida managed one of Saiful's friend's house in Dhaka. From the friend Shahida was informed that Saiful had a previous wife and a son. He also told Shahida that Saiful was living with his previous wife then and Saiful did not want to keep any sort of communication with Shahida.

Hearing that, Shahida returned her parent's house at Kashipur. Shahida, even after hearing those all wanted to resettle everything but Saiful had never paid attention to her. He told Shahida to issue him a divorce letter. Thus Shahida and her parents felt into a terrible situation and they had nothing to do against the fate or nowhere to place their complain.

Shahida's mother Maksud Begum once attended in a group meeting organized by the NU Kashipur union on the premise of Women Leader Sajeda Begum. In that group session there was a specific session on divorce and its procedures according to the state laws. Through the discussion, Maksud Begum was informed that, in case of divorce, whoever, either the husband or the wife orders it, the husband must be bound to pay the alimony to his wife according to the marriage register certificate. Maksud was also known that, there are legislative prohibitions on violating the divorce law.

Maksud then discussed the entire story of her daughter with women leader Sajeda Begum and Sajeda advised her to register a complain against Saiful. Subsequently, the complaint was registered to the NU Community Mobilizer.

After making the primary investigation and finding out the truth, NU Community Mobilizer issued legal notice to Saiful. Being noticed, Saiful and his relatives started to avoid any mediation upon different pretexts. NU, Kashipur in support with NU Barisal sadar Upazila office started creating pressure upon Saiful and his family either to obey the decision through social mediation or through criminal court. Finally Saiful and his family agreed to resolve the issue through a mediation and the Shalish was held on April 01, 2015 at Muzibur Rahman's house.

Both Saiful and Shahida and their relatives, members of the Ward shalish Committee, representatives of the local govt. and local elites were present in the Shalish meeting. Hearing from Saiful and Shahida individually, finally the shalish was concluded with the following decisions:

- As neither Shahida nor Saiful intends to continue their conjugal relation any more, their divorce will be effective only after an official divorce order.
- Saiful Islam will pay BDT 130,000 cash to Shahida as alimony before issuing the divorce.
- The divorce order will be issued on April 04, 2015 and will effect from the same date.

According to the decision of the salish meeting, both Shahida and Saiful willingly expressed their consents on divorcing each other. Saiful also paid BDT 130000 to Shahida before the divorce.

NU Follow up reports says that Shahida is now living with her parents. She had deposited the money in a post office through opening up a savings scheme. She again got herself admitted into Kashipur Degree College. She is now planning to utilize money for her higher education.

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## SHAHINUR GOT BACK HER RIGHTS THROUGH LEGAL AID CLINIC

Shaniur was the eldest among her siblings. When she reached at her 18, Shahinur was married to Rafik Hawlader of Awrabunia union of Kathalia upazila. Rafik, due to his job had to stay at Khulna and Shahinur was with her in laws. Everything was going fine and Shahinur became a mother of three children. Rafik used to visit and meet her wife and children whenever he manage the chances. Suddenly the Jute mill at Khalishpur, Khulna where Rafik used to work and earn collapsed and Rafik lost his job. Being jobless, Rafik went to Dhaka and started earning by driving CNG Scooter and carrying passengers. Shahinur suddenly found out that Rafik, her husband had changed a lot. She was also convinced that Rafik was not taking care of their children like earlier. Whenever Shaninur asked Rafik, he simply ignored. As time passed, Rafik stopped visiting her family and sending money for Shahniur and children. Shahinur's father in law had only a little income and that was really poor to manage a large family. Finding no other way, Shahinur finally returned her own father's house along with her three adolescent children.

After waiting for a long period of one year, Shahinur suddenly heard that her husband Rafik had returned to her village house with a new wife. She, along with her children went and met her husband at Awrabunia union of Kathalia upazila. Both Rafik and his new wife abused them cruelly and pushed them out of the house. That day Shahinur had no way to return home as it was far away. As all the people around that place were very familiar to her, she complained to the elites regarding her husband's injustice. But there was no meaningful response. Upon request, she could somehow manage to stay for another 3 days at a neighbor's house and Shahinur was planning to get a least chance to meet and talk with Rafik. Unfortunately, Rafik after three days, again went away to Dhaka and Shahinur with her three children returned to her parent's house.

With the advice and cooperation of local people, Shahinur enrolled her three children in an orphanage in education and started to manage herself by serving as a maid to the neighbors. Within a short she somehow managed a poultry in small scale too.

Shahinur's old father Abul Hassem Akon had 72 decimals of uncultivated land. As Shahinur had no brother, her next door cousins used to take the advantages. There were conflicts after conflicts initiated by her cousins on the issue of land. They even tried to deprive Shahinur of the rights of possessing land on several pretexts. On April 2014, when Abul Hassem Akon was seriously ill and was needed for an improve treatment, Shahinur upon her father's approval sold some trees of her land to manage money and her father's nursing. Her cousins had been looking for a strong ground to initiate conflicts and they filed a criminal case in the police station that both Shahinur and her father had forcibly cut and sold trees from their land.

Hearing the news Shahinur consulted with some lawyers of nearby Judge Court, but the fees demanded by the lawyers were higher than her capability. Nobody was there to help her financially, and Shahinur knew very well that her cousins would never let her cut and sell any tree again. As Shahinur failed to manage money and recruit a lawyer, she was always in fear of the police and the fake case.

Some people among her neighbors were kind hearted too. One day one of them collected a leaflet published by NU in the nearby market and gave it to Shahinur. He also advised Shahinur to communicate with the nearby legal aid clinic for cost free supports. That neighbor also gave Shahinur a phone number which was printed on the leaflet to seek any help. When Shahinur called that number, she talked with NU Community Mobilizer of Mollarhat union, Rina Akhter who advised Shahinur to attend the three-monthly legal aid clinic to be held in her own ward and consult with the panel lawyers. Rina Akhter provided her with details venue and schedule of the upcoming legal aid clinic.

As per the schedule, on June 09, 2015, Shahinur visited the legal aid clinic and shared everything to the Panel Lawyer Advocate Ayub Ali. When the lawyer asked for the papers, Shahinur showed her the original documents and the Lawyer became sure that the case was a fake and Shahinur cannot be blamed. The lawyer also found out that according to the registered documents, Shahinur's father belongs more lands that are occupied by her cousins. The NU lawyer with his own initiative, guide Shahinur to file a criminal case against her cousins and fought on behalf of her and in free of cost. On the very first day, the case was dismissed and the result was in Shahinur's favor.

Neither Shahinur, nor her father ever imagined that they would be escaped

so easily. Shahinur expressed her opinion like this, “It was the same Judge Court and there were those lawyers too, but this time nobody demanded money and even gave back me the unoccupied land too. This is only because of the learned Lawyer and NU.”

The NU Follow up report says that Shahinur Begum and her father are still living together. Her cousins are not making any disturb. Shahinur is planning to utilize the land in a productive manner, but it requires financial contribution. Her father is old enough to work and earn. Her eldest daughter works in a Garment factory in Dhaka. Her other two children are also living in Dhaka with the eldest.

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## STORY OF A MAKSUDA AND HER RETURN TO HOME

Maksuda was the eldest amongst the two children of Shgajahan and Rina Begum of Sadekpur village in Mehendiganj upazil. When Masuda was a student of class IX in 2013, her parents settled her marriage with Rassel, son of Mozammel Huq of nearby Azimpur village. As usual, after her marriage, Maksuda went to her in-laws house with a great hope in her eyes.

A few days later, her husband Rassel went to his working place at Dhaka. As like the traditional Bangladesh family, relationship between Maksuda and her in laws started falling down. In many cases, Maksuda could not tolerate the “does” and “don’t do” of them. Afterwards, Maksuda came to know that Rassel had an early wife with a son. Even her father in law forcibly kept some valuable assets of Maksuda to him that Maksuda was given by her own parents on the eve of her marriage. Due to these, as well many others, conflicts aroused among the couple on regular basis.

Once, Rassel ordered Maksuda to bring BDT 20000 from her parents. Both Rassel and his parents pushed her out of the house. Poor Maksuda, having no other way went to her parents. But, her parents were really unable to manage this amount of money.



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## TWENTY YEARS LATER, KAZAL WAS ABLE TO CLAIM BACK HER DOWER AND ALIMONY

Kazal Begum is the eldest among ten children of Motahar Hawlader, an inhabitant of Chandipur village of Muladi Upazila, Barisal. Being the first child and pretty in her childhood, Kazal was very adorable to all. At her 16, when Kazal was a student of class IX of Chandipur Mohammad Ali School, once visited her maternal aunt's house in the Char Commissioner village of Muladi district. That time she had happened to meet with Abdul Jalil Bepari, son of Mannan Bepari of that village. At the very first sight, a romantic relationship started to build between the two and finally, in January 05, 1993, a marriage has been recorded between Abdul Jalil Bepari and Kazal Begum. Taking consents of both the parties, the dower was settled at an amount of one hundred thousand taka (100000). Abdul Jalil, within a little shortly after their marriage, flew away to abroad without any prior notice and left his newly married wife Kazal to her parent's house.

Abdul Jalil, while in abroad seized off all his communication with Kazal Begum. By this time, Kazal became the mother of one boy child. After passing four years' crucial time, Kazal suddenly heard that her husband was seen at his village home in Muladi. Kazal, hearing the news, spent no time to visit her in law's home at Muladi. She was really in a dark about her husband's unexpected behavior. But, our poor girl Kazal never expected that she would see her husband with an earlier wife and three young sons. Kazal could not believe it in her eyes. She was even more tensed when she realized that she had no other way to go as she turned her parents down when she had ignored them at the time of her marriage with Abdul Jalil Bepary. So, finding no other way, Kazal begged a living place and food for her and her baby and finally started living with her rival wife and family with no more honor than a disgraced maid. But how many days can it be tolerated? Not only the 1<sup>st</sup> wife of Abdul Jalil, their three sons at their growing ages were also inhumane both to Kazal and her new born baby. During this time, Abdul Jalil paid no attention either to Kazal or to their infant baby.

After a little while, Jalil Bepari again left to abroad without informing Kazal. In the absence of her husband, Kazal also came back to her parent's house and started earning her living by working as a maid servant in neighbor's

houses. In 2009, Abdul Jalil again came back to his village home. He, at times, used to see and meet Kazal. He even assured Kazal to take her back to home, though Abdul Jalil had never given any pennies to Kazal nor spent a single for Kazal. Anyway, their relationship was like a husband and wife, but of course, with the absence of financial responsibility. Subsequently, Kazal became the mother of her 2<sup>nd</sup> child. Her husband, Abdul Jalil Bepari after one and a half year, again went abroad and terminated all channels of connection with Kazal. This time Kazal, with her two kids became more helpless. Even then, Kazal somehow managed to educate their children by working at neighbor's houses. She still had a hope that Abdul Jalil Bepari would come back to her and their children.

Jalil Bepari, again came to Bangladesh and he, this time had sent a divorce letter to Kazal Begum on March 22, 2015 through a neighbor. Getting the letter Kazal became speechless. She could not find the way of how to handle the situation or where to share. She could not even decide what to do or think next.

Having the divorce letter, when Kazal Begum was like a wrathful and loss, her neighbors came to console her. Among them, there were the members of the NU Ward Shalish Committee. Through them, Kazal Begum came to know about the three monthly Legal Aid Clinic and the legal aid supports of NU. On April 04, 2015 she came to Legal aid Clinic at Jagua union and consulted with the panel lawyer of NU regarding her doings to claim the dower and alimony. According to the advice of our Lawyer, she put an instant complain at that Legal Aid Center and her registered complaint number is 50.

Community Mobilizer of Zagua Union, investigated about the authenticity of the complaint and collected the required information about Abdul Jalil Bepari. NU Jagua Office sent a letter to Abdul Jalil and requested him to sit in a mediation meeting to settle the issue. In reply, Abdul Jalil Bepary denied any sort of mediation and settlement. Abdul Jalil even started abusing and threatened Kazal for putting the complain at NU.

Finding no other way to claim her right, finally Kazal decided to go to court to settle the issue. But poor Kazal had no financial capacity to file or fight the case. Considering her limitation, NU assured her to provide all sorts of legal aid support at cost free for this particular issue.

On the very 1<sup>st</sup> day of case hearing, honorable judge sent the culprit Abdul Jalil to Jail. He again accepted the bell prayer upon condition and settled the second hearing day after 18 days. This time Jalil Bepary agreed to sit

in a mediation meeting through NU. Having consents from both the parties, finally the day of mediation was settled on 20 June 2015 at NU Barisal sadar upazila office. In that mediation meeting lawyers and representatives of both the parties along with the accused and accuser were present. After a long discussion and debates, finally upon consents of both the parties, the following decisions were made and the case was dismissed.

1. Divorce will be effective only after an open divorce.
2. Abdul Jalil Bepary will pay One Lac and Twenty Thousand taka (1,20,000) cash to Kazal Begum as dowers and subtraction.
3. Abdul Jalil will pay another 60000 as alimony for their youngest child.
4. He will also bear the educational and other regular expenditure of their elder child.
5. Abdul Jalil Bepari, as his father will also bear the educational and other expenses of his younger child after reaching at 7 years of ages.
6. Kazal Begum will withdraw the case from court upon the due fulfillment of the conditions made by the mediation meeting.

The NU Follow up report says that according to the decision, Abdul Jalil Bepary paid One Lac and Eighty thousand taka in cash to Kazal Begum as her dower and alimony for both her and the youngest kid. Kazal Begum deposited the money through opening an account at Bank Asia. Her account number is 05734002581. Jalil Bepari is paying the fixed amount duly in every month as the educational expenditure of their elder son.

Kazal Begum herself says, “I never thought of having the money without giving anything. Though it was my problem alone; NU was with me all the time like a brother and sister is supposed to be.

Recently, Kazal Begum is staying at her Parent’s house. She is trying to make herself a self-sustainer. To do this, she needs adequate skill development training, continuous supports and services like counselling. NU, with its own effort, is trying to build up a link between Kazal and the institutions that provide skill development training. However, it would definitely be better if NU have the strength to provide skill development training and other necessary supports to Kazal Begum until she seems to be self-dependent. Who knows after a few days, man like Abdul Jalil Bepari may stop paying his son’s educational expenses or can deny his fatherhood. Under the observation of Nagorik Uddyog which was somehow difficult.

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## YEASMIN NEVER THOUGHT OF HAVING HER JUSTICE

Wishing the newly married bride and groom with the gifts is a traditional culture in our society, but gradually it has taken the shape of dowry. In rural areas, marriage without dowry rarely happens and this dowry can be in different shape with different names. Sometimes; dowry became the major factor for marrying. The more dowry a father can provide, the more qualified groom, he can expect for his daughter. Again, maximum cases that are reported as violence against women are due to the dowry related issues. Either the bride's family fails to pay, or the groom claims more and more. Performing physical assault against the bride demanding dowry has become an effective means to claim it especially in the rural areas.

The following story is one among those brides who for not meeting up the consecutive demands of dowry made by her husband finally got divorced.

Yeasmin was born in a large family in Vanga village of Andharmanik union. Yeasmin was third among her 4 siblings. After the death of her parents, Yeasmin had to live with her elder brothers. Due to the poverty of the family, Yeasmin had never got the chances to have even the primary education. Since her childhood, she had to assist her mother in doing neighbor's works as a maid. In her elder brother's house Yeasmin had to go through more trouble as there was the wife of Yeasmin elder brother, who could never tolerate Yeasmin, treated her worse than a maid and thought her as a burden. Thus the days of Yeasmin had been passing with enormous sorrows and pain.

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When Yeasmin became a girl of 15, her elder brother settled her marriage with Tarikul's Islam, a massion man in the nearby Char Lakshipur village. Poor Yeasmin, though she did not want to marry at that age, could not go against her elder brother and his wife's decision. Her elder brother, thinking of Yeasmin's future tried his best to satisfy all the demands of the groom's end. Tarikul's father Abdur Rob Hawlader demanded BDT 50,000 cash as dowry and only after having that amount in his hand; he permitted his son to put his signature on the marriage register. Yeasmin's elder brother by borrowing from others and selling his property managed the money thinking

of his sister's happiness.

Story of Yeasmin after her marriage could have been different from others; as she had tried her best to satisfy her husband and in laws with the best that she could deliver. But she could not satisfy them anymore when her husband, within a couple of months of their marriage, asked her to bring BDT 100,000 from her family. Yeasmin knew very well that her elder brothers were quite unable to give her anymore. But her husband and in laws frequently pressurized her saying, "either the money or a divorce". Instead of Yeasmin's appeal and request, they used to torture her violently and used to say that without the money they would no more provide food and shelter to Yeasmin. Thus, Yeasmin even her best possible try to live with peace and happiness had to face the terrible experience of her life. Her husband Tarikul even threatened her to marry him another girl if Yeasmin failed to manage the money.

Thus, another couples of months passed and her husband in search of a better job settled at Dhaka. Yeasmin while living with her in laws gave birth to a girl child in 2012. Hearing the birth of a girl child Tarikul simply denied seeing neither the mother nor the new born baby. Rather, soon after their child born, Yeasmin heard that her husband Tarikul had married another woman in Dhaka.

After that life of Yeasmin became more terrible. Her husband, Tarikul did not give any money to her for caring the baby. Her in laws were never agreed to provide her nothing except the shelter. Yeasmin with the lactating baby in her lap had to work both in her in laws house and her neighbors as a maid.

Yeasmin even after knowing her husband's second marriage, wanted to stay with him as a wife, as she had nowhere to go with the little baby. Tarikul, at times used to visit to see his parents, but never took care either of his wife Yeasmin or his daughter. Rather, he used to pressurize Yeasmin to bring money from her brothers or he would bring the first wife from Dhaka and divorce Yeasmin.

One day when Yeasmin refused to bring money, her husband in guidance with his elder brother Shahidul and his father, tortured Yeasmin cruelly and pushed her away from the house. Yeasmin, with her wounded body and lactating baby, came back to her brother's house.

Her brothers and relatives, seeing the beaten and wounded sister, decided to file criminal case against Tariku, his elder brother Shahidul and their

father Abdur Rob. Discussing with the elders, finally on August, 2014 they filed a case in the special tribunal Act of Repression of Women and Children against Tarikul, his elder and his father in the Judge Court.

After casing the file, both Yeasmin and her brothers fell into more trouble. Tarikul and his family with their own influences raised a rumor against Yeasmin that the child belonged to some other male and Tarikul denied his fatherhood. By insulting Yeasmin and questioning on her character Tarikul and his relatives tried their best to dominate them and dismiss the case forcibly. The criminals with their own influence could even manage to delay the judgment of the court. Thus, six months passed and Yeasmin and her brothers became downhearted seeing that the criminals were far away of the law. The situation became such that Yeasmin's brother had no more option to spend money for running with the case. Taking the opportunity of their depression, the criminals started harassing them in every way.

There was Fatema Begum, an NU Woman Leader amongst Yeasmin's neighbors. She used to provide advisory supports to her neighbors. Though Fatema was known with the Yeasmin's pathetic story, she could not do anything as the case had been pending in the Judge Court. When Yeasmin became unable to attend the court and fight for the case, Fatema Begum advised her to meet with the NU Community Mobilizer and register a case.

Yeasmin, in advice with Fatema Begum registered a complaint against her husband Tarikul. As the case was pending, the NU Community Mobilizer, with her primary investigation results and recommendations forwarded the file to the Program Coordinator (Legal aid support and investigation) Shamim Al Mamun at Barisal regional office for an immediate and better solution. The NU Barishal regional office, having the file and the supporting documents in their hand, started operating the case together with the NU Panel Lawyers and the Yeasmin's recruited lawyer.

Due to the collective effort and pressure, finally Tarikul, the top ranked criminal had been arrested and was sent to jail by the court. Both his elder brother and father flew away to avoid punishment. Yeasmin and her brothers waited eagerly for a result, but the court could not bring anything good for her. The court did not make her husband agree to take care of her and the kid. The court did not give her back the conjugal life. The court could not rebuild her life.

A few days later, Tarikul's father through a representative informed NU to dismiss the issue with Yeasmin through a social mediation. NU, Barisal

regional office with the assistance and cooperation from the Panel Lawyers and **National Legal Aid Service Organization**, settled the issue in the presence of the local Govt. bodies, elites and the members of the Ward Shalish Committee and other respected lawyers. Tarikul, his elder brother and his father confessed their mistakes and apologized. Even after requesting Tarikul for several times to reconsider his decision and reorganize with Yeasmin and the child, Tarikul simply denied. Finally, upon the following decisions of all, the mediation was concluded.

- Tarikul would pay BDT 80,000 in cash as alimony and maintenance to Yeasmin.
- Tarikul in agreement with Yeasmin would divorce each other following the official divorce rules.
- Tarikul must pay the maintenance for their daughter.

The NU Follow up report says that Tarikul's family paid BDT 80,000 to Yeasmin within the due date and Yeasmin had withdrawn the case from the court. Yeasmin, when she was asked about her days, said "I have never thought of getting the money. It would help me to nurse my baby."

Violence against women in different shapes and on different pretexts is a regular occurrence in our society. Unfortunately, maximum of the cases of violence remains unreported due to social taboos and religious bindings. If any case is reported, the accuser needs to face one after another administrative troubles that she is not familiar with. Moreover, due to the lengthy judicial process, it becomes unable for the poor women to attend the court regularly.

Yeasmin did nothing wrong filing the case and seeking punishment against her culprit husband. But our Judiciary system could not bring any good news for her until NU with its lawyers stood beside Yeasmin.

Who knows, how many women are being deprived of their rights and justice only for the delaying of our judiciary.

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## AT LAT ZAHIDUL WENT ABROAD WITH THE MONEY OF SELLING INHERITED TREES

Dispute with the inherited property among the successors is common everywhere in our society. Sometimes the conflict even turns towards physical assault and murders too. Cases related disputes among the inherited property can easily be resolved through social mediation before placing it to the higher court or planning conspiracy against any rivals. The following story of Zahidul with his brothers regarding only 02 planted trees might be turn towards a pathetic one, if a social mediation by NU cannot be initiated in the right moment.

Zahidul was the youngest among the three sons of Abdul Huq Mridha of Kamlapur village in Khanjapur union of Gournadi upazila. Abdul Huq had a small pieces of land where he used to live with his family. After his death, his three sons started living separately on that land by building their own houses and without distributing the land among themselves. As a result, there always remained a cool conflict among the brothers regarding the ownership of the land and everything that belongs to the land.

Zahidul's father, during his living period had planted few RainTree which is popularly used for making furnitures. Rain Tree is a costly wood and it is normally planted for commercial purposes. Two of those planted trees were grown and about ready to cut off. But there was always a difference among the brothers to settle the right time for cutting off and sell the tree.

Zahidul, since long had been trying to go abroad for living there and earning money. After a long try, he suddenly got the confirmation of having visa and therefore he required a handsome amount of money. After borrowing from others he could not manage the full. To manage the required money, he decided to cut off the trees. When Zahidul informed his elders about his decision, they totally ignored him and told him to manage money from other sources.

But Zahidul had no alternative. His deadline for submitting Visa application was becoming closer but he had still the shortage of money. Zahidul requested his brothers several times but they did not want to hear anything



about cut off the trees at that time. Feeling undone, Zahidul even tried at his own forcibly to cut off and sell the trees but his elder brothers did not let him. Rather they warned him to file criminal case against him.

Zahidul, becoming failure to manage money by selling the trees, gave up his hope to avail the Visa and go abroad. He tried with his every possible ways to convince his elders, but they did not agree to cut and sell the trees at that time as the tree would give them more money after a few years.

Thus, there grew a conflict among the brothers and sometimes it became so violent that their neighbors had been always in fear of encountering a cruel incident. Among their neighbors, there was Rashida Begum, a paternal aunt of the brothers as well as an NU Woman Leader. As a senior relative of the family, Rashida always wanted a peaceful solution among his nephews regarding the trees. She on different times tried to settle the issue but failed.

Rashida, felling the emergency of Zahidul for the money to go and earn better in abroad, Rashida advised Zahidul to discuss his problem with NU Khanjapur union office to find out a better solution. Zahidul, accordingly in consultation with the NU Community Mobilizer registered a complaint against his brothers on distribution of inherited properties to NU on February 2015.

After making the initial investigation, the NU Community Mobilizer invited Zahidul's other two elder brother's Zakir and Jalal to settle the issue through a social mediation. Both the brothers agreed for the mediation and finally on February 13, 2015 a mediation meeting was held in a neighbor's house. All the three brothers, their relatives, neighbors and social elites along with the members of the Ward Shalish Committee were present in the mediation. Hearing the speeches of the three brothers and their opinions, finally the issue was settled upon the following decisions:

- As per the existing market price, the cost of the rain trees had been fixed at BDT 36,000 which would be distributed equally among the brothers.
- As Zahidul needs money immediately, Zakir Mridha would pay BDT 12,000 to him instead of Zahidul's ownership on the trees.
- Zahidul would never claim his ownership on these 02 trees in future.

The NU Follow up report says that Zahidul's elder brother Zakir, on that mediation day, paid BDT 12,000 to Zahidul. Zahidul utilized the money for processing his visa and other documents. Right now he is working in Oman and his wife with two children are living in his village along with his other two elder brothers. The family is now really happy and the elders of Zahidul showed their gratitude to NU for mitigating the issue without any big hassle and help them being happy.

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## **JHARNA BEGUM GOT BACK THE ACQUISITION POWER OF HER LAND**

Jharna Begum was an inhabitant of a remote village named Khastakhali of Chanpur union at Mehendiganj upazila in Barisal district. Her husband, Jainal Abedin was a fisherman. Her family consisted of another two sons and a daughter. In spite of the little income of her husband, Jharna Begum could somehow manage to educate her children. As they had no household, the entire family used to live on other peoples' land. Both Jharna Begum and her husband had a common dream to own a small piece of land and build up their own house and to pass their rest of the life with children. To touch their dream, both Jainal and Jharna Begum tried their best to earn more and save money. Thus, they could even manage a small amount through their savings.

Moktar Hossain is a paternal uncle of Jainal Abedin. One day Moktar Hossain intended to sell some of his land. Hearing this, Jainal and Jharna decided to meet with their uncle and offer him for them to purchase his land. As Moktar was his blood connected relative, Jainal and Jharna thought he would never make any bad deal with them. Accordingly, they discussed with Moktar Hossain and after several discussions and debates, it was settled that Moktar Hossain would sell 11 decimals of his land to Jharna Begum in exchange of thirty two thousand taka. Jainal Abedin cautiously made a statement on revenue stamp and handed over the money after having a signature of Moktar Hossain on that statement. When Jainal Abedin asked for the purchase registration of the land, Moktar Hossain replied him to trust on his verbal assurance as it was a function between the close relatives. Both Jainal and Jharna were convinced as Moktar Hossain was the brother of Jainal's father. They never thought of having problems made by Moktar Hossain.

After receiving the money, Moktar Hossain started to avoid Jharna Begum and Jainal Abedin on several pretexts. A few days later when Jharna asked Moktar Hossain for the registration document, Moktar assured her to hand over all the papers and documents soon to her husband. Thus three years had passed, but Moktar Hossain did not hand over the land or the registration paper. Both Jainal and Jharna put their complain to every affordable place around them for remedies and justice but there was no result.

Jharna Begum was present in a group discussion organized by Ward -3 of NU, Chanpur Union. She became known with the supports and services that NU usually provides through the group discussion. She was highly pleased to find such an organization in her own locality that arranges mediation and cost free legal aid supports. Both Jharna and her husband communicated with the NU Community Mobilizer and filed a complain against Moktar Hossain.

Community Mobilizer invested the authenticity of the complaint and collected required information. After finding out the preliminary information, he acknowledged the matter to the members of the local Ward Shalish Committee. According to the suggestion of the Ward Shalish Committee members, a mediation meeting was organized between Jharna Begum and Moktar Hossain to resolve the unsettled issues. Both the parties put their statements in that Mediation Meeting and submitted all their required papers and documents. This time Moktar Hossain admitted that he had received money from Jharna Begum for selling land, but he did not hand over any land or registration paper to Jharna. After that, Shalish Members and both parties decided to put an end to the hanging issue under the following conditions:

- Moktar Hossain, on that particular day must hand over the land and the papers to Jharna Begum.
- Moktar Hossain would immediately replace the ownership of the land through the land registered office.
- Shalish Committee would accept no further discussion regarding this issue.

Finally, both the parties agreed on the terms of the conditions and put their signature on the mediation form.

By receiving services from NU, Jharna Begum also got back her land. By this reporting time, the land registration documents have also been handed over with the changes in ownership name. NU Community Mobilizer recently reported that, there are no conflicts between Jharna Begum and Moktar Hossain regards the land. Both Jainal and Jharna are really pleased for a wonderful solution and having back their land. They are now somehow relaxed as they would one day able to build a shelter and live together with their children. They are really grateful to NU as it would never be possible for them to get back the acquisition of their land without having timely support from NU.

## LAKI GOT THE TREATMENT COST OF HER CHILD

After the death of her husband, Lucky Begum was alone with her three children in Dobra village of Naconmahal union at Nalchity upazila. Among her three children, the eldest Sajal was only 13, Habib was 14 and her only daughter Shammi was 07 in their ages.

Sajal, her eldest son used to play with the neighboring boys in a nearby field. One day, following by some silly reasons a group of boys decided not to let Sajal play with them. But the kid did not want to be boycotted, rather he wanted to play on the same field. As a result, at first there arose debates, then scolding and finally beating. Under the guidance of Jakir and Ansar, some other boys tortured him violently till he became faint. That time Sajal cried frequently for help, but no one was there to help the poor fellow. When the assassins left Sajal alone, one of his neighbors informed his mother. Lucky Begum took the injured Sajal to a doctor and Sajal was cured after a long caring and treatment. Later on, Lucky Begum informed the incident with Abdul Barek Hawlader, an NU Ward Shalish Committee member . To have immediate remedy, Barek Hawlader sent Lucky Begum to the Community Mobilizer of Nacon Mohol union. NU Community Mobilizer, hearing the details, register a complaint.

Community Mobilizer then collected necessary information and found out the reality. He then issued legal notices to the guardians of Zakir and Ansar who were in the control of that days quarrel when Sajal was injured violently. Both the guardian along with Lucky Begum agreed to sit in a mediation meeting. The mediation meeting was held in the presence of some other local elites, UP members and Ward Shalish Committee members. Finally, upon the consents of all the mediation was concluded with the following decisions:

- As the legal guardian both Jakir and Ansar would pay BDT 9000 each to Lucky begum as the treatment cost of Sajal.
- Both the guardians must be cautious so that the same thing may not happen in future.

- Sajal and the other children will mix and play together like friends.

The NU follow up report says that Lucky Begum received BDT 18,000 from them according to the mediation decision. She has saved the amount for Sajal's higher education. Sajal and his other siblings are mixing and playing with other neighboring children as friends. Lucky Begum expressed her opinion in these words, "I never thought of claiming the money. I was worried of how I would make up the shortage. But NU made me happy by paying back the treatment cost without any hassle."

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## MASUDA GOT BACK HER HUSBAND'S PROPERTY

Masuda Begum became a widower at her 37. Her husband left with her their three children and huge land properties at Raypura, Nalchity. At that time she had no helping hands to support her or take care of the children and maintain the family. Masuda Begum had worked really hard to manage her children education and other regular commodities.

When Masuda Begum became alone with her underage orphan children, some of her neighbors planned to occupy her husband's lands in conspiracy. Her neighbors even applied their physical force and power to occupy the land illegally. Masuda, being helpless became undone.

She requested her neighbors to let her cultivate the land, but the neighbors did not pay attention. Masuda then put her complaint to the local Union Parishad and other social elites, but no one was there to work for Masuda. She kept on trying, but there was no mediation. Masuda realized that the illegal land occupiers are stronger enough with their networks and had already managed the corrupted members of the local govt.

Masuda then put her complaint to the nearby police station, but there was no result too. Thus days, months and years passed and the neighbors became stronger. Some of the illegal occupiers even tried to invade and occupy her last piece of land where Masuda and children used to live.

By this time, Masuda had already spent her saved money but gained nothing. She suddenly fell into a terrible financial disaster and gave up the hope to recover lands from the illegal occupiers.

When Nagorik Uddyog expanded its program "Access to Justice through Community Legal Services" in Nalchity upazila and invited the people to join in "Root Level Women Leader's Network", Masuda Begum showed her interest to join the network. Through her training and orientation on "Law and Arbitration" as well as numbers of group discussions, Masuda became aware of women's human rights, rights to possession and inheritance law. After being informed, Masuda again started possessing the hope to recover her husband's land. She was pretty sure that the state law was with her and

she is the only owner of the land in absence of her husband.

Nasima discussed the entire story with the NU Community Mobilizer of Subidpur union and registered a complain on land dispute. Nu Community Mobilizer collected necessary information and issued legal notices to the all illegal occupiers. Having consents from them all and in consultation with the members of the Ward Shalish Committee, finally all the accused, accuser and surrounding people were present. Papers and documents of the land claimers had been examined carefully. After a long discussion and debates, it was settled upon the consents of both the parties that :

- Both the parties will get 62 decimal of land equally
- Concerned Land Registree office will re-measure Masuda's land and she would enjoy her land according to the official declaration of the land office.

NU Follow up report says that, Masuda is now enjoying 62 decimal of her land. She along with the NU Office of Nalchity has already contacted with the distric land register office and soon the boundary of her possession would be refixed.

Masuda seemed to be very happy having recovered her lands from the illegal occupiers. She expressed her feelings in these sentences, " I was about to give up. I never thought of having my lands back so easily. It became possible as NU had been there."

NU follow up report says that Masuda Begum is working as an active member of the Root Level Woman Leater Network Group, operated by NU. She is also contributing in mediating social and family disputs and working strongly to protest social curses like early marriage, dowry. She says, "I dont want any girl in the society to encounter the bad dreams like me"



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## Sohorjan Begum reoccupied her inherited land properties

Sohorjan Begum, the only daughter of Saral Khan and Kadbanu Begum of Gournadi upazila was married to Kader Shikdar , a farmer of the same village. Neither Sohorjan nor her husband were educated as both of them are from very poor family and it was hardly passible for their parents to send them school. Kader Shikder, at that time was a landless farmer and he used to work as a daily labor along with other farmers.

Though her father, Saral Khan his share of their family properties, Sohorjan could not occupy the land as his paternal uncle and cousins forcibly occupy the entire property by depriving him. Being uneducated and unaware, Sohorjan found no way to recover her father's property from the illegal occupiers. She tried her best by requesting the socially influential people for a solution, but none of them had been seen to help her. Thus; Sohorjan Begum became deprive of her inherited property.

One day, Sohorjan, being invited by one of his neighbor attended a group meeting initiated by Nagorik Uddyog. Fortunately the topic of that day's group discussion was on women rights in the inherited properties. On behalf of Nagorik Uddyog, the local women leaders detailed why the women have their rights on their parents' properties and the entire procedure to claim. The women leaders also highlighted the legal supports that Nagorik Uddyog usually provides to claim the rights on the inherited properties. After the group meeting, Sohorjan discussed her problem regarding the land with the women leaders and they assured her to provide necessary supports. Encouraged by the women leaders and her rights, she on returning him, claimed her properties to her uncle. Her uncle ignored her totally and discouraged her by saying that she had no rights as she was a woman.

Being failed to occupy the land, Sohorjan and her husband again met the women leaders and requested for their supports and cooperation to claim her rights on family properties. The NU women leaders informed the issue to the NU Community Mobilizer of Malhaara union and adviced Sohorjan to register a complaint against her uncle. Being adviced, Sohorjan accordingly met with the NU Community Mobilizer and in consultation with him registered

a complaint against her paternal uncle for illegally occupying her inherited properties.

The NU Community Mobilizer, after having the primary investigation result, issued a legal notice to the accused Messer Ali, uncle of Sohorjan and requested him to resolve the dispute with Sohorjan through a mediation. At first, Messer Ali denied to attend the mediation. The NU Community Mobilizer then informed him about the decisions of Nagorik Uddyog to provide legal supports to Sohorjan for reoccupying her legal and inherited family properties. He also explained the legal instruments that might go against the illegal occupiers. Hearing all those, finally Messer Ali agreed to attend in the mediation meeting.

Having the consents of both Sohorjan and Messer Ali, the mediation was held on December 24, 2014. Apart from the members of the NU Ward Shaliush Committee, local elites and their neighbors were also present. The members of the Shalish Committee checked the registration papers and documents in details. They found out that Sohorjan has her rights over 44 decimals of their family lands. After a long debate and discussion, finally the dispute had been resolved by making the following decisions upon the consents of all.

- Soon 44 decimals of land would be handover to Sohorjan through proper investigation and in cooperation with the Govt. land registration office.
- After the final distribution of the land, no one would oppose Sohorjan to enjoy her ownership of the land.

According to the latest NU Follow up report, the land has already been distributed and Sohorjan received her ownership on 44 decimals of land. Her husband Kader Shikdar is cultivating crops on that land. Right now, Kader Shikder is not a landless farmer.

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## SUVAS OCCUPIED HIS LAND AFTER 30 YEARS

Suvas is the only son of Soroni Shikdar, a day laborer of Chandshi union who used to maintain his family of four members by earning a very small amount of money. Even then, he tried his best to educate his children by sending them schools. When Suvas was preparing for the secondary final examination, suddenly Soroni Shikdar died.

Thus Suvas, his old mother and a little sister fell into a terrible situation. Even then Suvas by managing the family anyway, passed his secondary and higher secondary examinations. Her younger sister was married and had been living away.

Some other years passed and Suvas, himself got married and became a father too. As Suvas could not complete his higher education, it became hard for him to manage a suitable job. He was somehow managing his family with terrible hardship.

There was Raddheshsham Shikdar, a neighbor who had been illegally and forcefully enjoying some land of Soroni Shikdar after his death. Whenever Suvas claimed his father's land, Raddheshsham usually used to deny Suvas's right.

Thus five years passed and every time when Suvas demanded his father's land or wanted to cultivate, Raddheshsham used to oppose. Thus, the land became a critical issue among the two neighboring families and there had always been a possibility of blood shedding.

Suvas, being hopeless tried his best to convince his neighbors to stand beside him for claiming and gaining his rights but nobody heard him.

At that time suddenly Suvas happened to meet with Jibon Pal, a Ward Shalish Committee member of Nagorik Uddyog. Hearing the story of Suvas in details, Jibon Pal advised Suvas to register a formal complain through the concerned Union Community Mobilizer. Accordingly Suvas, in consultation with the NU Community Mobilizer of Chandshi Union registered a complaint against Raddheshsham Shikdar on land related dispute on June 2015.

After making the initial investigation and finding out the truth behind the complain, he issued a legal notice to Raddhesham Shikdar and invite him to settle the dispute through a mediation. Raddhesham, hearing the legal procedure and hearing of the previous successful records of Nagorik Uddyog to work with the land related dispute had no other way. He agreed to and upon his consent the mediation was held on June 10 2015 just after a week of Suvas's complain.

Both Raddhesham Shikdar and Suvas were told to bring their necessary land related papers and documents. Apart from Suvas and Raddhesham, their neighbors, members of the NU Ward Shalish Committee as well as other social elites were also present in the mediation.

At last, land related problem between Suvas and Raddhesham was settled after a strict examination of the registration documents and hearing details from them both. By checking the documents the mediators found out that Raddhesham Shikdar had been illegally occupying 11 decimals of Suvas's property illegally. When asked, Raddhesham Shikdar confessed and agreed to surrender those 11 decimal of land. Upon the consents of all, finally he following decisions were made in that mediation to solve the land related problem

- Raddhesham Shikdar must return Suvas's land within the next three days by removing his establishments and other things from there.
- The boundary of their land would be marked through fence or pillars.
- All the mediators would present and observe everything when the land will be measured.

The members of the NU Ward Shalish Committee were present on that day accordingly. By that time Raddhesham Shikdar cleared the land and Suvas finally occupied his inherited property. Thus within only 10 days of registering a legal complain Suvas got back his land that he tried for more than the last five years. Nagorik Uddog Follow Up Report says that Suvas is now enjoying his land fully. Now he is leading a better life than earlier.

## **DOLONCHAPA WOULD NO MORE BENT DOWN, THEY HAVE LEARNT TO CLAIM THEIR RIGHT**

Sahabuddin Hawlader of Manpasha village of Kushangal union, Nalchity had been working at Dhaka. In spite of having his family in Dhaka, Sahabuddin married for the second time and formed another family in his native village.

Dolonchapa is the youngest girl of the six children in her second family. Sahabuddin somehow managed to settle marriage of his other two daughters before completing their education. After that, Sahabuddin also thought for settling the marriage of his youngest daughter Dolonchapa and started searching for a suitable husband for her daughter. Both Sahabuddin and his wife contacted a village marry maker for having a right groom. At that time Dolonchapa was a student of Kushongol Secondary high school and she had been preparing for her upcoming Secondary final examination. Because of her merit and wit, Dolonchapa was very popular in her school and her teachers always hoped that she would cut a very good figure in the competitive examination.

On October 2014, Nagorik Uddyog organized an awareness meeting on the negative consequences of child marriage and dowry in Jahanara's school. Along with Jahanara, other senior students of the school attended in the workshop. Both the teachers and the NU officials discouraged everyone in child marriage through highlighting its negative effects. Jahanara and other students were fully convinced and after the meeting all the girls promised together not to get marry before 18. They also put their words to protest any incident of early marriage in their family and if necessary, the girls further promised to take necessary supports and advices from Nagorik Uddyog and their teachers to stop any event of early marriage.

A few days after that, the village marry maker came with a proposal for Dolonchapa. Sahabuddin, hearing the qualifications and conditions of the groom, showed his consent and told the marry maker to forward with that particular proposal.

Hearing about the preparation of her marriage, Dolonchapa requested her parents to stop thinking of her marriage before completing her education.

But Sahabuddin did not pay any attention. Her mother also supported him, as it was really hard for Sahabuddin to manage and maintain two separate families.

At first, Dolonchapa could not decide what to do. When her parents became serious to settle her marriage, Dolonchapa at that time, finding no other way informed Nasima Begum, a NU Woman Leader to take necessary actions for putting an end to the ill motive of her parents.

Requested by Dolonchapa, the members of the NU Ward Shalish Committee and Citizen Rights Groups, discussed the issue with the school teachers and other social elites. Finally all the three groups went together to Sahabuddin's house.

But Sahabuddin and his wife at first never wanted to stop the marriage. The NU leaders then made them understand with the negative consequences that may occur to their daughter's health due to child marriage. They also explained the legislative prohibition against the initiative of any sort of child marriage. Dolonchapa's teachers requested them to let her complete the education and sustain at her own.

Finally, upon the requests of the NU leaders, social elites and the teachers, finally Sahabuddin agreed to postpone the marriage of Dolonchapa in this early age. Honoring the existing laws, they assured to let her complete her education first and then settle her marriage after her 18 years of age.

Thus with the joint initiative of NU leaders, school teachers and local elites, Jahanara was saved from the early marriage.

The NU Follow Up report says that Dolonchapa is preparing seriously for her upcoming competitive examination. As her educational cost became expensive and her father is unable to meet up the cost, the headmaster of jahanara's own school and the Chairman of the School Mnaging Committee have been bearing the educational expenses of Dolonchapa.

## RIYA SAVED HER FROM A CHILD MARRIAGE

Sharmin Akter Riya is the youngest daughter of Jamal Mallik, who had been serving with the Bangladesh Army before her retirement. Though due to his job, Jamal Mallik had to live alone in Dhaka, the rest of his family members, including his own parents used to live in his native village at the Sugandhia Village of Binaykathi union in Jhalakathi district. His wife Shanaj Parvin somehow tried her best to manage their education and other things within the limitation. Thus Riya became a student of Class VIII when her elder sister got married.

Musa Mallik, Riya's grandfather in his old age was really happy to have the family around him. Adjacent to Musa Mallik house, there was a family of Musa's brother. One of the nephews of Musa Mallik, Uzzal Mallik managed a job with Bangladesh Police. Uzzal had a crush on Riya since long. As Riya was fair, attractive and intelligent, Uzzal had been planning to make Riya his bride. The family members of Uzzal also planned the same and supported him.

On the other, on her way to school Riya had often been disturbed by a village vagabond Kawsar, who forcefully used to stop and talk to her for nothing. When the disturbance of Kawsar became intolerable, Riya's mother decided to settle her marriage to avoid the disturbance and send Riya somewhere else with her husband where there would no Kawsar or disturb.

Accordingly, Riya's mother discussed the entire thing with Riya's grandfather, Musa Mallik. He then shared the thing with his own brother and his family to have their support and cooperation to handle the entire situation. That time, Uzzal's father proposed him to settle Riya's marry with his son Uzzal. As Uzzal, was that time serving with Bangladesh Police, Musa Mallik was convinced thinking that Riya would at least get a solvent husband and being in Bangladesh Police, Uzzal must have some power to apply in case of emergency.

Musa Mallik shared Uzzal's proposal to Riya's mother. They both agreed with and discussed the thing with Riya's father Jamal Mallik. Hearing the

proposal Jamal Mallik denied and told that he had not even thought of settling her marriage as Riya was only 14 at that time. But his father Musa Mallik was stuck with his choice as he already put his word to Uzzal and his father to settle the marriage between Riya and Uzzal. Moreover, there was Riya's mother, who often used to call Jamal Mallik over telephone and say that even in 14, Riya looked like an adult and marrying at that age would do no harm to Riya. Finally, Jamal Mallik being pressurized by his old father and wife agreed to settle the marriage.

According to the ritual, Uzzal and his family proposed formally and as a remembrance, gifted Sharmin, the bride with a gold necklace. In the absence of Jamal Mallik, the elder family members fixed the marriage date and other itinerary. But Riya, the young girl was not prepared to get married. She disagreed and opposed the decision boldly. Riya requested her father Jamal Mallik to postpone the marriage. But no one in the family was there to support her, ignoring the decision of the eldest. She even went for hunger strike and quit her school. She had been waiting for her father to return home and rescue her.

On February 18, 2015 NU organized to show a drama in the courtyard of Abdul Latif in Binoykathi village. The location was near to Riya's house. Along with Riya other members of her and Uzzal's family was also present there as viewers. It was pre-fixed to display the drama "MIMANGSA (MEDIATION)" and the drama was on resolving communal problems like child marriage. The moderator also invited the viewers to protest any sort of child marriage around them as it is a social curse. The drama also displayed the vulnerable effects that may occur as a result of early marriage. The moderator also offered the support of NU to postpone child marriage as it is not supported by the existing laws.

Riya was somehow seeing the light of a new hope after enjoying the drama. On returning home, she threatened her mother to postpone the marriage or she would seek legal help through NU. She even threatened all other initiators to register an official complaint of child marriage against them.

The NU drama and then the threat of Riya made the eldest family members rethink of their decision. Through the drams and the messages of the moderator, they were somehow realized that child marriage might cost them more. Instead of the happiness, something more miserable and unexpected might happen. After consulting among them, Riya's mother discussed with her husband Jamal Mallik and decided to stop the function.



Uzzal's family at first was not agreed to change the decision. They tried to manage Riya's parents on several pretexts. Riya, in consultation with her mother and grandfather discussed the entire situation with the concerned NU Community Mobilizer and seek help to convince Uzzal's family. Requested by Riya and her family, the NU Community Mobilizer of Sugandhia village met Uzzal's parents and requested them to withdraw their proposal. He detailed them how a child marriage can be harmful for a wife and what are the country's legislative prohibitions against child marriage. Community Mobilizer also declared his firm determination to postpone any child marriage in his duty area with the official support.

Finally Uzzal's family agreed to withdraw their proposal and the marriage was postponed. The little girl Riya, thus saved her from the curse of the child marries. NU reports says that Riya is happy now, she is busy with her school and study. Riya requested NU to show more and more dramas on specific issues so that our people may be conscious of their rights an the superstitions. She thanked NU and its people for supporting her in a crisis.

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## ASMA REGAINED HER MOTHERHOOD THROUGH MEDIATION

Asma daughter of Abdul Mannan Akon of Chatrakanda village in Dhansiri union was married to Sujon Hawlader of the nearby Joisi village in 2012. After their marriage, like others, the newly married couple after living a short while with the groom's parents house, started their own family by renting a house at Jhalokatha town.

Thus, both Asma and her husband was somehow happy in spite of their hardship. In their new house, mother in law of Asma used to visit so often and stay with them. Asma was really hesitant as her mother in law used to find out her silly faults always and everywhere. As Asma's own parents house was not also far away, she often visited her old parents whenever she got chances.

Once Asma noticed that neither Sujon nor her mother in law do not like her visiting her own parents. This issue raised some critical misunderstandings among Asma and Sujon. Sujon, without hearing Asma, used to support his own mother blindly and Asma could not tolerate that all the time.

After about a year of their marriage, Asma gave birth to her first child, Arafat. A few days later, when Asma wanted to visit her own parents house with the new born baby, her husband did not permit her to go. Asma tried her best to convince her husband and mother in law, but they never agreed to let her go. So one day, when Sujon was away of the house, Asma without informing anyone, left the house with her son Arafat. Thus, she finally went to her own parents house with her son.

Her mother in law, to make the silly thing more complicated, created pressure on her son Sujon to file complain against Asma and her father. Sujon was also angry upon Asma and he finally registered a complaint to the nearby police station. Thus, the relation between the husband and wife became more critical.

A few days later, suddenly Arafat became ill and he was admitted into Jhalokathi Sadar Hospital for better treatment. When Arafat was about to cure, Asma's mother in law, one day, with the pretext of treating by an

experienced traditional village quack, took Arafat with her. Asma alone waited in the hospital for her son till the night fall. But her mother in law did not return with the lactating kid Arafat, and finally Asma realized that her mother in law had snatched away her son with the false commitment.

Asma, on returning home, inform the entire thing with the Chairman of the Gabkhan Dhansiri union. The Chairman, being sympathized on the helpless mother Asma, assured her to bring an immediate solution and talked with her husband over telephone. He also advised Sujon to return Arafat to her mother. Sujon also agreed to return Arafat on the next day. But Sujon did not keep his commitment.

With the advice of the Chairman and other well wishers, Asma then discussed the issue with Fatema Begum, a neighbor and a woman leader of NU Gabkhan Dhansiri union. Fatema Begum advised Asma to register a complaint and helped her to do that by accompanying her to the NU Community Mobilizer. With the support of them, finally Asma registered a complaint against her husband and mother in law for kidnapping her lactating child Arafat.

Both the Upazilla Coordinator and Assistant Coordinator of NU Jhalokathi office, after having the complaint visited Sujon's house at Joysi village along with the NU Group Leader of Basanda union for an immediate solution. As Sujon was not available at that time, the NU Officials called him over telephone and asked him to meet with them at Jhalokathi NU office before issuing any legal action. Sujon was somehow panicked and met with the NU officials at Jhalokathi office on the next day. When he was questioned by the NU Official, Sujon confessed his fault and agreed to hand over the child to her mother without any further complication. NU officials then asked Sujon to bring the child within next one hour. They also told Asma to come and take her child.

Sujon, accordingly came to the NU office with Arafat and in presence of some local elites, Arafat was handed over to her mother upon the consent of Sujon.

Anyway, this is not the end of the story, as the conflict among the couple had not been resolved. Actually Arafat was handed over to her mother's warm lap through counseling. The Jhalokathi NU Officials also took the initiative to reorganize the couple and their conjugal life through a mediation.

With the consents of both Asma and Sujon, and in presence of the noted

people like the Union parishad Chairman, social elites and members of the NU Shalish Committee, finally the issue was settled on 04 December 2014, through a long discussion and lots of debates. The following decisions were made in the mediation:

- Sujon must withdraw the false complaint against Asma and her father as soon as possible.
- Both Sujon and Asma would live together with Arafat and in family.

Thus, through a mediation, a helpless mother like Asma not only got back her lactating child, she was also able to restart her conjugal life.

The NU follow up report says that, till the mediation Asma has been living happily with her husband and in laws. They are a happy family now.

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## DULU BEGUM GOT BACK HER RIGHTS

Dulu Begum is the eldest daughter of Rustom Ali, living in Nandapara village, of Bakherganj upazila in Barisal district. Dulu Begum was married to Md. Shahdat Badsah of Gochara Village at Siddhakathi union in 2011. After her marriage, Dulu Begum with a new dream in her eyes started her new life with Shadat.

After 01 year of their marriage, Dulu Begum became the mother of a girl child. For giving birth to a girl, her husband started physical and mental torture without any causes. Finding no other way, when the torture became too violent to tolerate, Dulu Begum went to her own father's house. But there was no news from her husband Shadat. He neither cared about how she was living or what she and his infant daughter had been eating. When Dulu's father and other family members met Shahadat and proposed to ease the situation, Shadat and his relatives replied that, Shadat will no more continue his relationship with Dulu and they would issue a divorce letter shortly. But Dulu could not believe her eyes. She rushed to the Union Parishad Chairman and other members for convincing Shadat and not to issue the divorce letter. But nobody of them seemed to work cordially for Dulu. They ignored her complain as nothing happened there. Dulu, with her young daughter in her lap, started moving from door to door and for justice, but there was nothing in her favor she happened to meet Rokaya Begum and Selina Begum.

Rokeya Begum and Selina Begum are 02 Women leaders of the Siddhakathi union Women Group. Somehow, the news regarding the struggle of Dulu attracted their attention. These 02 women leaders, out of their own responsibility, met and talked with both Dulu and Shadat individually. Hearing all the facts, they advised Dulu Begum to register a complaint to the Union Community Mobilizer. Accordingly Dulu Begum registered a complain against her husband to Siddhakathi Union Shalish Kendra and her complain number is 03.

After having the complainant, the Union Mobilizer investigated the authenticity and according to his findings, issued a letter requesting

Shahadat and Dulu to sit in a Shalish meeting. Fortunately, both Shadat and Dulu agreed to sit face to face and resolve the issue. Finally the Shalish date was fixed at June 15, 2014 at Siddhakathi Union NU Legal Aid Support center. Representatives from both the parties along with the local elites and Ward Shalish Committee Members were present at the Shalish. After a long discussion, and continuous debates finally the following decisions were made and the case was dismissed:

- Md Shadat Badsha will never torture Dulu Begam in future.
- Shadat will take Dulu and her daughter to his own home, will honor her as her wife and will bear the maintenance.

Accordingly, Shahdat took Dulu and their daughter with him to his home. Their conjugal life became re-united.

Our followup report says Dulu Begum is now busy with taking care of her husband and daughter and her husband Shahdat can not think of a single day without his daughter. When Dulu Begum met NU Community Mobilizer during the follow-up, Dulu begum says, " You have done the thing that the UP Chairman and other people ignored. You have given me and my daughter a new life. If you people were not there to help me, I had no other way other than drowning in the river with my daughter." Her husband Shahdat says, " I have realized what the sin I was about to committ by divorcing my wife and living my daughter. You people have made me understand otherwise my dearest daughter would have been an orphan by this time."

## FAZILA AGAIN FELT HAPPY AFTER 22 YEARS

Fazila's father Sultan Hawlader died when Fazila was only 13 years. Fazila was the eldest among her siblings. As Sultan Hawlader was the only earning man, with the death of him the entire family also fell into a terrible hardship.

Her mother Somertoban was a simple house wife and she could not decide what to do with the children. Her relatives took the initiative to settle the marriage of Fazila, the youngest daughter to someone who can work as the guardian of the family. Consulting with her mother, finally the relatives settled her marriage with a 40 years old man Malek Kha of the same village.

Ali Hossen was a day laborer. He had been living with his mother and other sibling in a joint house. There was no demand of dowry in that marriage and Fazila started her new life with her husband. After their marriage the first couple of months went well, other than the ordinary misunderstandings, there were no major conflicts among the couple. Three years passed away and Jahanara became the mother of a daughter as well as a son.

Suddenly, Fazila noticed a peculiar change in her husband's behavior. Ali Hossen, for no reasons, used to quarrel with Fazila. Initially it was limited to verbal abuses and scolding, but within times Fazila became the victim of frequent physical tortures too. Sometimes, Ali Hossen after making violent quarrel with Fazila used to send her to the parents home forcibly and threaten her parents to divorce Fazila.

Fazila's parents or relatives could not do anything against Ali Hossen thinking of the future of her children. Her mother, without informing Ali Hossen, often used to send money to Fazila for managing her necessary financial issues. Her eldest daughter Salma passed her Secondary final examination and was married to a nearby village. Her only son was at that living away of the house and was searching for job. After the marriage of their daughter, her husband became more rude to Fazila. He was always in a bad temper and could not tolerate Fazila. Thus, Fazila passed 22 years of her life with her husband but could not gain his faith or love.

Fazila Begum, in spite of her such trouble was always ready to help the

people. She had an honest intention to work for the mankind. One day, while in a group meeting of Nagorik Uddyog, Fazila Begum decided to take the organization's help and counseling support to change her fate and ensure happiness in her life. She, then with the cooperation of the Charbaria union Community Mobilizer registered a complaint.

After performing the initial investigation, the NU Community Mobilizer invited Ali Hossen to resolve her long running conjugal life's complication through a mediation. Ali Hossen also agreed to settle his conjugal problems. Thus, upon the consent of both the accused and accuser, finally a mediation was organized in their own residence. Apart from Ali Hossen and Fazila Begum, their relatives and neighbors, social elites and the members of the NU Ward Shalish committee were also present. Both Ali Hossen and Fazila Begum narrated their own story. The mediators reminded the couple of the importance of ensuring mutual understanding and honor. They advised them to build up their life and family with interpersonal relationship, honor and respect. Both Fazila and Ali Hossen also promised to take care of each other and not to involve in any further conflicts.

Thus after almost two decades Fazila Begum, finally could able to smile. The NU Follow Up report says that both Fazila and Ali Hossen are living together with the support and cooperation to each other. Their neighbors reported that Ali Hossen was at that time a well mannered and the family had been living with peace and happiness.



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## HASI BEGUM RETURNED TO HER FAMILY

Hasi Begum is the only daughter of speech disabled Abul Hawlader of Varatkathi village, Dapdapia union under Nalchity upazila of Jhalokathi district. Abul Hawlader was really poor to manage the education and all other necessary expenses of her 03 children. Subsequently; when Hasi was a student of class VIII of Varatkathi High School, her father ignoring the warning of all others arranged marriage of Hasi with Milon hawlader, of Auliapur village. Not only her daughter, Hassi's father also gave dowery to Milon as per his demand for marrying her daughter.

The young bride Hasi at that time was not matured enough to manage an entire family of her in-laws. She wished her husband and other members would help her to be familiar with their demands and choices, rather they seem to be more cruder and started torturing her both physically and mentally. They even sent Hassi to her own father's house, blaming that Hassi had been mentally handicapped. Poor girl Hassi was neither happy in her father's home too. There were frequent teasing and taunting regarding her inability to manage her own husband by the neighbors and relatives. Some of them advised her to register an official case to the court against her husband. But Hassi or any of her family members were unable to run a case as it requires money. So Hassi was in darkness and could not find any sign of hope until she met Shahidul Islam, the Ward Shalish Committee Member of NU.

Shahidul Islam informed Hassi Begul about the services and supports of the NU Legal Aid clinic. Hassi became really happy to hear that NU does not demand any financial cost for providing legal aid supports and filing cases. Hassi was finally convinced to talk with the NU panel Lawyer to have cost free legal counseling services. Hearing all the detail story, the NU Panel Lawyer advised Hassi Begum to file a complaint to the NU Community Mobilizer of Dapdapia union. Accordingly Hassi registered a complaint with a hope to have the justice.

NU Community Mobilizer, after investigating, in consultation with Advocate Shamim Al Mamun, an NU Official, issued legal notices and invited Milon in a

mediation meeting. Milon, even after expressing his consent, did not attend the meeting. NU Community Mobilizer issued another notice; but the same thing happened again too. Neither Milon nor any of his representatives were present on the due date. Rather Milon filed a complaint against Hassi Begum to Madaripur Legal Aid, Bakerganj branch. Madaripur Legal Aid issued a legal notice to Hassi Begum. When Hassi Begum informed NU office regarding the legal notice, the NU Community Mobilizer and members of the Union Shalish Committee threw the case in the NU Barisal regional office. The Program Manager (Legal Aid and Investigation) of the Barisal regional NU Office discussed the issue officially with the concerned personnel of Madaripur Legal Aid, Bakherganj Office. With a mutual agreement finally the mediation date was scheduled to be held on July 21, 2014 at NU Barisal regional NU Office. Both the respected officials of NU and Madaripur Legal Aid, accused and accusers along with their representatives were present. Having consents from all, a 06 members investigation team was formed comprising 3 from each organization. Both Milon and Hassi Begum expressed their own opinion in front of the team. Both of them agreed to live together and form a family. Even the in laws of Hassi Begum admitted their wrong and put their commitment to not make the same mistake again in future. Finally, having the consents from all the members, the investigate team made the following decisions:

- Milon Hawlader must write down his commitment to treat Hassi Begum as a wife in an official stamp.
- Hassi Begum will live with her in laws as their own children.
- Hassi Begum must enjoy her liberty of a girl in her age.
- Nobody of her in law's family would torture her physically, mentally or in any other forms.
- Hassi Begum must show proper honor and respect for her in laws.

According to the decision, her father in law came and took Hassi Begum to her husband's house. Since then Hassi had been living with her husband and in laws.

The NU bakerganj Office conducted comprehensive follow-ups on this issue as Hassi Begum was underaged and helpless. After 03 months, when NU officials met, Hassi Begum said, "Nobody hears the poors; nobody helps the them. NU Shalish Committee heard me and helped me to get back my husband and family. I am grateful to NU."

## HASI EGUM SAVED HER FAMILY

Hassi Begum was married to Shahin Hawlader almost 9 years ago in 2006. After her marriage, she started living with her husband and in-laws at the Kafarkathi village of Kulkathi union under Jhalokathi district. Shahin had only a poor income and there was scarcity all around the family. Meanwhile Hassi Begum became the mother of 2 children and it had become really hard to manage infant food and health care for her 2 children. Therefore, there were misunderstanding between Hassi and her in law's family always. Misunderstandings with the courses of time turned towards physical and mental abuse and Hassi started to be scolded, insulted and tortured by her husband's family every now and then.

At that time, due to an official offer, there was an opportunity for Bangladeshi women to work in middle east countries. As the circular was made by the Govt., Many of Bangladeshi women, including housewives had availed the opportunity and went abroad to change their luck. Hassi's husband Shahin and his family decided to send Hassi abroad for earning money.

Hassi Begum did not show her least interest to go and earn money abroad, leaving her husband and children. But money was more important to them than Hassi's sentiment. They started creating pressure on Hassi Begum, but she denied. Then her in law's family started torturing her physically and blamed her as a spoiled woman who has physical relations with other men.

A few days passed and the torture and the false blame made by the in-laws family became so violent that Hassi could no more stay with her in laws. She then returned to her parents' home with one among her two children.

Hassi then complained against her husband and in laws to the local Union Parishad. But there was no result. She even drew the attention of the Kulkathi Union Parishad where she used to live with her in laws. Kulkathi Union Parishad tried to resolve their problem through mediation, but her in laws family denied to take care of Hassi. They disagreed to consider her as their son's wife.

Hassi, denied by her husband and in-laws, started living with her parents.

As her own family was really poor, Sathi with her infant child had to work at neighbors households. Her husband Shahin Hawlader had never come to see or sent any money to Hassi and her child. Thus Hassi and her parents felt into the darkness with a little kid. There was scarcity all around the family, and they had no place to put their complain. They were about to forget the Justice and Hassi had never thought of regaining her husband, conjugal life and other child.

One day Hassi happened to meet with Nasima Begum, who was a member of the Ward Shalish Committee under Kushongol union. Nasima Begum attentively heard the pathetic story of Hassi and assured her to ensure the justice. She advised Hassi Begum to register a formal complain to the NU Community Mobilizer.

On November 19, 2013 Hassi Begum registered a criminal complaint against her husband and in-laws to NU Community Mobilizer of Kushongol union. As Hassi's husband and in laws from a different union, NU Community Mobilizer of Kushongol union discussed the whole thing with the responsible Community Mobilizer of Kulkathi union and asked to collect authentic information. After the joint investigation and when the truth of the complaint was found out, the NU Nalchity Upazila Office issued a legal notice to Hassi's husband Shahin Hawlader and his parents. They invited the accused in a social mediation in order to avoid further complication. Shahin and his family honored the notice and expressed their opinion positively.

On December 19, 2013 both the accused and accuser was invited in NU Nalchity Upazila Sadar office for resolving the issue through mediation. Apart from the accused and accuser, their family members, neighbors, social elites, including the representatives of local govt. and members of the Ward Shalish Committee were present. Advocate Shamim Al Mamun, Program Manager (legal aid support and investigation), Nagorik Uddyog was also present to ensure the decisions of the mediation according to the eyes of law.

After a long discussion and hearing the details from both accused and accusers, the case was dismissed and the mediation was concluded upon the following decisions:

- As both Shahin Hawlader and Hassi Begum, the husband and wife, showed their interest to restart their conjugal life, they will live together and would forget their past days mistakes.

- Shahin or his family members would never attack her physically.
- Hassi will live with her in-laws and the in-laws must take care of their son's wife and grand children.
- If Shahin breaches the decision, legislative actions would be taken against him.

After the mediation meeting, Hassi with her husband and in laws went back to Kulkathi union.

NU Follow up report says that since the mediation, Hassi has been living happily with her husband and in-laws. She, as a house manager is taking care of her two children. Hassi's in-laws are cooperative too. Hassi expressed her opinion saying, "UP Chairmen or members could not settle the thing, though they are selected to take care of us but NU did it wonderfully. I never thought of living with my husband of children. NU helped me to achieve my family"

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## JAHANARA IS NOW A HAPPY WIFE BY REMOVING HER CONJUGAL LIFE COMPLICATIONS

Jahanara Begum, daughter of late Hossen Hawlader of Tokathi village in Kultkati union of Nalchity district was married Sony Mridha of the same village. After their marriage, first few years of the couple went well without any serious complication.

3 years later, Jahanra gave birth to a daughter and with their sweet and cute little daughter both Jahanara and her husband was really please.

Conflicts among the couple started arising when Jahanar, due to her physical illness, had to rest in the bed and she could not nurture her husband properly. Her husband wanted her to see active and working always. He was not even likely to spend money for Jahanar's treatment and health recover. Thus, on the issue of Jahanar's health and treatment, the couple became involved with conflicts for silly reasons.

Sony Mridha, having the chance of Jahanars's physical illness, became involved in post marital relationship with other women too. Jahanara was really shocked seeing her husband ignoring her and making physical relation with other women. But at that time she could do nothing as Jahanara was fully unaware of the procedure of putting such a complain regarding her husband's behavior. Anyway, Jahanra tried her best to tolerate her husband's ill behavior. Within times, their conflicts became extreme and the family was about to disorganized.

Relatives, neighbors and the people around them including the representatives of the local Govt. tried several times to settle the issue between the couple, but every time the effort concluded with an endless discussion. Jahanara herself also requested her known and socially influential people to bring out an immediate solution, but she could not manage that.

One day Jahana met with Kamal Hossen, one of her neighbor and a member of NU Toikathi Union Ward Shalish Committee. Hearing the story and her intention, Kamal advised her to resolve her problem through a mediation.

Kamal also advised her to register a complaint in consultation with the NU Community Mobilizer.

Accordingly, Jahanara upon discussion with the NU Community Mobilizer registered a complaint on February 2014. After receiving the complaint, the NU Community Mobilizer according to the formal official procedures, investigated the case and finally issued legal notice to Jahanara's husband Sony Mridha, as well invited him to resolve the conjugal problem through a mediation.

After the consents of both Jahanara and her husband, finally the mediation was held on Jahanar's house in presence of the Ward Shalish Committee members, local govt. representatives, their relatives and neighbors. Hearing the details from Jahanara and her husband, the mediators advised the couple to live with mutual understanding. Sony Mridha was told to provide immediate and comprehensive health treatment to Jahanara. In a stage of the counseling and mediation, both Jahanara and her husband promised to live with peace and happiness. They also put their strong commitment to treat each other with respect and honor.

Thus, through the mediation, the conjugal life complication among the couple had been swept away and they started living a happier life.

The NU Follow Up report says that both Jahanara and her husband are still living in the same house. By that time Jahanara was referred to a specialist and Sony Mridha is taking care of his wife's health regularly. According to their neighbors, both Jahanara and her husband Sony Mridha are leading a better life than earlier.

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## MAHMUDA COULD ABLE TO GET BACK HER CONJUGAL LIFE THROUGH MEDIATION

Mahmuda was married to Rokonuzzaman Mridha, at her age of 15. Though her in-law's house was at Kalibaria village in Nalchira union of Gournadi upazilla, her husband, Mridha used to live in Dhaka due to his job. After her marriage, Mahmuda started her new life with her in-law's family members like other typical Bengali housewives do. Mridha, when he used to manage leave, could make visit to see his wife Mahmuda. Thus, Mahmuda was passing a good time after her marriage with her in-laws until her 1<sup>st</sup> child was born two years after her marriage.

Every one of her in-law's house was expecting that Mauhmuda would give birth to a boy child. Nobody expected a daughter's face as the first child. Even her husband started blaming her for giving birth to a girl child. Mahmuda was being thought as an evil woman in the family. No one of her in-laws family, let alone her husband did pay a little attention to her or the newborn kid. She was being humiliated and treated crudely. Anyway, Mahmuda, thinking of her child's future, tolerated the torture in silence. Her only prayer to the almighty was to bless her with a boy child as this was the only way for her to manage the unhealthy situation and recover everything including her husband and family.

Thus six years passed and finally she became the mother of a long expected boy child. Every one of her in-laws family was happier than ever and Mahmuda started to get back her dignity. Her husband, Mridha was so happy that he himself opted the name of the newborn boy as "Abu Bakar Siidiki", matching with the name of one great Muslim Caliph. Rokonuzzaman Mridha desired a hope to educate his son and make him a real hero. To earn more and nurture his family better, Mridha left his job and migrated to Dhaka with his entire family.

Mridha started business in small scale and it had been going well. With the changing of the days, Mahmuda also marked the changes in Mridha's behavior. Her husband started behaving harsh and rude to her. He had even no attention to their little children. Within a short, it had become a regular habit for Mridha to return home late at night with a furious mood



and ill attempt to attack if any question is asked. In this situation, Mahmuda started investigating the reasons behind the recent behavior of her husband and revealed the truth that Mridha had recently got married to another woman after a long term relationship. When she asked Mridha about this, her husband scolded and tortured her violently. Later on, the torture became extreme and Mridha often started staying out of the house. Thus Mahmuda had suddenly fallen into a deep sea with her two children. Finally, Mridha sent both Mahmuda and her children to her parent's house at their village.

Nobody of Mahmuda including her parents, relatives and neighbors welcomed her back along with two children in a good manner. They started her thinking as a burden to the family. Thus, within a short, Mahmuda found everything against her with more problems. It seemed that her bad days had no ending. Both Mahmuda and her father knocked every possible door and people of her society for a job and to have the justice against her husband's injustice. But there was no result. Thus, one day, they happened to meet with Julekha Banu, a member of NU Root Level Women Network. After hearing the detail pathetic story of Mahmuda, Julekha Banu assured her about the remedies and told her about the initiatives of NU that are being implemented for the betterment of the destitute women like Mahmuda. Julekha Banu also advised Mahmuda and her father to contact with the NU Community Mobilizer of their respective union. Accordingly, Mahmuda came in touch with the NU Community Mobilizer and put her complaint to the particular point.

The NU Community Mobilizer, after receiving the complaint investigated the authenticity of the complaint and collected required information. The NU Community Mobilizer then issued a legal notice to Rokonuzzaman Mridha and requested him to sit in a mediation meeting to settle the issue.

In reply, Rokonuzzaman Mridha agreed to sit in a mediation meeting. Finally, with the consents of both the parties, the Mediation Meeting was organized in the Nalchira Union NU Office. 03 members of the Ward Shalish Committee and other respected local personalities were present at that Shalish Meeting. In the meeting, Rokonuzzaman Mridha admitted his wrong and urged to live with his first wife Mahmuda and lead a conjugal life. The Mediation Meeting was finally concluded with the following decisions:

1. In order to bridge his conjugal life with Mahmuda, Mridha must divorce his second wife. He needs to do this as Mridha did not take Mahmuda's consent during his second marriage and more conveniently, Mridha

were no more interested to continue his conjugal relationship with the second wife.

2. A Copy of the aforesaid divorce letter must be available and presented upon the Shalish Committee within next two months.
3. Only after that, Mridha would be considered to bring back Mahmuda to his home and of course upon conditions.
4. Mridha must treat Mahmuda as his wife with proper honor and dignity.

According to the decision of the Mediation Meeting, Rokonuzzaman Mridha divorced his 2<sup>nd</sup> wife and showed the divorce letter to the Shalish Committee. After having the divorce letter, the Shalish Committee with the continuous supports and cooperation from NU, prepared a detail agreement paper about the subtractions and responsibilities of both for Mahmuda and her children. After having consent and signature of Rokonuzzaman on the agreement, Shalish Committee let Rokonuzzaman Mridha take his wife and children with him for the sake of the reunion of the family.

Mahmuda Begum is really happy by having back his husband in her conjugal life again. She says “I am ever grateful to NU and thankful to the Ward Committee Members. Without having them all in my side; it was really impossible to happen.”

The NU workers already made two successful follow ups of how and where Mahmuda and her husband is living now. According to the finding, presently Mahmuda is leading a happy life with her children and husband. Her father expressed his gratitude in this...” I have knocked on every possible door for the remedies, but no one heard. If you did not take the initiative, my daughter would never get back his family and I had to be a hopeless father with a helpless daughter”.

NU is still trying to keep contact with Mahmuda through following up and other available means. People like her father, at least got the last address to complain against this sort of injustice. But where will they go when there would be no Shalish Center or conscious Shalish Committee Members? What is happening where there are no center of NU?. It would definitely be better if NU could be a long term hope for the helpless, deprived and destitute women like Mahmuda Begum.

Maksuda was the eldest amongst the two children of Shajahan and Rina Begum of Sadekpur village in Mehendiganj upazil. In 2013, when MaKsuda was a student of class IX, her parents settled her marriage with Rassel, son of Mozammel Huq of nearby Azimpur village. As usual, after her marriage, Maksuda went to her in-laws house with a great hope in her eyes.

A few days later, her husband Rassel went to his working place at Dhaka. As like the traditional Bangladesh family, relationship between Maksuda and her in laws started falling down. In many cases, Maksuda could not tolerate the orders of them. Her in laws also used to impose work load on her. Maksuda had no honor than a house maid in her husband's family. Even her father in law forcibly kept some valuable assets of Maksuda to him which Maksuda had been given by her own parents during her marriage. A few days later, Maksuda from a neighbor heard that, her husband, Rassel had an early wife with a son. Due to these, as well as many others, conflicts aroused among the couple and Maksuda was always the victim of torture .

Once, Rassel ordered Maksuda to bring BDT 20,000 from her parents. Both Rassel and his parents pushed her out of the house and told her not to show her face without the money. Poor Maksuda, having no other way, went to her parents. But, her parents were really unable to manage all those money.

On the issue of demanding the dowry, both the two families stood opposite to each other. Maksuda, to bring a better solution asked help of her neighbor, Abul Bashar Liton, who was a member of the Nagorik Uddyog Citizen Rights Group. Liton, hearing the pathetic story of Maksuda, accompanied her to the NU Community Mobilizer to register a complaint against Rassel for demanding dowry and performing domestic violence.

Hearing of Maksuda's complain to Nagorik Uddyog, Rassel filed a false case against Maksuda and her father to the nearby police station. During that time Maksuda was always in a close contact with NU officials. According to the advice of Advocate Imtiaz Ahmed of NU Legal Aid Clinic, Maksuda submitted a written statement to the respected court against the petition case, filed by her husband. Having the satisfactory answer from Maksuda,

the honorable judge dismissed the case on its first hearing date. Maksuda then filed a case to the police station against her husband for demanding dowry.

After the case, Rassel had no way other than to compromise through the mediation. Rassel agreed to settle his issue with Maksuda through the mediation. On August, 2014 both Rassel and Maksuda attended in the mediation, but there were no solution as Maksuda strongly denied to restart with Rassel. Considering the overall circumstances, the mediators, before taking any final decisions, advised them to think again.

On September 2014, both Maksuda and Rassel came to NU Office. That time, both of them agreed to forget their previous incidents and restart the conjugal life. In presence of the NU Ward Shalish Committee Members and the social elites, finally the conjugal problem between Maksuda and Rassel was resolved through an effective mediation and proper counselling.

The NU Follow Up Report says that as both Maksuda and Rassel intended to restart their conjugal life, Maksuda had withdrawn her case against Rassel. On the following day after the mediation, Rassel and his father visited Maksuda's parents and took her with them. Till then Maksuda is living happily with her husband and in laws. Right now she is waiting for her new baby to come on the earth within the next few days.

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## Mediation helps Khadiza and Shain to restart their conjugal life

Khadija Akhter of Pormohol village in Nabagram union was married to Shahin Mridha of Binnapara village of Dhansiri union 2013 when she was a college student of 20 years. Shahin Mridha, was that time posted at Jessore Cantonment. So after their marriage, Shahin Mridha went to Jessore leaving his newly married wife with his parents and siblings.

A few days passed, Shahin Mridha often used to talk to her over the telephone. But the family members of Shahin Mridha had never wanted that Shahin would give more importance to Khadija. If Khadija wished to talk to her husband in private, her in laws never allowed her. They did not even allow Khadiza to call and talk to her husband alone.

Thus, another few days passed and Khadija tried her best to cope up with the in laws. But they started to treat her as a rival. Every now and then her in laws started her scolding for no reasons. Sometimes Khadija tried to protest, but nobody was there to support her. Rather, her in laws made an imaginary story and complained to her husband that Khadija had an extramarital affair with a neighbor in her own village and whenever she got the chance would meet her illegal lover. They also complained that, Khadija often assaulted his old parents physically and mentally.

Hearing the complaint from his own parents Shahin started behaving ill to Khadija. He did not even think of having his wife's opinion. She scolded Khadiza cruelty and ordered her to leave the house. Khadija tried her best to make her husband believe about her honesty and innocence; but her in laws did not let her do that. After that, Shahin never wanted to talk to Khadija. Thus, when the situation became more troublesome, Khadija finding no other way, returned to her own parents' home in Pormohol village.

Returning home, Khadija over telephone, tried to make her husband understand the situation, but Shahin did not believe her. Khadija never found that Shahin had been treating her as a wife and she could not decide what to do or where to go. Becoming refused by her husband, she stopped calling him over telephone thinking that every hope of her had gone against

the fate.

Suddenly, Shahin while in his routine work at Jessore Cantonment, encountered an accident and was admitted into the Combined Military Hospital (CMH) at Dhaka. Hearing of the news of Shahin, her own parents rushed to Dhaka but they did not even bother to inform Khadija about her husband's accident. Khadija knowing nothing of her husband, stayed at home.

On the other hand, when Shahin did not find his wife beside him during his illness; he thought Khadija would have been avoiding him. When he asked his relatives about Khadija, they simply replied that Khadija did not want to see and nurse him. Shahin became so angry upon Khadija that he did not even bother to talk to Khadija.

Khadija, when she heard of her husband's illness, tried her all possible ways to go and see him, but nobody of her in laws helped her to do that, they rather threatened her mentioning Military rules that if Khadija wanted to see Shahin at CMH, he might have lost his job. As Khadija did not know the address of CMH, she could not do anything except waiting for her husband to be cured and return home.

Shahin, after a one month long treatment at CMH, came to his village home with his relatives. When Khadija heard about her husband's return; she wasted no time to meet Shahin. But neither Shahin nor her in laws received her cordially. Shahin did not talk to her politely rather threatened her to leave the house and get ready for the divorce.

Khadija tried her best to convince her husband and inform him with the actual story, but Shahin's relatives did not let her talk with Shahin. Rather, they scolded her violently and pushed her out of the house.

Khadija became at a loss. She or her family members could not think what to do or where to go. There were no soft hearted people around them, who would hear Khadija and manage Shahin. Khadija, being helpless requested all the acquaintances around her to convey her messages to Shahin that Khadija was totally innocent and had become a victim of her in laws whims.

Dilruba Yeasmin, the NU Community Mobilizer of Gabkhan Dhansiri union and a neighbor of Khadija Begum, out of her own responsibility assured Khadija to talk with Shahin and settle the issue.

Accordingly when Dilruba went to Shahin's house and meet him. Shahin, as

he was also familiar with Dilruba, listened attentively and then put thousands of complaints against Khadija. In rhythm with the other members of his family Shahin declared to see an end of the issue by divorcing Khadija. Dilruba tried her best to make Shahin and his family calm, but nobody in Shahin's family cared her. Rather, Shahin and his family asked her to register complaint against Shahin for misleading her husband and having an extramarital affair.

Dilruba to settle the issue socially, register the complaint against Khadija and started her primary investigation. While collecting information, Dilruba found that the allegation made against Khadija by their in laws regarding her affair was totally fake. Dilruba also found that, Shahin's family did not let Khadija contact with her husband or let her visit her husband when he was admitted into CMH.

The NU Community Mobilizer, then in consultation with the members of the Ward Shalish Committee fixed a social mediation day on April 04, 2015 and invited both Khadija and Shahin along with their family members to the mediation. UP chairman of Dhansiri Union, A.K.M. Zakir Hossain was also present there along with other social elites. After hearing from both Shahin and Khadija, it was found that there were no strong reasons for Shahin to blame or divorce Khadija. They decided that Shahin, as his complaint was false, had no right to blame Khadija or divorce her. The mediators requested Shahin's parents to make everything easy, and let the couple lead their life. Upon consents of both the parties, it was also decided in that mediation that, Khadija for the next two months would live with her own parents and Shahin, as maintenance, would pay her BDT 3000 monthly. Both Khadija and Shahin would talk with each other over the telephone and no one of Shahin family would create any barrier in their communications. It was also decided that, after 3 months, both the parties along with the mediators would sit together and settle the next course of action.

Another two months passed, but the misunderstanding among the couple never passed. Instead of being easy, the situation became more complicated. Shahin with the references and of his parents, used to blame Khadija, while Khadija could not tolerate the references of her in laws. After 02 months, the NU Union Community Mobilizer again invited Shahin, Khadija, their relatives and all the previous mediators to check the follow up and finish the rest work. In consultation with the Ward Shalish Committee Members, UP chairmen of both Dhansiri, where Khadija used to live and Gabkhan union, where Shahin and her parents used to live, was also invited in the mediation.

As the issue was becoming complicated and the conflicts of the couple had become a talk of the union, both the chairmen agreed to mitigate the issue through mediation with their physical presence. Finally the mediation was fixed to be held on July 23, 2015 at Gabkhan-Dhanshiri Union NU office. Apart from both the chairmen, family members of both Shahin and Khadija and members of the NU Ward Shalish Committee were also present. Both Khadija and Shahin put their dozens of complaints against each other. The mediators found out that the entire misunderstanding between Khadija and Shahin had been made by the family members of Shahin. When the mediators asked Shahin's opinion, he simply replied to restart his conjugal life with Khadija and forget the past. Khadija also wished the same. After that, the mediators provided required counseling and advisory supports to Sahin's family member as well took their verbal assurance on cooperating Khadija and behaving her well. Khadija's in laws also confessed their mistakes and committed live with peace and happiness along with their son and his wife. Finally the mediation was concluded with the following decisions:

- From then onward, Khadija would live together with her in laws and nurse them properly and would sweep away all the misunderstandings.
- While staying with her in laws, Khadija would not do anything wrong that goes against the family norms and honor.
- Khadija's husband Shahin, after two months when he would be provided with the quarter in his working place, must take Khadija with him at Jessore Cantonment to live together.
- Khadija's husband would not perform any sort of physical or mental assault against Khadija and should overlook the silly mistakes those are not on purposes.
- Khadija must treat her husband with proper honor and respect and must not do or talk anything that may hurt Shahin mentally or emotionally.

As Shahin was a soldier of Bangladesh Army and Khadija was a meritorious college student, everyone around them really wanted to see the couple start their conjugal life together. But, as the incident was totally between the husband and wife, they could not do anything on their own. When Khadija asked for their cooperation, they tried their best to reunite the couple. After several obstacles, when the couple met together and decided to restart



their future with each other, the people of the entire locality showed their deepest gratitude to NU. According to the UP Chairman of Dhansiri union, “Disorganization of a family is not the solution. NU has proved that if we have the honest intention, we can easily solve the critical problems, according to the laws without going court or filing case to harassing each other”.

The NU Follow up report says that Khadija has been living with her in laws. Her husband Shahin is at his working place. Both Shahin and Khadiza are communicating with each other frequently. Khadija’s in laws are also cooperating Khadija to perform her chores. Khadija is waiting for her husband to be provided with the Govt. quarter where she would start her unique and own family.

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## MONIR AND MERINA RECOVERED THEIR CONJUGAL LIFE AFTER 4 YEARS

Md. Moniruzzaman, a day laborer of Raypsha Karapur union was passing his days happily along with his parents, wife and two young sons. As a day laborer Monir had no particular or regular job and it was really hard for Monir and his wife Merina to take care of a family consists of old people and young kids. Even then Merina had been trying her best to live in harmony with her in law's; but situation did not let her happy.

Llike many other traditional rural families, there had always been debates and conflicts between Merina and her in-laws on the silliest issues. Thus six years passed and when it became impossible for Merina to live together with her in-laws, Monir built a separate house beside her parents to live separately with her wife and kids.

But that could not bring any meaningful solution. Monir tried his best to satisfy Merina's demand so that the family might live without quarrel. But; Merina was somehow dominant and was unwilling to live with her old in-laws. She, always on small pretext used to make conflicts with her in-laws. Monir was totally undone and had nothing to do either against his wife's decision or his own parents.

One day Merina, on anger, left Monir and started living with her own parents at Raypasha karapur. Her father Md. Abdul Latif Sarder was a small trader and he had his personal influence upon the society, which sometimes are used in negative ways. Merina's parents hearing from their daughter only, misjudged Monir and planned to have the revenge once the chances are open.

A few days later, Imon, the eldest son of Merina died suddenly. Hearing the news of his son's death, Monir visited Menira's parents house. Merina's parents as their pre fixed plan, did not receive cordially. They insulted Monir and abused him verbally at first. When Monir protested, Monir's father and with his guidance some other assassins beat him cruelly till he lost his senses.

Monir, with the signs of tyranny all over his body, returned home alone; though he had a hope to bring his wife and the other children with him. Monir even tried his best in every possible ways to make everything smooth and agree Merina to live with him. But Merina did not pay attention. Encouraged by her father, she filed a case against Monir to Barisal Judge Court in its special tribunal on violence against women and children.

This case lasted for more than four years and both Monir and his father Abdul Kader Rari had to be imprisoned for one long month. But the conspiracy of Merina and her father did not bring any good result. It created more conflicts and bitterness among the two family. Though Monir intended to forget everything and live with her wife and children, Merina was totally different. Monir tried to bring Merina with him but every time Merina and her family insulted him. Ignoring Monir's invitation to go and live with, Merina rather demanded maintenance cost for her and their child's. Merina's father even warned Monir and set some conditions to restart his conjugal life with Merina. As Monir was not financially solvent enough to serve all their demands, the pressure of Merina and her family became heavier.

In this situation, when Monir and his family were totally at a loss, suddenly Monir's father Abdul Kader Rari came to know about the programmatic approaches of Nagorik Uddyog. To learn more about Nagorik Uddyog, Abdul Kader Rari in 2013 attended a legal aid clinic meeting in Raypasha Karapur union. From the discussion Abdul Kader got more acquainted with NU's objectives, it's mediation procedures, state laws etc. He finally put a verbal complain against his son's wife and drew the attention of NU Panel Lawyers for a mutual and appropriate solution through social mediation.

After having the complaint, NU Upazila Coordinator and Union Coordinator communicated several times with both Merina and her father. Merina and her father put their words to dismiss the issue through mediation , to the NU Officials, but they never attended in the mediation.

Thus another year passed and finally on May 17 2015, Monir in consultation with a NU Panel lawyer registered a complaint against Merina and her father. Though Monir had no intention to file complain against Merina, he did it in order to reorganize his family and live together with his wife and kid.

According to the complain, the NU Raypash Karapur union office issued legal notices on Merina and her father requesting them in a mediation to resolve the unsettled issue. When the NU Community Mobilizer talked to Merina over telephone, Merina simply denied any sort of mediation and

disagreed to live with Monir. The NU office then started counseling to Merina and her father in different ways and at last Merina and her father wanted to settle the issue through mediation.

On June 05, 2014 the mediation was held in the Bar Library of Barisal Judge court in presence of all the NU panel lawyers, Merina, Monir and their fathers. NU Officials and the members of the Raypasha Karapur union Ward Shalish Committee were also present. Recruited lawyer of the accused and some other lawyers of Barisal Judge Court were present too.

After hearing the details from Merina and Monir, finally the learned lawyers concluded the issue with the following decisions:

- Considering the financial status of Monir, he had been given three months time to mend his house.
- Within the next 3 months, Monir must rebuild his house completely along with Merina's consent.
- After three months, when the house would be suitable for living, Monir would bring back his wife Merina and their son.
- For time being and before completing the house, Merina would stay with her own parents.
- Monir would pay the monthly maintenance cost of her son to Merina as long as Merina would stay at her father's house.
- Merina would never oppose if Monir's parents live in separate house and Monir bear their every expenses.
- Merina would withdraw the case against Monir and his father from the special Tribunal within the soonest possible time.

It was also decided that the activities of Monir and Merina would be observed carefully in close contact by the NU Committee Mobilizer and the Ward Shalish Committee members.

The NU follow up report says that the day after the mediation, Monir invited by his wife and father in law went to see his son at Merina's house. Both Merina and her family received him cordially. Monir was really happy to find that Merina's family had been treating him with honor. In stead of 'just a visit and have a look' Monir, requesting by his wife and in-laws had to stay there for more than a week. Finally, when Monir wished to return his own home

and rebuilt his house for Merina and his son, Merina also wanted to return with him. Merina's parents also encouraged their daughter to abide by the decisions of the mediation and follow her husband. The NU follow up report also declares that, Merina according to her commitment over the mediation, withdrew the case against Monir.

When NU follow up team met Monir and asked him to express his feelings, Monir could not help crying. He thanked NU and said, "I had never thought of living with my wife and son. I tried my best to convince her but could not. NU made the thing easier for me and made my life happier too."

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## MUKTA BEGUM GOT BACK HER LACTATING CHILD

Mukta is the eldest among the six children of Aslam Hawladar, a permanent resident of Amanatganj in Barisal city corporation. Through the small income from a tea stall, Aslam used to maintain his family. In spite of the hardship, Aslam and her wife somehow managed education for their children.

There was Shamim Khan a 28 years old young man who used to live beside their house by renting a room in that slam area. Shamim was originally from Gheor upazila of Manikganj district and he used to stay at Barisal due to his work with a renowned publications in Barisal. Being the neighbors, Shamim had frequent access at Mukta's house. At that time Mukta just finished her primary education and had been helping her mothers in household chores.

Gradually, there grew a romantic relationship between Mukta and Shamim. Shamim with an honest intention proposed Mukta's parents to marry their daughter to him. But her parents denied the proposal thinking of Mukta's early age and as Shamim was from a far place and they actually know nothing about Shamim family. But both Mukta and Shamim were then fully determined to form their own family. Finally, with the influence of Shamim, Mukta left away her parents, they got married and the new couple flew away to Shamim's village house at Gheor upazila of Manikganj district.

Shamim and Mukta started their conjugal life in along with Shamim's parents who never agreed the Mukta as their son's bride. They even thought that Mukta and her parents had exploited and blackmailed their son. Mukta, even knowing the impression of her in laws, tried her best to tolerate everything for a better future. After a few days, her husband Shamim went back to his working place at Barisal leaving his newly married wife alone with his parents.

In absence of Shamim, the torture became stronger. Mukta's mother in law, on silly reasons, used to scold and hit Mukta. She even kept Mukta on starving for long hours. When Mukta tried to explain about the torture to Shamim, he simply answered her to wait and overcome the situation. In fact Shamim could not believe that her mother would have been making those

troubles to his wife. Finally, when Mukta could no more tolerate the torture, one day returned to her parents house from Manikganj without informing anything to Shamim.

After a few days, Shamim upon his commitment to rent a separate house, brought back Mukta with him to Manikganj. Shamim kept his commitment and rented a separate house at Dhaka. Months passed away, Mukta became pregnant and was about to give birth to their first child. For a better nursing, Shamim with the consent of Mukta, again went to his parents house to live with. But her mother in law could not tolerate Mukta. In presence of Shamim, though everything seemed to be fine, in his absence Mukta's mother in law used to show her cruel face. Mukta had to perform all the household chores even in that stage and thus she passed another seven months with the baby in her womb. Those seven months had been really painful when physical torture on silly reasons were her regular companions.

When Shamim saw Mukta after returning home from Barisal, he again rented the old house and started living separate from her parents. But her mother on the purpose of taking care of her son's child, used to visit the house so often and there was no end of her endless cruelty.

In that critical situation, Mukta became the mother of her first child. Hearing of the baby, Mukta's mother went to Dhaka to see her daughter at Mukta's house along with Shamim. Mukta told everything to her mother, and when the baby was only 06 days old, Mukta's mother by following some techniques and tricks came back to Barisal with Mukta and her new born baby. Both Shamim and her mother tried to stop her, but Mukta's mother was more tricky, and thus she was able to save her daughter's life from the oppression and exploitation.

Shamim became so angry upon Mukta that he seized all the communication with Mukta. He had left his job at Barisal and had been staying at Dhaka. Another six month passed and Shamim was not ever seen to taking care of his wife and child. Suddenly, one day through a relative, Mukta came to know that her husband Shamim married another woman according to her mother's choice and were living together at Dhaka. Hearing the news, Mukta tried to contact with Shamim through telephone and other possible means, but she never reached Shamim. Thus, Mukta became helpless with an infant baby. During those long period Mukta used to live with her own parents in Barisal.

After a one year and over, Shamim once came to Mukta's house at Barisal,

confessed his mistake and took Mukta and her child with him for reorganizing the family. That time Shamim had been working at Keraniganj of Dhaka and there she rented a house and started living with his wife and child. Thus another six months passed away. Then one day Shamim's mother came to see her grand son. She even made Shamim agree to let Mukta and the child visit and stay with her in Manikganj for a few days to ensure proper care of the grand son. Hearing the urge of his mother and upon her assurance of taking care of Mukta and the child, Shamim finally send Mukta with her mother.

But that time, along with her mother in law, there was the second wife of Shamim. In absence of Shamim, they both tortured Mukta physically and mentally. One day, when Mukta denied their domination, her mother in law pushed her away of the house keeping the child to her. Mukta requested them for giving the lactating baby with her, but they did not hear her. Mukta even tried to get her child through her neighbors but none of them were dare enough had already gained a wonderful reputation in resolving family related disputes as well as providing legal aid supports. Knowing the details of Nagorik Uddyog, Mukta, to discuss further came to the NU Barisal regional office and shared her story with the NU Legal Aid Unit. As Mukta was a permanent resident of Barisal City Corporation, she was referred to Bangladesh National Lawyer's Association (BNWLA). Advocate Monira Begum of BNWLA, registered the complaint and arranged necessary actions to rescue the child immediately. But as the accused was the resident of another district, Mukta with the advice of Advocate Monira filed a criminal case in the Judge Court against her mother in law and husband on kidnapping her lactating kid.

According to the procedure of the court, Mukta and her mother went to Manikganj but the appointed lawyer of BNWLA denied to fight with that particular case. BNWLA, Dhaka central office handed over the case to another lawyer. In the meanwhile, Mukta met with another two kind hearted lawyers in the Manikganj Judge Court. Hearing the detail and pathetic story of Mukta, they send her to the Officer in Charge of Gheor Police Station, and there Mukta finally registered a General Diary against her husband and to rescue the lactating baby.

Fron the BNWLA central office, necessary arrangements had been ensured to move with the case smoothly. Requesting by the BNWLA central office, Officer in Charge of Gheor Police Station invaded Shamim's parents house on the same day. The chairman and other social elites were also with the



police force. Both the police and the local people created extreme pressure upon Shamim's mother to return the baby to her mother. Finally, having no other alternative, Shamim and his mother surrendered them to the Gheor Police Station and returned the baby to its own mother. Mukta on the next day, came to Barisal along with her baby.

Thus, through the joint initiative of lawyers, polices, BNWLA and NU, Mukta finally got her baby back to her own lap. But the issue has not yet been dismissed as both Mukta and Shamim are living away from each other. Mukta wants an end to all the tyranny of her mother in law in order to live happily with her husband and child.

Both NU and BNWLA is taking regular care of Mukta. Shamim has been notified officially for settling her conjugal problem with Mukta through a mediation.

The NU follow up report says that, Mukta is still living with her parents at Barisal. Her husband Shamim confessed his fault to the NU officials and intends to restart his family with Mukta.

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## **SALMA, THE ORPAHN CHILD FINALLY REGAINED HER IDENTITY.**

Salma, at her very early age suddenly lost her parents in a road accident and a kind hearted couple Baker Bepari and Hasina Begum of Char Hogla village of Mehendigang upazilla adopted the orphan as their daughter. It was almost nine years of their marriage but the couple had not been blessed with the children. So finally they decided to bring up the 3 years old orphan baby Salma with their love and best care.

Baker Bepari was a very easy minded and simple man who at that time had been working at Malaysia for better earning. Both Baker and his wife Hasina used to behave with the little child gentle and carefully. In absence of Baker Bepari, Hasina too had been cautiously taking care of salma. Baker Bepari used to talk with Salma over telephone often from Malaysia.

Thus, and Salma became a girl of 8 years and everything around her was going fine unless Hassina Begum became pregnant and gave birth to her own and first child. Within time, Salma for nothing became the evil in her eyes. Hasina even started to abuse and torture Salma physically for no or silly reasons. Thus Salma, after passing away five years of her life as a daughter became an orphan again as Hasina Begum used to remind her so often. She even told Salma to leave the house and fly away. One day, for a silly mistake she even handed over a bottle of liquid pesticide and told Salma to kill herself by swallowing the poison.

The little Salma was not mature enough to differentiate her mother's behavior and was waiting for her father to return. One day Baker Bepary called over telephone from Malaysia and intended to talk with Salma. The little Salma was out of the house at that time. Hasina Begum, with the pretext of not finding Salma in due time abused and bate her with an wooden stick extremely. Next day, when Baker Bepary again called over telephone to talk with Salma, she complained to him against Hasina Begum and her terrible torture.

When Baker Bepari asked his wife Hasina to stop behaving rude with Salma, she became so cruel that Hasina started striking Salma randomly

and blindly with anything that she had found in front of her. With an wooden tool she struck on Salma's face really hard and her eyes, nose and the entire face was shedding blood. A little later, Salma became senseless without tolerating the vulnerability of the torture.

Some of the neighbors, rescued Salma and took her to the nearby Upazila Health complex. The responsible doctors referred the patient to Barisal Sher E Bangla Medical College for immediate and better treatment.

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## SHILPI GOT BACK HER CONJUGAL LIFE

Shilpi, a 19 years old, daughter of Md. Abdur Razzak at Ranapasha Union of Nalcity Upazilla was married to Md. Arifur Rahman, son of Md. Khalek Hawlader of Vabanipur village in Nachonmahal union. At that time, Shilpi was a 1<sup>st</sup> year BA student of Mollarhat ZA Vutto College.

After their marriage, her husband took Shilpi to Chittagong as he had been working with a Garment factory there. Within a few days, Arif without little or even no pretext, started abusing Shilpi both physically and mentally. At times, It had become a regular routine to torture her physically and thus once Arif striked so hard on her skull that Shilipi was needed to get herself admitted into the hospital. When it became too hard for Shilpi to cope up with her husband's cruelty, she got back to her in laws house at Nalcity. But alas! It was not the solution. In previous, it was only Arif but now she had to tolerate the cruelty of other members of her in-laws' family. Finally, finding no other way, Shilpi returned to her parents' house and since then her husband never intended to search for any whereabouts of Shilpi. Shilpi was then carrying the couples first child in her womb.

At that time Shilpi had nobody to help her and she was totally helpless. One day she heard from the Ward Shalish Committee members that the NU Panel Lawyer would visit Ranapasha union and would provide necessary legal aid counselling and advice to the service seekers at free of cost.

On 13<sup>th</sup> June, 2015 NU Panel Lawyer Advocate Mozammel Hossain visited the union and Shilpi narrated her pathetic story to the Lawyer. Mr. Advocate Mozammel Hossain advised Shilpi to put complain and accordingly Shilpi filed a complaint to the Community Mobilizer on the same day and her complaint number is 42.

The NU Community Mobilizer, after making her preliminary investigation, issued legal notice to Arif and invited him to attend the social mediation to settle the hanging issue with Shilpi Begum. After having Arif's consents, finally the mediation meeting was held on June 16, 2015 at the premise of Munni Begum, an NU Ward Shalish Committee member. Representatives

of the local Union Parishad, relatives of the accuse and accuser, members of the Ward Shalish committee along with the social elites were present in the mediation. The accused Arif confessed her mistake and expressed his opinion to rebuild his conjugal life with Shilpi. When Shilpi was asked about Arif proposal, she also shoed her consent. After a long debate and having consents from the jurors finally, the shalish was concluded upon the following decisions:

- Arifur Rahman would never torture his wife Shilpi Begum in any sorts.
- As Shilpi was pregnant, she would stay in her parents house until she gives birth to her child.
- Arif is not allowed to ban Shilpi's education.
- Both of them will try their best to live together in peace and harmony.
- If there arises any family conflict between them in future, any or both of them will be able to seek legislative supports.

The NU Follow up report says that both Arif and Shilpi are regretted for their previous activities. Since the mediation, Shilpi has been living with her parents. Arif often visits and meet Shilpi. Arif provides maintenance cost to Shilpi regularly. Both of them are living a happy life and are waiting for their child to be born.

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## SOMETIMES THERE ARE MORE THAN A MEDIATION...

Violence against women is a social curse that has been ingrained deeply in our society since long. This is really strange to see strong family bondage and again family without any emotional bond in the same society.

Conflicts between a wife and her in-laws (especially the mother in law) are also strongly present in everywhere in our society. A newly married wife tends to control the entire family affairs, including finance, whether a mother in law never wants to lose her control over the family. In her old age, when a mother becomes depends on her son's income, she can't accept her son's wife to control and manage the family out of an imaginary fear of losing her position.

This particular case is on the basis of a motherly love towards her son that has unwantedly created a pathetic story of violence against her son's wife.

The mother, Rani Begum, due to the family poverty left her village when she was 15 and managed a job in a Garment Industry in Dhaka. In her working place, she happened to meet with Alamgir Khan, a male worker. Within times, their relation turned into love and finally they were married to each other with their own decision. A few months later, when Rani became pregnant and was unable to present her working place regularly, lost her job. So Rani, being pregnant started staying at home, but her husband Alamgir, in the absence of Rani, married another female of the same working place and left Rani alone with her pregnancy and without food, medicine or money. Rani, being helpless and finding no way out finally returned to her own parent's house at Sharikal with their 8 months baby in her womb.

After that Rani never heard anything of her husband Alamgir, and their son was never able to know his legal father's identity.

Rani's son Anisur witnessed his mother's sufferings from his very childhood. Rani had to work as a maid in neighbors and both the mother and child had to starve nights after nights. Rani's father somehow allowed Rani and her son to stay with him, but that old man had not enough to support her daughter and grandson. Anisur passed his childhood without proper food

and cloths; let alone education. His mother, Rani put her best to take care of her only son, her future and her everything.

Thus, another few years passed and in 2003 Anisur became as young as 20 years. Anisur with the small savings of her mother and managing from the others purchased a grocery shop. Income through the shop was well enough for the mother and her son. Rani Begum after a life long struggle and scarcity had finally been able to see the light of happiness and solvency. She, at her own choice, settled his son's marriage with Rashida Begum, a 15 year old girl of the same village.

Anisur, as he viewed her mother's sufferings and her struggle with poverty and scarcity in a close contact, was always passionate about her mother Rani Begum. He wanted to make his mother happy at any cost. He even warned his newly married wife Rashida to take proper care of her.

Two years passed and Rashida gave birth to her first child Aminul. Rani, becoming the grandmother of a boy child were really pleased upon Rashida. After three years, Rashida gave birth to their second child, a girl, Abida. Thus a small family started turning towards a large family.

With the passes of time and the change around the family there also grew a remarkable change in Rani's attitude too. Whenever she found Anisur taking care of his children, Rani used to shout out of anger. If Anisur brought foods or toys for his small children, Rani used to scold him for wasting money and bringing poverty. In course of time, Rani could not even tolerate the presence of her son's wife Rashida around the house. Rani Begum, on her own psychology, assumed that Rashida would take her son apart from her. With the fear of losing her son, Rani started weaving the plot of conspiracy against Rashida. Nobody in the family was aware of her psychological disorder that was built on the basis of her own experience when her son was in her womb. Rani Begum had always been the fear of embracing the cause of poverty again by spending money after so many members of the family.

Because of the unusual thinking of Rani Begum, there started to raise quarrel and conflicts among the wife and her mother in law. Rani Begum could not tolerate Rashida. She started blaming Rashida for misguiding his son. On a small pretext, she used to scold and abuse Rashida verbally and tempted her son to take action against Rashida. Rani Begum plotted series of lies and misguided his son to attack Rashida physically. When Rashida could not tolerate the torture of her husband, used to stay at her parent's

house with the children. After a few days, when the situation became easy, both of them used to live together again. Sometimes the local eldest and elites with their own efforts tried to mitigate their conjugal problems.

In 2010, Rashid gave birth to a twin son and thus the size of the family again increased. Anisur had to earn more to support the large family. Rashida became busier on taking care of the twins and the other two children. Rani Begum as earlier started blaming Rashida for the family's suffering. In order to earn more, Anisur sold his grocery shop and purchased an automatic rickshaw. By pulling Rickshaw, the income was better than the shop and Rashida could somehow manage the pressure of the youngest family members and thus was able to avoid any serious conflict with her mother in law.

Another 05 years passed and Rani Begum became elder. But she always had the fear in her eyes to become poor again and lead a pathetic life. Whenever she could, rani used to blame and scold Rashida and it had turned towards a regular habit. Rashida, thinking of her husband's warning to support his mother in everywhere, tried her best to cope up with Rani. But all the days are not the same.

One day, when Rashida was really stuck with the household chores, suddenly Rani Begum ordered her to take care of the livestock those were a bit far from the house and roaming in an open field. As Rashida was busy with cooking and her little twins were on her lap, she answered Rani Begum to wait for a few more minutes or do the things by herself. Rani Begum, out of her own psychology presumed Ranis request as an order and scolded her cruelly. She ordered Rashida to leave the house.

On that day, when Anisur returned home, Rani Begum tempted her son against Rashida by throwing complaints that Rashida treated her as a house maid and she did not do the household chores. Anisur was also informed with the complaint that Rashida had ordered Rani to feed the livestock while Rashida was lying on the bed and was day dreaming. In short, Rashida was a burden for the family who did not do any household works, but only ordered her mother in law. Rani Begum after throwing bunches of complaint to Anisur demanded justice and actions against his wife Rashida Begum.

Hearing the complaints from her mother, the only living being on earth, Anisur without thinking of considering his wife's opinion started assaulted Rashida physically. Rani Begum, instead of controlling her son made him more irritated demanding more aggression and attack. The helpless Rashida



tried her best to convince her husband in every way; but Anisur never noticed. He rather tortured her so brutally that Rashida became senseless. Encouraged by his mother, Rani Begum, Anisur pushed her senseless body on the road and locked the door.

By this time, due to the violent shouting of Rashida, the incident of her being assaulted had been spread out. Some of their neighbors, while crossing the road found Rashida lies on the road faint. They advised Anisur and Rani Begum to take her to the doctor, but neither Rani Begum nor Anisur showed any interest. One of their neighbors rushed to Rashida's parents and finally Rashida was taken to a nearby physician when her younger brother reached and recovered her. After her primary Rashida returned to her own parent's house with her brother. All her four children at that time were with Anisur and Rani Begum.

Rashida had a hope that her husband Anisur would come to see her, but Anisur, her husband never appeared. Thinking of her children and how had they been treating by her husband and mother in law, Rashida became more anxious. To see her children, she became mentally sick. Her brother and neighbors requested several times Anisur and Rani Begum to let Rashida meet her children, but Anisur had never paid attention. Rashida and her own family were at a loss and could not find out what to do for breezing the family.

On May 20, 2015 NU displayed its theatre show "MIMANGSA" (The mitigation) at Sharikal Union. Fortunately, Rashida's parent's courtyard had been selected to show the drama. Both Rashida and her relatives enjoyed the drama along with their neighbors. After the drama, the moderator described the NU initiatives in details for resolving family and social disputes. Rashida and her brother, on the spot decided to discuss with the NU Community Mobilizer regarding their issue.

Both Rashida and her family became relief hearing that, in certain cases NU would bear all the expenses for ensuring justice even from the court. Upon request, the NU Community Mobilizer, after the drama gave her time to learn more about the incident and registered a criminal complaint against Anisur. The NU Community Mobilizer also assured Rashida and her family to initiate immediate action against Anisur so that Rashida and her children can be reunited.

After having the complaint, the NU Community Mobilizer collected required information and issued a legal notice against Anisur on May 24, 2015. Anisur, after receiving the letter, met with the NU Community Mobilizer and expressed his consent to compromise with his wife Rashida. The NU Community Mobilizer, then discussing with the members of the Ward Shalish Committee fixed to mediate the issue between Anisur and Rashida at the Union Parishad. On June 13 2015, the mediation successfully held in the presence of Rashida, Anisur and Rani Begum, local UP members local elites and the members of the NU Ward Shalish Committee. After the opinions of the jurors and hearing from Rashida and Anisur finally the mediation was concluded with the following decisions:

- Anisur would never assault Rashida physically, verbally or mentally.
- Neither Rashida nor her mother in law Rani Begum would make any sort of fake blame against each other.
- Both Rashida Begum and Rani Begum would live together like mother and daughter with respect and love towards each other.
- If any differs arises amongst the family members, they would solve the problem by discussing.
- Rashida, Anisur and Rani Begum would live together with children in the same house in peace and harmony, and Rashida and Rani must help each other to ensure the family harmony.

After the mediation meeting, with an invitation made by Rashida's brother, Anisur visited Rasida's parent's house; apologized to them for his misbehave and took Rashida with him to her children and her own address.

The NU Follow up report says, since that day Rashida has been living with her husband and children. Rashida thanked NU for reorganizing the family. She expressed her gratitude by saying, "in those days I had always been in the fear of my little children... they are more important to me than my life... now I am happy as I am with my children and in my own family"...

Whom to blame? Rani Begum had the same fear of happening something wrong to her only son Anisur. Rani had the fear that Rshida had been bringing the suffering and poverty to the family back by making her son apart from her...

Sometimes we don't have the right answer and we can't find out who is right with their own rights.

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## SUFIA BEGUM ESTABLISHED HER RIGHTS AND DIGNITY AS A WIFE

About 11 years , the young girl Sufia was married to an old man Sekandar Ali of Chatrakanda village in Dhansiri union. As Sekandar became the widower at her late age, his sons selected young Sufia as the wife of their old father. The elder son of Sekandar Ali, even offered 5 decimal of land to Sufia upon the condition of marrying and taking care of his old father. All those, they wanted to do was to bringing a woman in their house for taking care of the old Sekandar Ali. In fact, they had no intention to bring a new mother who would have her rights on their father's property. Finally; Sufia's parents became convinced and the young girl Sufia started her new life with Sekanadar Ali.

Sons of Sekandar Ali, with tricks avoided the registration of the marriage. They assured her parents to do that later and guaranteed them of taking proper care of Sufia. The first few months went well. Sufia was happily living with her old husband.

The trouble started after the death of the eldest son of Sekandar Ali who offered Sufia 5 decimals of land. In order to deprive Sufia off her ownership of 5 decimal of land, they started disturbing her in various ways. In fact, they wanted Sufia to leave the house so that she could never able to claim the land.

Within time, the torture became so hard for Sufia to tolerate any more. One day, to escape her from the son's evil intention, Sufia discussed her misfortune with a neighbor, Fatema Begum who was an active member of Nagorik Uddyog Ward Shalish committee. After that, with the advice of Fatema Begum, Sufia in consultation with the concerned NU Community Mobilizer registered a complaint on September 2014, against Sekandar Ali and his sons for performing domestic violence.

After the primary investigation the NU Community Mobilizer issued legal noteces to the accused and invited the in mediation meeting to settle the case. Thus upon the consents of Sekandar Ali and his sons, there were 02 consecutive mediation. Unfortunately all those 02 initiative had concluded

without any meaningful solution as they denied to handover the ownership of land to Sufia Begum. Finally, on June 2015 another mediation meeting was organized at Fatema Begum's house. Both Sufia Begum, Sekandar Ali, their sons, members of the NU Ward Shalish Committee, local Govt. representatives and other social elites were present in that mediation. After a long discussion and hearing from all, finally the family dispute was settled through making the following decisions:

- The marriage between Sekandar and Sufia would be registered officially and BDT 25,000 was settled as the maintenance.
- Sufia would live together with her husband
- Sons of Sekandar Ali would never perform any evil act against Sufia including physical and mental torture.
- Sufia Begum would not claim the 5 decimal of land in future.

The NU Follow Up Report says that, till the mediation date Sufia has been living with her old husband. As Sufia surrendered her ownership on the land, sons of Sekandar Ali are also pleased upon her. They are not making any further trouble to her. Thus, through the mediation, Sufia begum at last established her rights as a wife. She expressed her gratitude to NU as the organization helped her to establish her rights and dignity.

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## BEAUTY GOT COURT'S DECISION

Beauty Begum, daughter of Nayan Hawlader was married to Sohel Hawlader of the same village in her 18. Her husband was a small trader and Beauty had to live with her in laws and other family members. Beauty tried her best to serve and satisfy her husband and others. But there were always conflicts. Thus few months passed and Beauty became the mother of a boy child.

Suddenly Beauty marked remarkable changes in Sohel's attitude. His earnings became too little to support the family. If Beauty ever asked about his business or scarcity Sohel would avoid and scold her. Short after that Beauty came to know that Sohel had become habituated in gambling and he had been using maximum of his time in gambling rather business.

Sohel, on the other, after losing all his savings in gambling board started borrowing from others with high interest. His business fell down and Sohel became penniless though he always had the strong urge from gambling.

When it became hard for Sohel to borrow money from others, he started creating pressure on Beauty Begum to bring money from her father. Sohel demanded BDT 200,000 as dowry and to rebuild his business. Beauty at first did not agree as she was very well known of her parent's capability. Due to her disagree, Sohel and his other family members started torturing her. They even make her bound to starve for a consecutive days. Finally, when their torture became intolerable, Beauty got back to her parents home.

Beauty's parents in cooperation with the Chairman and members of Union Parishad tried to negotiate the issue through mediation, but Sohel never paid any honor to them. As both Sohel and Beauty were from the same people, their neighbors and other commonly acquainted people tried to resolve the issue too, but Sohel always denied to make any compromise with Beauty other than the money.

Thus Beauty Begum and her parents, after trying their best and being ignored from everywhere finally decided that there had been no justice and Beauty due to her poverty must tolerate all those.

Zebunnahar Begum, one of Beauty's neighbors and a NU Woman leader after hearing all those from Beauty and her mother, told them about the mediation procedure of NU. She also advised Beauty and her mother to register a criminal complaint against her husband Sohel. Beauty's father Nayan Shikder was so faded up that he simply denied any further mediation. He never thought of having justice as he did not have enough money to bribe the jurors. When Zebunnahar told her that NU demands no money and the services would be free of cost along with the lawyer fees, Beauty's father finally decided to give a try.

A few days later, Beauty and her father went to the NU Legal Aid Clinic. NU Panel Lawyer detailed him about the legal aid services and supports by NU to resolve the family and social disputes. He also assured that if Sohel did not agree the mediation decision, the case would be forwarded to the criminal court to have the justice according to the existing laws. She further assured Beauty and father that NU itself would take care of the lawyers and other formalities and Beauty or her father should never worry about the fees. Finally, being convinced, Beauty's father agreed to the mediation and registered a criminal case against Sohel and his family members.

After having the complaint, NU Community Mobilizer issued notices to Sohel Hawlader and his father Kalam Hawlader. As both the accused, accuser and all other related people of the story were from the same village, the story of Beauty was almost known by them all. After having the official notice from NU, Sohel and his father hesitated at first, but finally when the pressure had been created by the neighbors to resolve the issue, Sohel and his father agreed to attend the mediation meeting.

Finally the long desired mediation in the presence of the social elites and a member of the Ward Shalish Committee held. It had been decided that As Sohel intended to divorce Beauty, he must pay BDT 80,000 as maintenance for her and another BDT 2000 separate for their child.

Though Sohel and his father promised to abide by the decision and pay the maintenance within a fixed date, they started avoiding the decision with false pretext. Thus three months passed and Beauty or her father never received a single penny from Sohel. When NU local office observed Sohel and father's continuous ignorance, the case had been forwarded to the Barisal regional NU office for having further decision.

The program Manager of Barisal Regional NU Office, notified Sohel and his father and invited them to the Barisal regional NU office to dismiss the case.

The Program Coordinator also told them about the legislative prohibition that may occur in such a complaint. When Soheli and his father agreed to pay the maintenance to Beauty, this time the Program Coordinator intelligently told them to put down their commitment in a govt. revenue stamp along with their signature. Soheli and his father had to do nothing, they put their own signature on their own commitment.

But Soheli and his father again showed their unwillingness to pay the maintenance and resolve the issue. NU tried to communicate with Soheli and his father through the available means, but they never paid attention. Observing the whole, finally NU filed a case against Soheli and his father according to the clause 4 of the marriage and dowry act.

When the warrant for arresting Soheli was issued by the court, Soheli started playing another new and nasty game. He married another helpless girl and flew to Bhola, another district town to avoid Beauty, the warrant and the maintenance cost. But Beauty and NU were not so easy to make quiet. Discussing with Beauty and her father NU filed another case against Soheli for claiming alimony and maintenance.

But Soheli never showed honor to the court's decision and he never attended in the court. He started avoiding the warrants and other notices from the court. At times, he used to visit his parents on the sly. Thus, another year passed, Beauty with her infant child gave tireless effort to regain her husband and conjugal life, but there was never result. Soheli was never seen to the Judge Court premise to honor the court's decision.

Suddenly one day, Beauty saw her Soheli walking along with his village paths. She then and then went to Kazir Hat Police station and informed the Duty Officer about Soheli's availability. But the Duty Officer did not pay attention to Beauty's complain. When NU contacted Kazirhat Police Station and requested to take immediate action to arrest the criminal, the police forces came to arrest Soheli, but by that time he flew away with his father.

So Beauty had to wait again for another few months to get her justice. One day again Beauty saw both her husband and father in law walking towards the launch station. Beauty followed them in sly and came to Barisal by following. Beauty found that Soheli and his father was moving towards the Judge Court. Beauty Begum, without wasting her time also rushed to the NU Panel lawyer of the same Judge Court premise.

Hearing from Beauty, 05 Panel Lawyers from NU stood to fight for Beauty to

ensure her justice. All the papers of previous mediation and the commitment papers made and signed by Soheli and his father were submitted to the court. The fault of Soheli and his father had been clearly mentioned everywhere on all the documents.

The honorable judge, after hearing all and examining the documents, sent Soheli and his father to jail until the further notice. After three months, Soheli and his father took bail from the court and since then they were hiding.

By this time, a family tribunal court issued a decree to on alimony and maintenance. According to the decree Soheli was ordered to provide BDT 255000 as alimony and maintenance to Beauty and another BDT 4000 each month to bear the expenses of the court.

Though Beauty had not yet received any of this amount, she is happy as she had finally received the justice. Beauty never wanted to leave her husband and be alone, but her luck did not help her. She is optimistic that Soheli would once come to her and start a new life, if not she must claim the money from Soheli and build up the future of his son.



## NASIMA BEGUM- THE NAME OF A SURVIVOR

“There was a time when I used to think, people who have money, have everything too. Other people honor and obey them too. Only the people with money can be a leader. But, I was proved wrong when I had fully involved with NU. Through participating in different training and orientation courses I am now really broadening in knowledge. As I have found the platform to exercise and apply my knowledge and opinion, I do no more think me a burden or deprived or destitute. I do believe that I can too, if anyone can. There are a lot of things seemed impossible, but not incapable to me and I wish to make that possible”.

The NU Woman Leader Nasima Begum overwhelmed with emotion while describing her struggle with life to NU. “I do still think how I have become a leader of all people from an oppressed and destitute housewife”, she further informed, “today I talk about the rights, today I talk about the humanity and everyone loves me”.

But her days were not like this a few years back. She had to go through a terrible darkness of life that nobody wants to encounter.

Nasima, when she was a student of class 10 suddenly met with Asadul Huq of West Kayarchar village of Dapdapia union and there grew a romantic relationship between the two. Nasima was intelligent and attractive since her childhood. Her family’s financial condition was even better than many others of the locality. Therefore; many young men had a crush on Nasima. But, Nasima after meeting with Asadul, ignored all and put their commitment to each other to marry and settle together for the rest of their life. As a result, soon after their relationship turned towards the affair, it became a word-of-mouth to the people around the union and Nasima had to face warnings and threatens from her relatives frequently. But, to prove her honesty to her commitment, one day, without informing anyone of her family Nasima flew away with Asadul for an uncertain life.

After registering their marriage, Nasima with her husband Asadul went to her in laws house to stay there. She, as she left her own parents and

relatives, tried her best to cope with the relatives of her in laws. First few days passed well; but within a short she had realized what a terrible life is awaiting ahead of her.

Her husband Asadul was fully unemployed and had to live on his father Akramul Huq's income. Therefore, both Nasima and Asadul had to follow her Akramul's decision everywhere. One day, when Nasima was getting ready for her school, her father in law forbidden her from going to school. Neither Nasima nor Aasadul could protest and thus, Nasima had to quit her education. She had to manage all sorts of household chores instructed by her in laws. Nasima, in her days before marriage was loved and cared by all her family members as she was the youngest among all. But now she had to carry out all sorts of odd jobs in her husband's house. Her health broke up and she started losing her glamor.

Thus, three years passed away and Nasima became the mother of a boy child. Her life became more pathetic as she had to take care of her child too. Asadul, her husband at that time was still unemployed and Nasima had to live on the pity of her in laws, even for managing the cereals of the infant baby. During winter, she became more anxious as she had no winter clothes for the baby. Her husband, being asked frequently by Nasima to manage the situation simply replied either to follow his parents or to leave the house with the baby.

Nasima being neglected and deprived, finally decided to sever her relationship with Asadul.

After three years of discontinuing her all sorts of communications with her own parents and siblings, Nasima one morning without informing anything to anyone of her husband's family went to her own parents with the young baby. Seeing their daughter wrecked, shattered and exhausted, they became shocked and started nursing her properly without asking anything about her past and misdeeds.

Nasima, after returning her own parents' home and recovering her from the bad nightmare, decided to divorce her husband, discontinue all sorts of marital relationship and build her own life according to her own latent dream. But when she thought about her decision critically, she found Asadul just as an innocent and the victim of his parents whims too. Therefore Nasima gave up the decision of divorcing her husband Asadul, rather decided to manage a job for her husband by her own effort and live together in peace and happiness. Moreover, there were their infant baby and the baby definitely

needs his father to grow up.

Nasima, as she was a student and had an urge towards education, somehow managed a job as a teacher in a BRAC operated non formal school. After having the job she became busy with many other children at school and got her smiling back, forgetting the terrible days of her life. By this time, Asadul managed to meet her and apologized for his incapability to going against his father.

Nagorik Uddyog had been carrying out its periodical activities and programs like legal aid clinic, mediation, legal aid supports, theatre show etc. in Dapdapia union since long. Being a conscious and educated with an honorable job of a teacher Nasima got the opportunity to attend and participate in several events organized by NU. Inspiring by the activities of NU, Nasima offered her willingness to work with NU and serve the community people by solving their conjugal and social life problems. NU, also finding Nasima perfect to act like her words, selected her as the as the member of the NU Ward Shalish Committee. Being a member of the Shalish Committee Nasima was given with exclusive hands on training on law and mediation, gender and human rights and other related issues. Later on Nasima was selected as an NU Women Leader and she was given with more social responsibilities and ethical commitments.

Nasima, being empowered and honored, started living with her husband Asadul away from her in law's house. With the small income from the school and tuition fees, she started managing her own family. Within a short, her husband Asadul managed a job in a nearby Saw Mill and Nasima became more busy with social voluntary activities.

Nasima, right now as a woman leader is passing her days by serving the humanity. Apart from her regular job at the school, she whenever gets chances tries her best to assist the neighbors in solving the problems. All over the union, Nasima Begum becomes the name of justice and hope especially to the oppressed and destitute women. Nasima encouraged by her husband has already dismissed a number initiatives for early marriages around Dapdapia union. Her husband Asadul became involved with social mediation and other development initiatives too, and gradually the couple achieved honor and dignity from the people around them.

Afterwards, Nasima was provided with a Training of the Trainers on Human Right issue and she started playing her role more actively in establishing human rights especially for the women. After receiving a training on Heritage

Laws, she herself, with her own effort mitigated the land distribution disputes among the 17 successors of her in law's property. Right now she is attending different meetings and seminars in parallel with the UP Chairmen, members and other social elites and that really excites her. The local Govt. also invites Nasima in their development related meetings and other programs as well as takes her valued opinion. Nasima has also been engaged with other community development organizations and different networks.

“I thought that I had lost all my dreams. Getting angry upon my husband, I was about to divorce my husband; but I have learnt that divorce was not the solution.” Nasima added a few more words in her conclusion, “Family problems are everywhere in the society and women are always the victims. Though we cannot get rid of overnight, we can at least make the people aware of their rights. Now I am aware because I know exactly what my rights are. Thanks NU for making me honored and respected.”

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## Parvin Begum and her story of becoming a leader.

Parvin Begum was the youngest among the two children of Sirajuddin Hawladar. Sirajuddin had a small tea stall in the village Ramanathpur of Kirtipasha union in Jhalokathi district. Though Parvin had a strong urge to complete her education, her parents could not afford her due to the poverty. Thus Parvin was able to manager her education up to her primary level. As time passed, it became impossible for Sirajuddin to manage and maintain the large family of six members with the small income from the tea stall,

When, Parvin grew old and became a girl of 15 years, her parents settled her marriage with Aziz Sardar, a maternal cousin of Parvin Begum who used to live in Babuganj union and earned his living by driving rented vehicles.

After her marriage, the first few years of Parvin went well. By that time Parvin became the mother of two daughters and the entire family was with in peace and happiness unless one day and all on a sudden her husband Aziz Sardar died on a road accident. Hearing the news of her husband's sudden death Parvin became speechless. She could not decide what to do or where to go with the two little children.

After the death of her husband, Parvin passed another couple of years at her in law's house. When her father in law expired too, Parvin had no way other than returning her own parents home with the kids.

There, Parvin Begum met with Azizul Huq, the NU Community Mobilizer of Kirtipasha Union. Azizul had a well reputation as a social worker and human rights activist. He, hearing the interest of Parvin to work for the mankind, included Parvin as a member of the deprived woman group. Getting involved with the organization; Parvin with her own interest started attending every meetings and discussions. She also participated actively in other programs of Nagorik Uddyog too.

With the small amount that she received from NU as her conveyance, she started a poultry in very small scale. Parvin even completed a sewing course on making readymade garments. In cooperation of her father, she purchased a sewing machine and started her own home business by making

dresses of her neighbors.

Right now, Parvin is managing the entire family with the amount of her poultry and sewing business. Both of her daughters are the students of a nearby school. Now Parvin does not need to look for other people's help to manage and maintain her children. Nagorik Uddyog Kirtipasha union office is also taking proper care of her to make her a self sustainer.

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## PRIANKA MANAGED TO ESCAPE FROM THE EXTREMISTS

Ismail Molla, son of Shajahan Molla, village-Charpalat, union-Razapur, District-Jhalakathi had purchased a used mobile phone from a buyer about eight months back and found the number of “Prianka Rani” in the existing contact list on that mobile phone. Out of curiosity, Ismail Molla dialed the number and Prianka Rani responded from the other end. Ismail Molla with an attempt to make a relationship with Prianka, hide his original identity and introduced him as Shankar, a Hindu name which Ismail thought Prianka should take easy as the name is from her own Hindu community. After that, Ismail used to call and talk with Prianka in the disguise of Shankar. Sometimes through his own phone, and sometimes through others, Shankar used to talk with Prianka frequently. Thus, there build a romantic relationship between them.

The victim, Prianka Rani Shil was a student of the DND Degree College at Pirganj upazila of Thakurgaon district. She, in invitation of so called Shankar, flew away from her own house with her mother’s valuable ornaments. On June 17, 2015 Prianka left her house and came to Dhaka to meet, marry and live with Shankar which was Ismail Molla, in real. According to their previous conversation, Shankar was supposed to stay and wait at Gabtoli Bus Stoppage to welcome Prianka. But poor Prianka did not find him in the Bus Stoppage. After that, Prianka called him in his number, but it was switched off. Noticing that, Prianka became tempted and restless as she had nowhere to go in Dhaka. Prianka started calling to the every received phone numbers of her phone set that had been dialed by Shankar to call her. Among these numbers, one had been received by Shankar’s (Ismail) father Shajahan Molla.

By discussing with Shajahan Molla, Prianka came to know that Shankar is a fake name and Ismail Molla is a Muslim. Prianka, finding no way out finally told Shajahan Molla that she had left her parents and family behind to marry and live with Ismail and it had not been possible for her to go back to her own home. She requested Shajahan to take some immediate action to settle everything. Ismail’s father Shajahan tried his best to avoid Prianka. He had even discouraged Prianka saying that Ismail had been living with

his second wife after divorcing his first wife. But Prianka was determined to meet Ismail and see the last end of the situation. Due to the boldness of Prianka, finally Shajan Molla was compelled to invite Prianka to his home at Razapur. Prianka Rani had stayed in that house for 8 days, but never got the chance to meet with Ismail. By this time, the news spread away that Prianka had brought ornaments along with her. To snatch away the ornaments, some local culprits started a rumor that Prianka had become a Muslim and now she needs to marry a Muslim. They had even forcefully tried to marry Prianka with a visually handicapped Muslim man and arranged strict restriction so that Prianka could not leave the village.

With a great fear in mind, Prianka discussed the entire situation with a neighbor- Shefali Momtaz. Shefali Momtaz is a teacher of a Govt. Primary School of the same village. Shefali Momtaz, with her own initiative, tried to send back Prianka to her home on 26 June 2015. This time the local culprits and other village leaders opposed her to leave the village. Some of them were even much interested to take Prianka in their grips, make her a Muslim by changing her religion and let the Muslim blind man marry Prianka. This time, Shefail Momtaz, the school teacher was always with her. Being a conscious, Shefali Momtaz knew about the services of NU project "Access to Justice through providing legal aid services at local level". As there were no other ways to help Prianka, Shefali Begum finally communicated with the NU, Jhalokathi office for recovering Prianka from this unwanted situation.

NU instantly filed a case and requested the office of the Deputy Commissioner of Jhalokathi, district police office, Jhalaokathi and Upazilla Administration of Razapur to recover the victim from the culprit's grips. Finally Razapur police invaded, freed the girl and brought Prianka with them in the Thana Custody on June 26, 2015 at seven in the evening. Next day, Razapur thana police introduced Prianka upon the court of Jhalakathi Senior Magistrate.

In the meanwhile, NU also communicated with the parents and siblings of Prianka Rani Shil. Besides, NU also provided all sorts of supports and services through its Pannel Lawyers to deal the issue in court. Having the consents, the honorable court handed over Prianka to her guardian. With them all Prianka went to home in Dinajpur.

The NU Follow up report says that, till now Prianka is living happily with her family and is continuing her study.



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## **BAZLUR RAHMAN RECOVERED HIS INHERITED LAND THROUGH MEDIATION**

Bazlur Rahman and his 02 youngest brothers of Taruli village in Keora union was inherited some decimals of land properties from their father Ziinat Ali. Among those properties, 11 decimals were adjacent to the common boundary of 36 decimals of land with a Hindu neighbor. Bazlur Rahman faced no problems cultivating his lands unless his Hindu neighbor sold the entire 36 decimals of lands to their another neighbor.

Mozammel Ali Hawlader purchased the lands from the Hindu land owner and after his death, his two sons Ali Hossen Hawlader and Yar Hossen Hawlader who were known as influential and powerful, occupied the 11 decimal lands of Bazlur Rahman forcefully. They opposed Bazlur Rahman to cultivate his land and declared the entire 36 decimal of lands as their own. The two brothers even tried to circular that their father Mozammel Ali had purchased the entire 36 decimals of land from the Hindu neighbor.

Thus the conflict started between the two. Bazlur tried his best to reoccupy his land; but he became hopeless as Bazlur had neither financial strength nor any social power like his rival brothers. Bazlur knocked every doors of his neighbors for a solution; but nobody was there to talk against the brothers. The Chairman and other noted person of the union took the initiative several times for a solution but everything the mediation had concluded without any meaningful result. Thus, Bazlur Rahman became deprived of his own land.

One day, Bazlur Rahman through a neighbor was informed about Nagorik Uddyog and its implementing activities. He instantly decided to discuss his land issue with the NU officials for a reasonable solution. Accordingly, on February 2015, Bazlur Rahman in consultation with the NU Community Mobilizer of Keora union registered a complaint regarding illegal occupying of his lands against the two brothers.

The NU Community Mobilizer after having collecting primary information, issued legal notices to the brothers and invited them to a mediation for resolving the issue. On February 17, 2015 in the presence of the NU Panel lawyers, members of the Ward Shalish Committee and other social elites

the mediation was held on Bazlur Rahman's house. Both the accused and accusers showed their land registration documents, and finally after in depth analysis of the registration papers and other documents, the following decisions were made and the case was dismissed.

- Bazlur Rahman is the owner of the 11 decimal of lands according to the purchase documents.
- In presence and in cooperation of both Ali Hossen and Yar Hossen immediately the land would be re measured and handed over to Bazlur Rahman.
- Either any of the party would further involve in any conflict regarding the lands.

According to the follow up report of NU, Bazlur Rahman was given back with the rights to possess his inherited lands. Both Bazlur and his youngest brothers are cultivating crops there. His neighbors are not creating any obstacle. Bazlur Rahman expressed his gratitude to Nagorik Uddyog in the following lines, "Nobody of the village dared to fight for me; but Nagorik Uddyog did. If Nu did not stand beside me at that time, It would have never been possible to recover my lands."

## LAKSMI RANI BECAME ABLE TO RECOVER HER RIGHT

Lakshi Rani at her age of 11 years was married to Nittananda Bapari, an inhabitant of Rajarchar village, Charmonai union. In her adolescent age, Lakshi had to maintain and manage all the family chores as there were no one at her husband's house to help. Though her husband was a day laborer, the small income of him was well enough to live a happier life. As time passed, Laksmi became a mother of 3 daughters and a son. Due to their hardship, Laksmi could not send their children to school. Her husband Nittananda inherited about 10 decimals of land, but no one was there to cultivate any crops there. Laksmi somehow brought up her children, both of her daughters got married and had been happy with their own families. Suddenly one day, after a consecutive illness, it was found through medical check-up that her husband Nittananda had been attacked with cancer. Laksmi rani tried her best to bear the expensive treatment cost even in lieu of purchasing of their partial lands. But there was no fruitful result and Nittananda became jobless. Their eldest daughter Sandhya Rani relieved them assuring to bear all the necessary treatment cost for her father. Accordingly, until his death, Sandhya Rani obeyed her duty sincerely and carefully without failing. Before his death, Nittananda in the presence of all her children requested his only son Nironjan Bapari to hand over 10 decimal of land to Sandhya Rani following the official land registration procedure as a payback of Sandhya's treatment cost. Niranjan, at that moment, in the presence of all put his commitment to register 10 decimals of land in Sandhya Rani's name within a short. In our traditional social culture, commitment with a dying man is a must to do work and, both Sandhya and her mother Laksmi were relief hearing the commitment of Niranjan.

A couple of years passed after the death of Nittananda Bepari. One day Lakshi Rani told her son Nittananda to keep his promise and hand over 10 decimal of land to Sandhya Rani. But Nittananda disagreed. He ignored her mother saying that he would not give any single piece of land to anyone. When Lakshi created pressure, her son Nittananda did not hesitate to treat her badly. He even abused both Lakshi and Sandhya physically for raising the demand of the land. When the news spread out, Niranjon totally ignored

his promise to his dying father and kicked her own mother and sister out of his home.

Finding no other alternatives, Lakshi Rani with Sandhya and her husband built up a temporary shelter on her husband's land and beside Niranjans house. But Niranjon seemed unconcerned about her mother all the time. He was never seen to help her mother in any way. Rather; both Niranjon and his wife used to make clueless quarrel with Lakshi, Sandhya and her husband. After tolerating a lot, one day Lakshi Rani discussed the issue with some elite personnel of her village. They tried to bring out a solution through social mediation, but they failed as they were not fully convinced of the Hindu Family and Heritage laws.

Thus, another seven years passed and the conflict became more violent. Both Lakshi and Sandhya Rani tried their best to enjoy their legal right peacefully, but there was no result. One day Lakshi Rani happened to attend in a group discussion meeting at Rajar Char union NU Shalish Center. She became known with the supports and services that NU normally offers to dispute the unsettled social and family issues. Lakshi Rani discussed her own issue with the woman leader Taslima Begum. Laksmi became more convinced hearing that NU does everything according to the existing laws and in consultation with the panel lawyers and moreover the services are cost free. Taslima Begum also introduced her to the Community Mobilizer and told her to register the complaint. Accordingly a complaint containing the number 075 accusing Niranjan Bapari was registered.

When a legal notice was issued inviting Niranjan in a mediation meeting to settle the issue, Niranjan simply denied the mediation. Moreover, he started threatening his own mother and sister for registering the complaint. Niranjan even notified them to leave the land and go away.

But NU did not take the issue casually. The NU Union office discussed the entire issue with a lawyer of Barisal Judge Court who was supposed to make a regular visit to an NU legal aid clinic at Charmonai union. Having confirmation from the learned lawyer to move with the issue, NU Union office placed the issue in the Barisal Upazila NU office and made a thorough discussion with Parth Roy, the Upazila Coordinator of Barisal NU Office. Parth Roy talked with Lakshi and Sandhya and after hearing their stories called Niranjon over telephone and invited him to Barisal Upazila NU office in order to put an end to the issue. Niranjon assured him to visit him and settle the issue within a short. Several days passed away, but Niranjon showed

no interest. Finally, Parth Roy, in cooperation with the Govt. Legal supports advised Laksmi Rani to file a case against Nironjan for not providing her maintenance.

Hearing the news of the case, Niranjn with the support of an existing UP member threatened Sandhya and her husband. Niranjn even filed a false case against Sandhya's husband to make him a criminal.

In this situation, NU Charmonai Union office issued 2<sup>nd</sup> legal notice to Niranjn for a mediation meeting. Like the previous, Niranjn again ignored the notice. Niranjn, to take the revenge of claiming the case against him, with some associates beat Lakshi, Sandhya and her husband as well savaged their shelter.

Laksmi Rani, then in cooperation of NU, filed a case against Niranjn on torturing her physically. Subsequently, a warrant order was issued. Hearing the news of the warrant, Niranjn left his home and run away. The responsible police officer, when he raided Niranjn's house there were only his wife and children. The Police Officer warned her to attend Niranjn to the police station within due time.

Niranjn had no way other than to comply with the NU legal notice. In fear of the criminal case against him, he willingly requested NU Office to arrange a mediation meeting. Finally, NU Community Mobilizer of Charmonai Union, Maksuda Begum in consultation with others fixed the shalish on June 22, 2015 at UP member Mamunur Rashid's house who was also a member of NU Ward Shalish Committee. Apart from Niranjn, Lakshi Rani, Sandhya Rani and her husband other social elites, UP members along with the shalish committee members were present in the Shalish meeting. Both Lakshi, Sandhya and Niranjn delivered their speeches. Hearing them all finally the Shalish Committee made the following decision to settle the long hanging issue.

- Niranjn Bepari will pay an amount of BDT 100,000 to Laksmi Rani instead of the land by next one week which is June 29, 2015.
- Laksmi Rani, as her mother would stay with her only son and Niranjn must bear all the necessary expenses of Laksmi Rani.
- Laksmi Rani, after receiving 100,000 would purchase another land for her daughter Sandhya Rani in some other area.
- Niranjn would withdraw the false criminal case against her sister's

husband.

- Laksmi Rani would also withdraw her case against her son Niranjon.

Both the parties seemed to be happy with the decisions. The NU follow-up report says that Niranjon Bapari as per the decision of the mediation meeting handed over BDT 100000 to her mother on 8<sup>th</sup> July 2015 in presence of the Ward Shalish Committee members. Both Laksmi and Niranjon had withdrawn their cases against others. Laksmi Rani is now living with her son Niranjon and his family. Laksmi Rani is trying to purchase a piece of land for Sandhya Rani. She promised to pay the debts to Sandhya as soon as possible. The NU Charmonai office is still monitoring the issues cautiously so that everything may happen peacefully according to the mediation meeting.

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## **RUPA SAVED HER LAND FROM CONSPIRATOR AND ILLEGAL OCCUPIER.**

Mariam Akhter Rupa, at her 22 was married to Harun Ar Rashid. Both of them are from Jibdolon village of Tungbaria union in Barisal sadar upazila. Though it was his second marriage, Harun was adamant to marry Rupa upon any condition. He even threatened Rupa's family to settle the marriage, otherwise he would kidnapped and marry her. Finally Rupa's family agreed upon the condition that Harun would transfer his ownership of 50 decimals of land or BDT 500,000 to Rupa. Accordingly Harun, on the day before their marriage handed over the ownership documents of his 50 decimal of land to Rupa's guardian.

Harun had a small business in Dhaka and had been living with his 1<sup>st</sup> wife and children. After marrying, he took Rupa to his 1<sup>st</sup> wife and it was really impossible for Rupa to live with the 1<sup>st</sup> wife who used to abuse and scold her for nothing. Harun rented a separate house at Savar and started living there with Rupa. Thus Rupa was somehow happy as her husband used to care her strongly. At times, the 1<sup>st</sup> wife used to come with an evil mood and quarrel, otherwise, everything around her had been pretty good. In the meanwhile, she became the mother of a boy child.

With the little income of his husband, Rupa brought up her son with proper care and education. By this time Rupa's son Sunny passed his matriculation and her husband, in her late age had been encountering diseases consecutively. When Sunny was a student of class XI, the physicians declared that her husband Harun Ar rashid had been attacked with cancer. From the doctors and others Rupa also knew that there had been a little chance to save his husband's life and it would require a lot amount of money. Rupa, though she became helpless, she was not hopeless either. She started to give her best try to manage the treatment cost. When she met Harun's 1<sup>st</sup> wife and son to inform them about Harun's health condition, they just scolded her and kicked her out of the home. No relatives of Harun seemed to be interested to contribute in Harun's treatment. His health condition became worse, but Rupa had nothing to bear the treatment cost. Finally, finding out no way, she decided to sell the 50 decimal of land that Harun handed over her before the marriage.

When Rupa disclosed her decision of selling the land among her relatives, some Ruhul Amin, introducing him as her relative offered Rupa a loan of BDT 300,000 for one year in stead of a monthly interest of BDT 7,000 along with 38 decimals of land for one year to cultivate. As Rupa had no other alternatives, she agreed with the proposal.

On the next day, Rupa went to Barisal from Dhaka, keeping her dying husband behind to collect the money from Ruhul Amin. On April 16, 2014, Ruhul Amin cleverly convinced her to put down signature on an official stamp where it had been mentioned that Rupa must pay back BDT 300,000 along with the interest within next 01 year, otherwise Ruhul Amin would claim 38 acres of land. Rupa, at any cost wanted to have the money for her husband's treatment and she agreed with Ruhul Amin's proposal.

Rupa, after having the money went away Dhaka to her old husband for her better treatment. Finally with the help of the doctors, her husband Harun was cured and released from hospital.

According to the agreement, Rupa within next one year of the signing, went to pay back BDT 300,000 to Ruhul Amin and take the possession of her land, but Ruhul Amin did not meet Rupa. Hearing the news of Rupa's arrival, Ruhul left the village to avoid her meeting. When Rupa visited his house and met with her family members, they simply told that Ruhul Amin had purchased the land and he would not give it back to Rupa. Though Rupa tried her best to make them understand that she had loaned money and had not sold her land, all the people were just opposite.

Rupa then put her complain to the local Union Parishad. But there was no result. Rupa even organized the noted people including the traders of a nearby market to find out a solution. But Ruhul Amin did not honor any decision made in the mediation meeting.

In the meanwhile, Nagorik Uddyog organized its three monthly ward shalish clinic at Jibdolon village. The NU Upazila Coordinator of Barisal sadar upazila, Mr. Partho Roy was present in that clinic. A member of Ward Shalish Committee, Sadeka Afzal presented the story of Rupa and Ruhul Amin in that meeting and demanded its immediate remedy. Mr. Partho Roy assured the members that if the claims of Rupa would real, she must gain back her land.

After the meeting, the NU Community Mobilize along with Sadeka Afzal went at visit Rupa's house. According to their advise, Rupa registered a



complaint against Ruhul Amin and hoped for justice. After the preliminary investigation, NU Community Mobilizer issue the legal notice to Ruhul Amin. Ruhul Amin disagreed to sit in any arbitration. But NU staffs kept on their trying to convince Ruhul amin. Finally Ruhul Amin agreed and NU issued notices to both Rupa and Ruhul Amin for a mediation meeting on March 01, 2015 to dismiss the disputed issue.

According to the mediation date the shalish was held where both Rupa and Ruhul along with the UP members, Ward Shalish Committee members and noted personnel were present. After examining the register documents and hearing the accused and accuser, all the mediators had come to an conclusion that the claiming of Ruhul Amin was false. They also declared that Ruhul Amin had cheated Rupa with false and fake documents which is a cranial act. Having pressured by the mediators finally Ruhul Amin admitted his evil intention and opined to obey the decision made by the committee. After discussing amongst them, finally the mediators dismissed the case by making the following decisions:

- As Rupa intended to Purchase the land, Ruhul Amin will pay BDT 5,70,000 to Rupa as per the current market price.
- As Ruhul Amin already paid BDT 300,000, he would pay another BDT 2,70,000 by April 16, 2014 in cheque.
- Rupa would never claim the land or make any hassle with Ruhul Amin on land issue.
- If Ruhul Amin does not obey the decision or breaches any of it, the mediators will take necessary legal supports from the concerned legislative body officially.

Accordingly Ruhul Amin provided a Bank cheque of BDT 2,70,000 to Rupa and she went to Barisal Sadar Upazila Uttara Bank Branch to withdraw the money. When Rupa deposited the cheque at the cash counter, the concerned Bank officials seized the cheque and arrested her. When Rupa asked why, she was replied that the original check holder Ruhul Amin had informed the Bank that his house had been robbed and along with many other goods the robbers had also taken away his authorized and signed bank cheque too. Ruhul Amin also requested the bank authority to arrest and seize the cheque if anyone claim to withdraw money from his belonging account. The Bank authority informed the original account holder Ruhul Amin to visit the Bank and take away his cheque. But there was no responses from Ruhul

Amin. Rupa, on the other hand, by requesting the bank officials talked with the women leader Sadeka Afzal over telephone and informed her situation. Sadeka Afzal and the other mediators searched out Ruhul Amin and brought him to the Bank where Rupa was being harassed.

Ruhul Amin, in front of the Bank officials and others admitted his fault. Hearing his confession, the bank finally decided to honor Rupa's cheque and handed over her BDT 2,70,000 from Ruhul's account. They also warned Ruhul Amin for making fair deal with bank and other people too.

NU Follow up report says that, after the case was dismissed, Rupa Begum went to Dhaka. By this time her husband became ill again. Rupa is now passing her days with her dying husband. She expressed her gratitude to Nagorik Uddyog in these lines, " That land was with me as my husband had registered it for me. I have used the money for his treatment. If NU would not been at my side, I would have never been able to recover my land and own the money that I am utilizing for the treatment."

## SEKANDAR ALI KHAN WAS ABLE TO SAVE HIS LAND FROM A FAKE CLAIMER

Alhaz Abdul Majid Kha a very wealthy farmer of Hizaltala Village of Chandpura union under Barisal Sadr upazila left behind his 9 children and a good amount of properties when he died suddenly. His elder son Sekandar Ali Kha took the responsibility to manage his other siblings and family property. As there was no one to earn from anywhere, Sekandar Ali Khan had to sell his properties and perform other physical works to meet up the daily expenses including the education and foods of his siblings. Thus Sekandar Ali, after a hard labor managed to pass his Secondary School Final exam. He was even appointed as an Office Assistant into Sarukhali Hossainia Senior Madrasa. Thus, Sekandar Ali after taking care of his own siblings and the father's property attended to build up his own life.

Sekandar Ali was happy with his 02 sons, 02 daughters and wife. Both of his sons became educated and had been provided with jobs. His one daughter became a primary school teacher and another one was married to a noble family. Anyway, Sekandar Ali was satisfied of what he had with him until he was threatened by Jahangir Hossain, an illegal land pirates who had been trying to occupy Sekandar's land.

Sekandar's late father Majid Kha during the year from 1947 to 1949 purchased 5 acres of land from his paternal aunts which his aunts received from his grandfather / their father. After the death of Majid Kha, ownership of the land was handed over automatically to his eldest son Sekandar Ali Kha. Sekandar was ensuring the proper utilization of the land by paying due taxes too. Suddenly, in 2013, some Jahangir Hossain, who introduced himself as the husband of a granddaughter of one among Sekandar's aunts Abe Jan started claiming 3 among the 5 acres of land. He started disturbing Sekandar and threatened him asking 3 acres of land. Sekandar Ali, informed the local Union Parishad about the ill motive of Jahangir Hossain. The UP Chairman initiated to mitigate the conflict several times, but Jahangir Hossain never agreed.

After that Jahangir Hossain with the favor of a well familiar Police Officer of the adjacent Police Station created pressure upon Sekandar. Over the

telephone, the Police Officer told Sekandar to come over the office and resolve the issue. This time Sekandar Ali informed the Police Officer that he was a member of Ward Shalish Committee of Nagorik Uddyog, a non govt. A human rights activist who usually renders legal aid support and services to resolve the unsettled social and family issues. Sekandar Ali also told that he would take his decision after having consultation with other members of NU and according to the decision of the Shalish Committee.

To keep his words, Sekandar Ali registered a complaint regarding land disputes to Chadpura union NU Community Mobilizer on 29<sup>th</sup> April, 2015. His register complaint number is 63.

Accordingly, after having the complain the NU Community Mobilizer collected necessary and primary information. He issued a letter to Jahangir Hossain for arranging a mediation meeting to settle the issue with Sekandar Ali. Jahangir Hossain agreed and the mediation date was fixed on May 06, 2015.

As the mediation was really important the union NU office carefully invited the present and former UP chairmen, UP members, Ward Shalish Committee members and other important personnel.

The Shalish Committee after a thorough and careful examination of the documents and hearing the reasons of claiming from both the parties finally made the following decisions upon the consents of all:

- Sekandar's aunt sold the land to Majid Kha which is clear on the documents. As a result, sekandar, being the eldest son of Majid Khan is the legal and only owner of this land according to the family laws.
- Jahangir Hossain, husband of a grand daughter of Sekandar Ali has no right to claim the land in any way. With this particular issue Jahangir Hossain will not make any disturb to Sekandar Ali in the future.
- Owner of the 3 acres of land is the successors of late Abdul Majid Khan. Only Sekandar and his siblings are legally eligible to enjoy the ownership of the land.

Both the parties agreed to abide by the decisions of the Shalish. Sekandar Ali, in his late age became hassle free with his land. The NU Follow up report says, Jahangir Hossain, after the mediation was never seen again to disturb Sekandar Ali.

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## **SOMED MOLLAH FINALLY RECOVERED HIS LAND THROUGH MEDIATION**

Somed Mollah and his other 03 siblings inherited few decimals of land properties. Because of the hardship, neither Somed nor any of his siblings were well educated to claim the land properly. Among those lands, 10 decimals had been included within the boundary of an influential neighbor, Md. Hamid Bepari. Hamid, with his power, occupied the lands illegally for long.

Both Somed and his other brothers tried their best to convince Hamid Bepari to release their property, but Hamid Bepari ignored them always. He had no intention to make their lands free from his own boundary as Hamid had been cultivating crops on that illegally occupied land.

One day Samed Mollah attended a group meeting of Nagorik Uddyog and came to know about the activities of the organization. To learn more about Nagorik Uddyog and its executing activities, Samed Mollah in guidance with Md. Farid Chowdhury, a member of the Citizen rights Group came to the legal aid service center. There Samed Mollah discussed his entire issue with the NU Community Mobilizer and with his advice, Samed registered a complaint regarding land disputes. The complain number is 66.

After the primary investigation and when the NU Community Mobilizer found out the truth behind the complaint, issued legal notice to Hamid Bepari and invited him in a social mediation. Hamid Bepari, as he was very much aware of the activities of NU, agreed to settle the issue through the mediation.

Finally, after a long discussion and debates, the following decisions were made upon the consents of both the accused and accuser.

- Hamid Bepari must handover the 10 decimal lands to Samed Mollah and his brothers.
- Hamid Bepari would help Samed Mollah and his brothers to occupy their lands legally without any further harassment.

According to the follow up report of NU, Hamid Bepary, according to the decision of the mediation, handed over the lands to Samed Mollah and his brothers in due time. Samed and his brothers are now cultivating the lands to ensure their food and financial security.

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## REHANA RECOVERED HER MONEY

Rehana Begum used to live with her 2 daughters and 2 sons in Baroikon village of Kulkathi union of Nalchity upazila. Her husband, Abdus Sattar had to live in Dhaka as he had been serving with a private organization there. Abdus Sattar from his monthly earning used to send the large portion to Rehana for maintaining the family and their children's education. It was really hard for Abdus Sattar to stay with her family and take care of them. Therefore other it was Rehana who had to think about the family welfare, its future and its maintenance. Thinking of the marriage of her 2 daughters, Rehana used to save and manage some money from the expenses that Abdus Sattar used to send his for maintaining the family. Rehana had always been trying to increase the saving amount thinking of her daughters' future.

Babul Hawlader, an inhabitant of the neighboring Delduar village was acquainted with Rehana Begum since long. One day when Babul Hawlader was in financial crisis, contacted Rehana Begum and requested her to give him a loan of seven thousand BDT (7,000). Babul also offered 21 decimals of land to Rehana as a security assurance of her money. Rehana was convinced and she lent BDT 7,000 to Babul Hawlader with a condition to return the money back within the next 3 years.

Thus 06 years passed, but Babul Hawlader seemed to be not intended to return the money. By this time, Rehana Begum suddenly fell into financial problems and she asked Babul to return her money. Babul started misleading Rehana with fake commitments to return the money. He promised and fixed dates after dates to return the money, but every time he failed and re-fixed another date.

After having failed to recover the money, Rehana Begum requested some of her neighbors and local influential to help her to recover the money. Among them, some were the eyewitnesses of the previous dealing between Rehana and Babul. The socially noted people of the two villages tried to resolve the issue peacefully by creating personal influence, but there were no results. Even a number of mediation meetings were arranged but Babul even after making commitments and confessed his wrong, did not pay any

single. No one was beside Rehana to carefully follow-up the decisions of the local level mediation and observe Babul's tendency. Anyway, Babul paid nothing to Rehana, and she was about to give up after a long struggle of over 6 years to recover her money.

One day Rehana attended in a mediation meeting at her neighbor's house where NU organized a social mediation to resolve conflicts between 02 on the issue of borrowing and lending money. The entire mediation process made by the NU Ward Shalish Committee members ignited her hope to recover the money. As a result, Rehana talked with the NU Shalish Committee members and was known with the scope of having supports and services for her own case. NU members assured her to support if the case is genuine and within the criteria. According to their advice, Rehana Begum on February 04, 2014 registered a complain at Kulkathi Union NU Legal Aid Services center.

The NU Community Mobilizer after collecting primary information through investigation, issued a legal notice asking the accused, Babul Hawlader to attend at a mediation meeting. Having consent from Babul, the mediation date was fixed on February 08, 2014. NU office also issued letters to the nominated representatives for both the parties inviting their physical presence. All other necessary arrangements were made. The NU Office took the issue seriously as it had not been settled in the last 06 years even after a lot of initiatives.

After a long discussion among the all, finally the issue was settled upon following the decisions strictly:

Babul Hawlader will pay BDT 7000 to Rehana in installments. BDT 1750 will be paid within 20 days of each month as an installment.

Thus, Babul will pay BDT 7000 in 04 installments and within 04 months.

If Babul fails to pay a due installment, he must pay double in the next meeting otherwise it would be treated that he had breached the conditions.

NU follow up report says, finally Rehana was able to recover her money. Babul Hawlader kept his promise and returned the money within the due date according to the mediation meeting.

Rehana is really happy now. She informed NU team, 'Nobody could make it in 06 years but you could. This money must help my daughter build up her life.

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## REHANA RECOVERED HER MONEY

Rehana Begum used to live with her 2 daughters and 2 sons in Baroikon village of Kulkathi union of Nalchity upazila. Her husband, Abdus Sattar had to live in Dhaka as he had been serving with a private organization there. Abdus Sattar from his monthly earning used to send the large portion to Rehana for maintaining the family and their children's education. It was really hard for Abdus Sattar to stay with her family and take care of them. Therefore other it was Rehana who had to think about the family welfare, its future and its maintenance. Thinking of the marriage of her 2 daughters, Rehana used to save and manage some money from the expenses that Abdus Sattar used to send his for maintaining the family. Rehana had always been trying to increase the saving amount thinking of her daughters' future.

Babul Hawlader, an inhabitant of the neighboring Delduar village was acquainted with Rehana Begum since long. One day when Babul Hawlader was in financial crisis, contacted Rehana Begum and requested her to give him a loan of seven thousand BDT (7,000). Babul also offered 21 decimals of land to Rehana as a security assurance of her money. Rehana was convinced and she lent BDT 7,000 to Babul Hawlader with a condition to return the money back within the next 3 years.

Thus 06 years passed, but Babul Hawlader seemed to be not intended to return the money. By this time, Rehana Begum suddenly fell into financial problems and she asked Babul to return her money. Babul started misleading Rehana with fake commitments to return the money. He promised and fixed dates after dates to return the money, but every time he failed and re-fixed another date.

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Rehana is really happy now. She informed NU team, 'Nobody could make it in 06 years but you could. This money must help my daughter build up her life.'

## A NU DRAMA HAS CHANGED THE LIFE OF SATHI AKTER

Asman Ali was a day laborer living at Maloar Village of Siddhakathi Union. He was somehow passing his days in the joys and pains with his four children and wife. Sathi Akter was the third among the four children. When Sathi reached at 17 years of age, Asman Ali settled her marry to Md. Ripon Rari, son of Late Kadam Ali Rari of the same village. At that time, Ripon was a man of 32 years.

Misunderstandings started to grow within a very few days of her marriage. Conflicts between the couple were always there, without a silly or even no pretext which finally ended with physical torture. In the meanwhile, Sathi gave birth to a baby girl. For giving birth to a girl, her husband Ripon Rari became more ill-tempered. Sathi tried her best to convince her husband, but Ripon did not respond positively. A few days passed and finally Sathi realized that her husband is a polygamist and he has physical relationships with other women too. If Sathi tried to talk with her husband regarding this, Ripon used to abuse her physically. When it became hard to tolerate, Sathi often left and stayed in her father's house; but Ripon never tried to communicate or see her.

One day when Sathi was staying at her father's house, Parvin Begum a woman leader at her next door, invited Sathi to enjoy a stage drama at Sahid Master's house of that village. Fortunately, on that day NU had organized a drama in that displayed how NU provides supports and services like mediation, legal aid and counseling. Particularly there was a sequence on shalish in that drama. While enjoying, Sathi Akter was highly convinced with the initiative of the members of the Ward Shalish Committee who in that drama had brought out an accurate, precise and neutral solution in light of our conventional legislative framework.

At the end of the drama when the NU Community Mobilizer announced an invitation to file the complain if any of the audience would have such experience, Sathi decided to take a chance. She was more convinced when the NU Community Mobilizer assured to provide legal aid supports if the complaint is logical and within the legal frame. After returning her home,

Sathi informed her family members about the initiative of NU and her decision to register a complaint against her husband Ripon Rari. Accordingly, after having a discussion with the Union Community Mobilizer Sathi submitted a written complaint in the prescribed format on May 02, 2015.

After receiving the complaint, the Community Mobilizer investigated it and when found out the rationality, sent a notice to the accused and its carbon copy to the accuser. Upon consent of both the parties, the Shalish had been decided to be held on May 17, 2015 at Rintu Master's house on 3.00 pm. At the same time, another letter was issued to the members of the Ward Shalish Committee with a request to present on that Shalish.

Accordingly, the Shalish/Mediation Meeting was organized where 02 female and another 02 male members of the Ward Shalish Committee along with another 03 local elites were present. With the presence of the representatives, family members and both the accuser and accused; finally the Shalish/Mediation Meeting ended successfully with the following mutual decisions:

1. Ripon must give up his monogamy habit.
2. Ripon would bear the entire responsibility and alimony for his wife and daughter.
3. Ripon would never behave rough with Sathi Akter
4. They would live together in peace and harmony and would bind a strong family.

After that, the presented mediators greeted them warmly and wished for a happier conjugal life and let Sathi Akter go with her husband Ripon Rari.

While following up, it was observed by the NU members that Sathi Akter is living happily with her husband and children. Ripon, her husband is also careful to them. When our team members met Sathi, she appreciated the NU initiative and said that, "I never thought of bringing this sort of easy and cost free solution to my family problems which was about to destroy my life. If NU can be presented with these types of initiatives, a lot of families and wives of this village would also be saved from the damages. NU has given pleasure through the drama and brought solutions to the conjugal problems." She also requested to show more dramas for creating awareness and consciousness.

## NU DRAMA HELPS KHALIL RECOVER HIS MONEY

In order to develop the life living status of our marginalized people, Govt. has been offering different types of social privileges since long to bring the marginalized and deprived people inside the social safety net. But, sometimes, even after the Govt. utmost effort, these privileges never reach to the end-people due to several push and pull factors.

The following story is how NU helped a 76 year old landless citizen to claim and enjoy his Govt. allotted khas land and recover his money from a broker.

Khalilur Rahman Kha, a landless farmer of Baherchar village was provided with 1 acre and 50 decimal lands in 1990 under the Govt. Khas Land Allocation Management Program. Khalilur Rahman at that time thought of spending her rest days with peace and happiness after all the past sufferings. With his wife and 3 children, he had been dreaming to become a land owner, by building their small house and farming the rest land. But being uneducated and unaware of and acts, Khililur Rahman was not fully capable to manage all the govt. procedures and could not submit his proper documents to support him as the land claimer. As a result, even after being the land owner, Khalil never received the legal land acquisition papers and some other people, who were clever enough to manage fake papers, occupied the land and started enjoying that.

Khalil, as he had neither money nor any power or even the proper documents could not do anything against the illegal occupier. By this way, more than two decades passed and Khalil grew elder, but could not build his own house. His wife died, and his three sons left him alone for building their own lives. His only daughter was married to a nearby village, and Khalil had to live on the pity of his daughter's and her husband.

Khalil, even at his age longed the hope to build his house and cultivate his own land. He, all through those 30 years had been seeking help to different people from recovering his land. But all those ended effortless. Khalil could not find the right place to put any complaint or nobody around him helped him providing with the accurate information.

Finding no other way, Khalil finally requested Md. Selim Panchayaet, a land broker of nearby Baherchar village to work for him. Selim Panchayaet, instead of BDT 10,000 assured Khalil to register the land with his name within 15 days. Selim demanded the money in the name of filing a case and meet up the govt. procedures in the AC Land office. As Selim was experienced in resolving critical land related issues and had a fame all over around, Khalil was convinced. He, in 2011, with an honest intention handed over BDT 10,000 to Selim that he had collected through his small savings and borrowing from others.

After handing over the money, Khalil started counting down. 15 days went away, and then even 15 months; but no result. Selim never appeared. Khalil, in his old age, becoming tensed of his money than the land. Whenever he had met Selim, Selim as usual, replied to wait for a few days more with different pretexts like the officials were on vacation or office remained closed and thousand others that were perfect to convince Khalil.

Khalil, on the other hand, being lost by Selim consecutively, started to request other people around the village to help him to recover his money from Selim. Though, there were people with the honest intention to help Khalil, but could not do anything further than a fruitless discussion amongst them as Selim Panchayet was well off and had his own influence upon the society.

Thus Khalil, in his old age could nothing except regretting and blaming his own. Due to his physical condition, it became hard for him to move around all the time in search of Selim. He started passing his days alone in his daughter's shelter.

On May 17, 2015 NU organized its theatre show in Baherchar village of Alimabad union where both Khalil and Selim lived. As theatre show is still popular in our rural villages, people of all ages normally enjoy the show. The NU theatre not only entertains the audiences but also deliver messages to make them aware of their rights and entitlements. The drama is normally based on particular social issues, and the character artists through their acting try to equip the audiences with necessary and updated legislative information and prohibitions. It had been fixed earlier that NU would demonstrate the drama "MIMANGSA" (MITIGATION) that had been on the basis of land related disputes. After the drama, the moderator also described how NU assists the deprived people to enjoy their rights and entitlements according to the constitution. The moderator also detailed the

way of availing free legal aid support from NU including the Panel lawyers.

Coincidentally, among the audiences, there were Selim Panchayaet and Ohab Mridha, a neighbor and well wisher of Khalil. They enjoyed the drama sitting together. Ohab Mridha while enjoying the drama, decided to guide the old Khalil to have legal aid support from NU. After the drama, he even warned Selim Panchayet to return the money back to Khalil before any action taken by NU or Govt. legal body.

Both the NU drama and the threat of Ohab Mridha made Selim confused. For long he had been cheating people and nobody was there to talk about the legality, but the situation was different then as NU assured to support the people with legal advices and stay with the deprived. So when Khalil, with the advice of and encouraged by Ohab Mridha demanded either the case registration number or the money, Selim had no where to hide. He simply assured Khalil to give the case number within the next 3 days.

After 3 days, when Selim failed to show the paper, Khalil warned him to complain against him at NU if he failed to return the money within next two days. Two days passed away and Selim failed. Selim requested Khalil to wait for another few days, but Khalil was unsure of Selim's motive, and in consultation with Ohab Mridha discussed his matter with the NU Ward Shalish Committee.

NU Community Mobilizer of Baherchar union after registering the complain, invited Selim Panchayet in the mediation to settle the issue. Selim, in reply, requested NU to avoid the social mediation in fear of losing his social acceptability and dignity. To create a better solution for the both NU agreed to avoid the mediation upon the following conditions:

- Selim would pay 5,000 to Khalil in the presence of the NU Community Mobilizer by the next day.
- Rest 5000 would be paid to Khalil by the next month.

Accordingly, on the next day, Selim Panchayaet in the presence of the NU Community Mobilizer paid back 4,000 to Khalil. He apologized for not paying the full and put his commitment to pay back the rest within the next month. NU warned him boldly to obey the commitment.

The NU union office observed Selim Panchayet for the next few days. It communicated with both Khalil and Selim and ensured to be informed of each other's status. Finally, according to the commitment, Selim paid the

rest 6,000 to Khalil.

The NU follow up report says that Khalil, after recovering his money, is now trying to acquire his allocated land. He already consulted with NU about the disputes of the land and NU assured him to provide with the best possible supports within the legal framework. NU also invited him in the legal aid clinic and consult with its panel lawyers. Khalil in his expression specially thanked the theatre show of NU that motivated his neighbor to encourage him. Both Khalil and Ohab demanded to demonstrate more theatre shows highlighting the long existing social and family conflicts and showing the remedies.

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## FAZILA AGAIN FELT HAPPY AFTER 22 YEARS

Fazila's father Sultan Hawlader died when Fazila was only 13 years. Fazila was the eldest among her siblings. As Sultan Hawlader was the only earning man, with the death of him the entire family also fell into a terrible hardship.

Her mother Somertoban was a simple house wife and she could not decide what to do with the children. Her relatives took the initiative to settle the marriage of Fazila, the youngest daughter to someone who can work as the guardian of the family. Consulting with her mother, finally the relatives settled her marriage with a 40 years old man Malek Kha of the same village.

Ali Hossen was a day laborer. He had been living with his mother and other sibling in a joint house. There was no demand of dowry in that marriage and Fazila started her new life with her husband. After their marriage the first couple of months went well, other than the ordinary misunderstandings, there were no major conflicts among the couple. Three years passed away and Jahanara became the mother of a daughter as well as a son.

Suddenly, Fazila noticed a peculiar change in her husband's behavior. Ali Hossen, for no reasons, used to quarrel with Fazila. Initially it was limited to verbal abuses and scolding, but within times Fazila became the victim of frequent physical tortures too. Sometimes, Ali Hossen after making violent quarrel with Fazila used to send her to the parents home forcibly and threaten her parents to divorce Fazila.

Fazila's parents or relatives could not do anything against Ali Hossen thinking of the future of her children. Her mother, without informing Ali Hossen, often used to send money to Fazila for managing her necessary financial issues. Her eldest daughter Salma passed her Secondary final examination and was married to a nearby village. Her only son was at that living away of the house and was searching for job. After the marriage of their daughter, her husband became more rude to Fazila. He was always in a bad temper and could not tolerate Fazila. Thus, Fazila passed 22 years of her life with her husband but could not gain his faith or love.

Fazila Begum, in spite of her such trouble was always ready to help the

people. She had an honest intention to work for the mankind. One day, while in a group meeting of Nagorik Uddyog, Fazila Begum decided to take the organization's help and counseling support to change her fate and ensure happiness in her life. She, then with the cooperation of the Charbaria union Community Mobilizer registered a complaint.

After performing the initial investigation, the NU Community Mobilizer invited Ali Hossen to resolve her long running conjugal life's complication through a mediation. Ali Hossen also agreed to settle his conjugal problems. Thus, upon the consent of both the accused and accuser, finally a mediation was organized in their own residence. Apart from Ali Hossen and Fazila Begum, their relatives and neighbors, social elites and the members of the NU Ward Shalish committee were also present. Both Ali Hossen and Fazila Begum narrated their own story. The mediators reminded the couple of the importance of ensuring mutual understanding and honor. They advised them to build up their life and family with interpersonal relationship, honor and respect. Both Fazila and Ali Hossen also promised to take care of each other and not to involve in any further conflicts.

Thus after almost two decades Fazila Begum, finally could able to smile. The NU Follow Up report says that both Fazila and Ali Hossen are living together with the support and cooperation to each other. Their neighbors reported that Ali Hossen was at that time a well mannered and the family had been living with peace and happiness.

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## JAHANARA IS NOW A HAPPY WIFE BY REMOVING HER CONJUGAL LIFE COMPLICATIONS

Jahanara Begum, daughter of late Hossen Hawlader of Tokathi village in Kultkati union of Nalchity district was married Sony Mridha of the same village. After their marriage, first few years of the couple went well without any serious complication.

3 years later, Jahanra gave birth to a daughter and with their sweet and cute little daughter both Jahanara and her husband was really please.

Conflicts among the couple started arising when Jahanar, due to her physical illness, had to rest in the bed and she could not nurture her husband properly. Her husband wanted her to see active and working always. He was not even likely to spend money for Jahanar's treatment and health recover. Thus, on the issue of Jahanar's health and treatment, the couple became involved with conflicts for silly reasons.

Sony Mridha, having the chance of Jahanars's physical illness, became involved in post marital relationship with other women too. Jahanara was really shocked seeing her husband ignoring her and making physical relation with other women. But at that time she could do nothing as Jahanara was fully unaware of the procedure of putting such a complain regarding her husband's behavior. Anyway, Jahanra tried her best to tolerate her husband's ill behavior. Within times, their conflicts became extreme and the family was about to disorganized.

Relatives, neighbors and the people around them including the representatives of the local Govt. tried several times to settle the issue between the couple, but every time the effort concluded with an endless discussion. Jahanara herself also requested her known and socially influential people to bring out an immediate solution, but she could not manage that.

One day Jahana met with Kamal Hossen, one of her neighbor and a member of NU Toikathi Union Ward Shalish Committee. Hearing the story and her intention, Kamal advised her to resolve her problem through a mediation.

Kamal also advised her to register a complaint in consultation with the NU Community Mobilizer.

Accordingly, Jahanara upon discussion with the NU Community Mobilizer registered a complaint on February 2014. After receiving the complaint, the NU Community Mobilizer according to the formal official procedures, investigated the case and finally issued legal notice to Jahanara's husband Sony Mridha, as well invited him to resolve the conjugal problem through a mediation.

After the consents of both Jahanara and her husband, finally the mediation was held on Jahanar's house in presence of the Ward Shalish Committee members, local govt. representatives, their relatives and neighbors. Hearing the details from Jahanara and her husband, the mediators advised the couple to live with mutual understanding. Sony Mridha was told to provide immediate and comprehensive health treatment to Jahanara. In a stage of the counseling and mediation, both Jahanara and her husband promised to live with peace and happiness. They also put their strong commitment to treat each other with respect and honor.

Thus, through the mediation, the conjugal life complication among the couple had been swept away and they started living a happier life.

The NU Follow Up report says that both Jahanara and her husband are still living in the same house. By that time Jahanara was referred to a specialist and Sony Mridha is taking care of his wife's health regularly. According to their neighbors, both Jahanara and her husband Sony Mridha are leading a better life than earlier.

