

ANNUAL ACTIVITY REPORT 2007



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Secretary's Report

I am pleased to present to you Odhikar's Annual Report for 2007.

Despite the fact that Bangladesh returned to democracy 17 years ago following a popular upsurge, constitutional liberties still face some challenges. The human rights situation and overall political and security conditions in Bangladesh have deteriorated on many counts over the last decade, concurrent with the shift in the role of the state, from socio-economic welfare of the citizens to promoting 'free' market, that in essence it seems to safeguard the interest of the private sector against the citizens at large. Unfortunately, the continued occurrence of political confrontations, arbitrary arrests, custodial deaths, violence against women, extra-judicial killings and torture by state and non-state actors hinder the enjoyment of civil and political rights. In the absence of effective instruments and institutions defending the collective and individual rights of the citizens, the overall situation shows symptoms that are alarming. However, the situation has dramatically changed after the proclamation of the State of Emergency on January 11, 2007.

In 2007 the inevitable course is manifesting into a general deterioration of democratic values and political tolerance culminating in increasing fragmentation of the society, breeding non-negotiable antagonistic positions and open violence. The human rights situation deteriorated sharply in Bangladesh in 2007. Following the escalation of increasingly violent clashes between members of rival political parties allegedly over the independence of the state bodies tasked with conducting national elections, the Army intervened on 11 January 2007; a new military-backed government took control and declared a State of Emergency.

Odhikar works to improve the quality of life, liberty and livelihood of the people of Bangladesh promoting civil, political, economic, social, cultural and collective values of human rights including implementation of obligations of the government prescribed by the Constitution as well as by international instruments including the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, International Covenant on Socio, Economic and the Cultural Rights and Convention against Torture.

Odhikar always emphasises the active participation of the grassroots community in its work. Odhikar realises that empowerment is a precondition to establishing human rights. With this in mind, in 2007 Odhikar continued working with the vision of "a society where full enjoyment of human rights by every human being will be ensured."

Odhikar's biggest achievements of 2007 follow Odhikar's research and monitoring of human rights situation under the State of Emergency across the country, throughout the year, Odhikar has proved its neutrality and capability of being a dynamic human rights watchdog nationally and internationally.

It must be noted here that Odhikar continues to receive threatening telephone calls and veiled warnings from government intelligence agencies and anonymous sources. Furthermore, due to the now telephone tapping laws, it can safely be deduced Odhikar's e-mails and telephone calls are being screened and monitored.

I would like to thank all Odhikar's staff, volunteers, human rights defenders and my fellow Executive Committee members for their hard work in 2007.

Adilur Rahman Khan
Secretary
Odhikar

About Odhikar

Who we are

Odhikar is one of the leading human rights organisations in Bangladesh, registered under the NGO Affairs Bureau. Since its inception in 1994 Odhikar has been striving to improve the human rights of the people by holding to account both state and non-state actors who perpetrate human rights violations. It was founded as, and will continue to be, a politically non-partisan organisation.

Our mission

Odhikar seeks to uphold the civil, political, social, cultural and economic rights of the people of Bangladesh.

What we do

Odhikar documents and records violations of human rights by monitoring the human rights situation through its nationwide network of human rights defenders, scanning media reports and running fact-finding missions. Where appropriate, we campaign for changes to legislation that allows violations to go unchecked.

We network with other NGOs nationally and internationally to share information and exchange best practices.

Odhikar helps to ensure that elections are free and fair through a programme of election monitoring.

The most disadvantaged communities in Bangladesh benefit from Odhikar's training workshops which help them understand their rights and how to access them.

We have a nationwide network of over 200 men and women trained as Human Rights Defenders. Their information and reporting helps Odhikar expand its working area to places not readily accessible to our fact-finders.

Odhikar Activities in 2007

Odhikar continued two projects that commenced in 2006 and ended in mid 2007, and also implemented three new projects:

- Democratic Elections: Motivation, Orientation and Support
- Pluralism & Diversity: Promotion of Article 41 of the Constitution of Bangladesh through Education and Training
- Promoting Human Rights especially Rights of Ethnic People, through Empowering the Leaders of the Ethnic Community Project
- Documentation, Fact Finding and Policy Advocacy to stop Human Rights Violations
- Ending Impunity for Acid Attack and Rape Project

Our Annual Report gives an overview of each of these projects and highlights the key findings, recommendations and outcomes.

Further, more detailed, information on each project is available on request.

Pluralism & Diversity: Promotion of Article 41 of the Constitution of Bangladesh through Education and Training

Background of the Project

Odhikar has conducted a review of education materials and curricula under this project. Odhikar as Partner of Minority Rights Group International (MRG) has collated and assessed recently revised educational materials/curricula with regards to their content and portrayal of religious minorities and disseminate findings.

This review was conducted in terms of good practices with respect to the status of religious minorities in textbooks and areas where they were overlooked. The review also included an analysis of the contents of these textbooks regarding the same issues on the basis of class and subjects. The method of selecting grade, subjects and institutions was on the basis of purposive sampling. The time line for conducting this study was six months.

The books of Grade III and Grade VII were chosen for the review. The selected subjects of these two grades were Social Science, History and Religious Studies.

A number of formal primary and secondary educational institutions were selected, based on a common standard of the Bangladesh education system. These were Government Schools, Alia Madrasha, Qaumi Madrasha (under the *Befaqul Madarisil Arabia*), one English Medium School (Scholastica), one English Medium Missionary School (Saint Francis Xavier Green Herald International School) and one Bangla Medium Missionary School (Saint Gregory's School).

A total of 35 books were analysed, given that there were a number of subjects under a single discipline such as Moral Science, Islamic Religious Studies, Christian Religious Studies, and so on under religious studies and so under the subject of Social Science.

The selected books were reviewed separately in terms of good and bad practices with respect to the discussion on religious minority groups. The findings have been arranged based on class and subjects through detail analysis.

This is the first phase of the MRG project, running in India, Pakistan and Bangladesh. The second phase, involving training and campaign, is yet to commence.

Promoting Human Rights, Especially Rights of Ethnic People Through Empowering the Leaders of the Ethnic Community

Background of the project

Bangladesh is a country with a large majority Bangali population and a small ethnic minority population who belong to about 46 different ethnic groups from the plains and also from the hill regions. This present land of Bangladesh was originally a land of trees and rivers with an Ethnic population with more than one thousand years of history and culture. The now marginalised population of Ethnic origin who either failed or refused to integrate were left on the sidelines and their land, language and culture have become endangered.

Due to lack of education, information or financial recourses, different ethnic minority people whether they are from the 'Santal' and other communities of northern Bangladesh or the 'Buno's from western part or 'Monipuri' from north-eastern part of Sylhet or hill tribes from Chittagong Hill Tracts or the 'Garos from the greater Mymensingh districts of central Bangladesh all face the same or at least similar problems of land grabbing, violence against women (such as abduction of young women, rape, intimidation, sexual abuse, force marriage etc.), forced evictions, arson attacks, unemployment, lack of access to resources and poor access to justice.

Violent attacks, harassment, and social and economic discrimination are the status quo for the ethnic people of Bangladesh. The agents of various forms of intimidation and violence are usually Bangali land grabbers, but local officials, and hired thugs often join the latter. The most widely reported incidents are of armed attacks on villages and related acts of arson. In addition to other forms of violence, an ongoing epidemic is the phenomenon of rape and sexual assault of ethnic women. As seen elsewhere in the world, the women of ethnic communities are targeted in order to 'teach a lesson to the entire community'.

For these reasons, Odhikar has been working with ethnic community groups for raising awareness on human rights especially on ethnic rights, campaign on land rights of Ethnic Minority Communities and rights of ethnic women through training, documentation, advocacy and publication.

To address the needs identified above, Odhikar developed this project to promote human rights through empowering the leaders of the ethnic community. The project will develop the knowledge and skills of the participants to monitor rights violation and to use the existing national and international mechanisms to seek effective redress.

The broad objective of the project

The objective of the project may be stated as: building the capacity of the community leaders as well as staff members of the partner organisations of Action Aid Bangladesh belonging to ethnic and linguistic minority groups for promoting economic, social and cultural rights of ethnic people in private and public, freely and without interference or any form of discrimination.

Specific Objectives of the project

- Sensitise and build capacity of the staff members of partner organisations of Action Aid Bangladesh- Diversity and Citizenship Theme and Ethnic community leaders with regards to human rights activism so they can protest and prevent human rights violations using national and international human rights mechanism.
- Develop and maintain an association of ethnic people through out the country.
- Strengthen the capacity of associations of ethnic people to design human rights advocacy campaigns effectively and efficiently.
- Build the capacity of the participants for ensuring proper implementation of rights based activities in their own area by conducting training courses.
- Assist to develop a network of Human Rights Defenders and explore partnership activities essential to further the cause of human rights.

Key strategies

This Project has built a network with the ethnic community organisations and has assisted them in selecting at least 3 (three) participants from each partner organisation of Action Aid Bangladesh –Diversity and Citizenship Theme and community organisations for this course. A total of 106 participants received the training, in which at least 30% came from Action Aid partner organisations. The course was divided into five topics and took three days to complete. They were conducted in 5 Districts in 5 Divisions where an average of 25 participants attended each course.

Focus of the course has been given on the 1989 Ethnic and Tribal Peoples Convention and the Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities. Women and child rights, land rights along with violence against Ethnic women were also discussed intensively. This course was designed based on participatory approach with an interactive and learner centred processes.

Activities

It was decided that Odhikar would carry out the following activities:

- 1) Organise a resource team from Odhikar and external facilitators
- 2) Develop course material and hand books for the participants
- 3) Organise meetings with ethnic community organisations and share the project objectives and activities
- 4) Select participants and conduct human rights training courses
- 5) Facilitate five training courses in five different regions

- 6) Develop an action plan as part of a post training assignment which will ensure the utilisation and practice of knowledge gained
- 7) Carry out a training follow up
- 8) Organise Alumni meetings with all participants to develop an action plan to work as a Human Rights Defenders on a voluntary basis as much as possible

Objectives of the training course

For better understanding about the training course it is necessary to mention the course objectives here:

- To define rights, human rights and needs
- To differentiate between rights and needs
- To analyse conceptual framework of Rights Based Approach (RBA), its characteristics, its tools and its application procedure
- To provide information on international human rights mechanisms, systems, standards and issues related to the work of the Indigenous groups
- To analyse fundamental rights, laws, policies, issues related to the work of the indigenous groups
- To make participants sensitise to claim their rights and determine strategies to realise public services from the duty bearers
- To maximise knowledge on existing national and international laws and conventions to promote and protect rights of indigenous people
- To become familiar with different levels to work in order to secure the rights and services for the indigenous people
- To stimulate participants to their particular role in protecting and promoting human rights and their own potential for affecting human rights in their daily work

Expected outcome of the project

- 125 Ethnic community leaders from different ethnic community organisations will be developed as Human Rights Defenders.
- At least 30 ethnic minority community organisations will be sensitised and internalise the concept of Human Rights, Human Rights Culture and Rights of Ethnic people
- Network of Ethnic human rights defenders/organisations will be developed and maintained.

Stakeholders of the project

Primary stakeholders of the project were 125 ethnic minority community leaders and staff members of Action Aid Bangladesh's partner organisations from different Ethnic community organisations all over the country. A total of 106 participants from 16 ethnic minority communities attended the training courses.

Outputs

The material outputs from the project are course material, five training courses, and an action plan for each participant, a draft report and a final report. Details are given below:

- Representatives of 16 ethnic minority communities were sensitised about the concept of Human Rights, Human Rights Culture and Rights of Ethnic people.
- A network of Ethnic minority human rights defenders/ community organisations has been developed.
- Knowledge and skills of each and every participant on rights issues have been enhanced.
- An action plan for each participant was prepared as a post training commitment, which was shared with and confirmed by the Odhikar team.
- Participants received sufficient material on human rights, laws relating to human rights, which will assist them to carry out human rights activities independently.

Approaches and Methodology

The training was intensely interactive and participatory in manner. The whole approach was participant-centered. The emphasis was given on discussion, role-play, analysis, group work, and exercise, presentation and sharing of information. More emphasis was given to the dissemination and implementation process rather than merely general discussion. The participants played a very active role not only as participants but also as a resource persons in the whole course.

Support from the Action Aid team

Action Aid Bangladesh staff provided direct support to Odhikar both in Dhaka and in the training venues outside Dhaka. They provided all necessary logistic and other support that helped to conduct the courses successfully.

Conclusion

At the end of every course, the participants shared their feelings. Most mentioned that they regretted not having attended such a course earlier. They wanted to organise more human rights training courses for their community. One participant from the Rakhain community confirmed that they are entirely excluded as a people. They have no chance to participate in the mainstream decision making process.

This project has given Odhikar an intensive opportunity to develop a network with the ethnic minority communities, which it is hoped, will be advantageous to the communities, Odhikar and AAB for future work. The network established between the ethnic community and Odhikar will continue which will assist to reduce human rights violations against ethnic people across the country.

Documentation, Fact Finding and Policy Advocacy to stop Human Rights Violation

Background to the Project

Human rights are rights inherent to all human beings, regardless of nationality, place of residence, sex, national or ethnic origin, color, religion, language, or any other status. These rights are all interrelated, interdependent and indivisible. The human rights record in Bangladesh is not satisfactory. Extrajudicial killings, custodial death, torture by different law enforcement agencies still continue. Vulnerable groups like women, children, ethnic and religious minorities and people from Chittagong Hill Tracts are victims in many ways. It is very important to monitor and keep statistics of human rights abuses and conduct fact finding missions to get the scenario of human rights abuses in order to stop it. Odhikar is committed to by promoting civil, political, economic, social, cultural and collective values of human rights, including implementation of obligations of the government prescribed by the Constitution as well as by international instruments including the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), International Covenant on Socio, Economic and Cultural Rights (ICESCR), Convention against Torture (CAT), CEDAW.

The Program Goal:

In order to stop human rights violations this programme is designed to maintain documentation of human rights violation on specific issues and conduct fact finding missions and disseminate information to the relevant national and international bodies.

In order to create awareness to stop human rights abuse and to uphold human rights, Odhikar released monthly reports and data on extra-judicial killings, violence against women, freedom of expression to the stakeholders including Government bodies; UN special rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary execution; special rapporteur on torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment; special rapporteur for Human Rights Defenders; special rapporteur for Right to freedom of opinion and expression; and special rapporteur for violence against women, its causes and consequences. Besides, national and international human rights organisations, national and international media also received regularly the information on human rights abuses. Fact-finding reports produced by the organisation are regularly sent to all relevant stakeholders to take further action.

Under this contract Odhikar has been continuously monitoring of the human rights situation and addressing the human rights abuses to the concerned authority and decision makers. This is based on the 1st Phase report of the contract **Documentation, Fact Finding and Policy Advocacy to stop human rights violations.**

Documentation and fact finding of human rights violations:

Documentation of human rights violations is one of the most important activities of Odhikar. The documentation team keep the organisation updated with information of human rights abuses from the reports of the human rights defenders, fact-finders and reports from the major dailies. The work of the documentation team is to gather and document relevant information from network of grass-root level human rights defenders and from the twelve daily newspapers and electronically compile specific issues to prepare human rights violation reports and engage in advocacy to bring changes.

The major issues of human rights violation documented are as below:

- Impunity of law enforcement agencies and misuse of power
- Human Rights abuses perpetrated by law enforcement agencies
- Prison condition
- Political violence
- Violence against ethnic and religious minorities
- Violence against women and children (Rape, Dowry, Acid Throwing,)
- Election and democratic institutions
- Use and abuse of the national security laws
- Freedom of expression
- Human rights violation in border area
- Human rights situation in CHT region and the peace process
- Human rights defenders activities

Fact finding:

Odhikar conducted 12 fact finding missions in the 1st Phase in 2007. They are listed below:

- Allegation of an accused tortured to death during custody at the Narshingdi Model Police Station
- More than hundred garments workers wounded by police baton charge in Narayanganj
- A Bangladeshi shot by the BSF at the Fakirganj border of Thakurgaon
- Police officer accused of raping a Tripura girl in Bandarban
- Young businessman dies in the custody of the Department of Narcotics Control
- A young man in Gournadi, Barishal allegedly beaten by police
- A young man allegedly shot dead by police
- A young man killed in alleged gunfight with RAB
- A young man allegedly shot dead by police
- A left party leader allegedly shot dead by police
- A man killed in alleged gunfight with RAB
- Clashes between garments workers and law enforcement agencies

Work Plan and Activities - First Phase (16 September 2007-15 January 2008)

Sl. No.	Types of the initiatives		Number of initiatives for current quarter (16 Sept. '07–15 Jan '08)	
			Planned	Actual
1.	Fact-finding missions	<i>Fact-finding on the incidents perpetrated by LEA</i>	12 incidents	12 incidents
2.	Newspaper clipping (daily basis) and also gather information from magazines	<i>Marking on specific human rights issues</i>	11 newspapers	11 newspapers
3.	Data entry	Issues on		
		<i>Extra-judicial killings</i>	✓	✓
		<i>Death in jail</i>	✓	✓
		<i>Acid attack</i>	✓	✓
		<i>Rape</i>	✓	✓
		<i>Freedom of expression</i>	✓	✓
		<i>Political repression</i>	✓	✓
		<i>Violence against ethnic minority</i>	✓	✓
		<i>Violence against religious minority</i>	✓	✓
4.	Training	<i>Training on databases/graph</i>	1	1
		<i>Training on Excel</i>	2	2
		<i>Training on fact-finding & documentation</i>	0	0
		<i>Prepare monthly HRV graph/ statistics</i>	✓	✓
5.	Reporting	<i>Prepare fact-finding reports</i>	8	6
		<i>Provide data support from documentation team</i>	✓	✓
		<i>computerized comprehensive report on extra-judicial killings 2006</i>	✓	✓
		<i>Dissemination of fact-finding reports</i>	8	6
6.	Dissemination of information	<i>Dissemination of press releases</i>	8	8
		<i>Dissemination of comprehensive data files/statistical chart/graph on human rights violations</i>	11	11
		<i>Weekly staff meeting with documentation & fact-finding team</i>	16	16
7.	Meeting			

Ending Impunity of Acid Violence and Rape

Background to the Project

Even though women in Bangladesh make up roughly 49% of the population, they bear a disproportionately greater share of the country's poverty and are discriminated against in both the public and private sphere. Patriarchal, class based, repressive mind-sets, certain social behaviors, economic dependence, financial insecurity and high illiteracy keep a majority of the women out of an equal position within the family, society, and the overall development process of the country. Gender violence is a common social problem in Bangladesh and, unfortunately, one that is neglected by various government agencies

Acid violence is one common form of violence against women in Bangladesh. The first documented case of acid violence was in 1967 when a young girl had acid poured on her by her 'admirer' when her proposal of marriage was refused by the girl's mother. Women's emancipation in the market and economy has, unfortunately increased the violence against them both in the domestic and public sphere. The number of women who experience violence – including rape, beatings, torture and murder – is extraordinarily high in rural areas of Bangladesh, both in domestic situations and outside the home. They are largely from the poor and underprivileged sections of society, in many cases contrary to the perpetrators.

Despite specialised criminal laws for protecting women – the Suppression of Violence against Women and Children Act, the Dowry Prohibition Act, the Child Marriage Restraint Act, the Acid Crime Control Act, to name a few – instances of violence against women- especially domestic violence and rape – have not decreased in any significant manner. The major reasons why women do not get justice are: barriers to accessing the justice system itself, police corruption, mismanagement of vital evidence, and ignorance of the law and a lack of proper medical reports.

Heinous crimes such as rape and acid violence leave deep-rooted scars on the psychological make up of the victims, who are, more often than not, below 25 years of age. A large majority of them are school-going 14 – 18 year olds.

Rationale

In light of all the above, in March 2007, Odhikar and Action Aid Bangladesh decided to collaborate on an awareness-raising programme on the issues of rape and acid violence and the laws involved. The project titled "Ending Impunity to Acid Violence and Rape". The goal of the project was to 'create an effective and friendly environment of support mechanisms for the victims of acid violence and rape by the relevant state officials'. Odhikar and Action Aid Bangladesh (AAB) planned the program with specific purposes in mind – ensuring legal support and justice to victims and monitoring the implementation of the Acid Laws, including encouraging the setting up of DACC where there are none.

In order to do this, Odhikar carried out advocacy work with police, judges, lawyers and local administration about the consequence of the acid and rape victims and explore their cooperation to ensure punishment of the perpetrators. Fact finding missions are also carried out to highlight incidents of rape and acid violence. It has organised collective action (social and legal) against perpetrators of acid attacks and rapists. Thus, the target groups aimed for were members of the district level acid control committees, local government representatives, police officers, lawyers, journalists, judges/magistrates, doctors, Department of Women Affairs, teachers and NGO leaders.

Odhikar scans 11 newspapers every day, every year and as per newspapers reports of 2004, 2005 and 2006 the districts of Sirajgonj, Satkhira, Khulna and Barisal came up as the most rape and acid prone areas.

Odhikar was assisted by its human rights defenders and Action Aid Bangladesh partner organisations in the target Districts of Sirajgonj, Sathkhira, Barisal and Khulna for successfully carrying out the activities. They were given the title of 'District Monitor'.

Goal of the project

To create effective and friendly environment in support mechanism for the victims of acid violence and rape by the state duty bearers.

Purposes of the project

- To carry out advocacy work with police, judges, lawyers and local administration about the consequence of the acid and rape victims and explore their cooperation to ensure punishment of the perpetrators
- To ensure access to legal support for the acid and rape victims availing district level govt. and NGO legal aid fund.
- To organize collective action (social and legal) against acid attackers and rapists.

Major Activities

- Building capacity of AAB SVAW members and AAB local partner staff, human rights defenders and local community.
- Facilitate the formation/activate of district level acid control committees and monitor their functions on a regular basis.
- Carry out workshops in association with Women's Directorate, Social Welfare Department, Police Department, Upazila and District Administration, Community Elites, Local Media and NGOs ensuring to reduce acid attack and rape.
- Establish network with victims' to police stations to district court to ensure punishment of perpetrators by SVAW campaign officer, human rights defenders and staff of AAB local partners.
- Ensure monitoring, documentation and reporting of all the activities of the project.

The nine-month pilot project was based on four objectives:

1. Encourage the effectiveness of the DACC and Nari O Shishu Nirjaton Doman Committee;
2. Collect complete information dealing with Violence against women
3. Scheduled Work Shops.
4. Produce first-hand, detailed, fact-finding reports.

1. Activities focusing on an effective system:

- To meet and talk with Deputy Commissioner to activate and or reorganize (where necessary) the District Acid Control Committee (DACC) and Nari O Shishu Nirjaton Domon Committee (NSNDC) and monitor activities initiated on the basis of the decision made in the meetings organized by the DACC and Nari O Shishu Nirjaton Domon Committee.

During the year 2007, meetings of District Acid Control Committee (DACC) and Nari O Shishu Nirjaton Domon Committee were also held in four working districts. The District monitors for the programme attended the meetings and informed Odhikar that the discussions at the meeting were lively and effectively but the implementation of the decisions taken and written on the resolutions were almost lacking. Odhikar received some copies of the resolutions and minutes of the meetings.

- To organise District-wise awareness raising workshops in collaboration of the District administrations.

2. Listing Activities:

- To collect information regarding acid and rape cases i.e. number and types of cases, dates and sections of cases, concerned courts and public prosecutors, detailed information on victims and perpetrators.
- To collect lists of acid users and sellers i.e. number and detailed information of those who have sales license and those who do not have any license but sell and use acid.

The district monitors of four districts (Khulna, Satkhira, Sirajganj and Barisal) collected information regarding acid and rape cases i.e. number and types of cases, dates and sections of cases, concerned courts and public prosecutors, detailed information on victims and perpetrators. During this period, district monitors also collected the information about the number of acid cases pending in the relevant Tribunal. Also during this period the district monitors have collected the list of acid users and sellers i.e. number and detailed information of those who have sales license.

3. Capacity Building Training Programme:

In May 2007, under this project Odhikar organised a two-day training programme on resisting acid violence and rape in Dhaka on 19-20 May 2007 to strengthen the capacity of grassroots level human rights defenders of Odhikar and network partners of ActionAid. Odhikar in collaboration with ActionAid Bangladesh organised the training for human rights (HR) activists of four districts. Md. Sazzad Hussain of Odhikar described the objectives of the training and shared the activities carried out under the Violence against Women project.

Odhikar Secretary Adilur Rahman Khan and Acting Director ASM Nasiruddin Elan and Samia Ahmed and Tahmina Huq of ActionAid spoke at the inaugural session of the programme. The workshop was designed to impart knowledge about the methods of working with the victims, raise awareness in the society and coordinate with the administration to challenge the threats. An action plan was also chalked out in the workshop held at the BRAC Centre Inn in Dhaka.

Deputy Director (Legal) of Bangladesh Legal Aid and Services Trust (BLAST) Advocate Farida Yeasmin and Shishir Modol of the daily *Prothom Alo* were resource persons of the training. The objective of the training was to educate the human rights activists at the grassroots to facilitate the victims of acid violence and rape maintaining a close association with the law enforcement agencies.

Odhikar Secretary Adilur Rahman Khan, Acting Director ASM Nasiruddin Elan, Khuku Chokrobarty and Samia Ahmed of Action Aid and Nurul Kabir, Editor, *New Age*, spoke at the concluding session of the programme. They said the training workshop could create a link between the victims and the legal and social support providers and to involve the media reporters to work on these issues. Speakers said the rights activists should be vigilant on acid trading in their neighbourhood and help the administration and the media to curb the violence. Advocate Saidur Rahman, Programme Coordinator of Odhikar was the trainer of the training programme.

In order to eliminate acid violence and rape Odhikar designed a project in association with ActionAid Bangladesh, which is working presently in six districts of Bangladesh, i.e., Barisal, Khulna, Jessore, Satkhira, Kushtia and Jessore. Odhikar monitors the status of cases of acid violence and rape in the District Courts. Odhikar's human rights defenders and Action Aid Bangladesh's campaign officers are jointly working in this project as field level partners. Fact finding missions are also carried out to highlight incidents of rape and acid violence.

4. Awareness-raising Workshops:

Odhikar has been able to organise awareness-raising workshops regarding acid violence, rape and relevant laws in Satkhira, Sirajgonj and Barisal. The District administrative bodies have been very cooperative, as have been the local law enforcement agencies and local government bodies, including the judiciary, who all sent representatives.

District Workshops organized during the project period

Name of the District	Name of the venue	Date	Total Number of participants
Sirajgonj	Shahid Shamsuddin Conference Hall	6 September 2007	70
Satkhira	Officer's Club, Sadar	3 November 2007	85
Barisal	Deputy Commissioner's Conference Hall	22 January 2008	99

The following recommendations emerged from the workshops:

As preventive measures:

- Meetings with acid sellers must be done on a regular basis.
- Observing the acid sales inventories by the relevant government agencies on a periodic basis.
- Discussions on the issue of acid violence and its effects should be held in religious and educational institutions.
- The source of acid must be strictly maintained and controlled.

- Mass awareness regarding the crime of rape and its repercussions must be created by the Government, NGO's and the media. Regular workshops should be arranged involving religious leaders, local community and civil society.

After the violence has occurred:

- There must be no negotiation with the perpetrator of acid violence or rape. Judicial punishment must be ensured.
- Ensuring quick medication and aid to the victims of rape and attack survivors.
- Specialised acid burn units need to be opened in every hospital.
- Ensuring the complete and effective implementation of the acid laws.
- The rape victim's safety and security must be ensured to prevent further harassment and the press should be more sensitive while reporting rape crimes.
- Communities can boycott/ostracise the families of acid-throwers and rapists.
- Filing the case of rape as soon as possible.
- The investigating officer has to work with dedication, giving free legal aid to the victim/survivor and ensuring quick investigation and sentencing.

In January 2008, after the district level advocacy workshops, a national advocacy meeting organised in Dhaka, to explore the outcomes gathered from the working areas during the project period in 2007.

5. Fact-finding Reports:

As regards fact-finding missions, during this quarter, Odhikar carried out the following fact-finding missions:

Month	Fact Finding Subject	Source	Date of Occurrence
April	A minor girl raped at Koira in Khulna	Daily Jugantor 13/04/07	11 April 2007
May	A mother with her two daughters affected in acid violence in Sirajganj	Prothom Alo 08/05/07	07 May 2007
June	A housewife raped in Kolaroa under Satkhira	Daily Shomokal 18/07/07	16 June 2007
	Baki Begum raped in Dumuria under Khulna	Prothom Alo 25/06/07	22 June 2007
July	Rape of a young girl at Chandanimahal in Digholia, Khulna	Daily Purbanchol 18/07/07	10 July 2007
	A housewife named Trishna Sarkar (35) in the village of Farhadabad under Ashashuni Thana of Sathkhira became a victim of acid violence.	Sathkhira Sadar Hospital 24/07/07	22 July 2007
	A housewife gang raped in front of her mother in Koloroa district under Satkhira	Local Daily Potroduct 25/07/07	24 July 2007
August	Miscreants threw acid on minor girl in the village of Durgapur under Sadar Thana of Barisal District.	Daily New Age 11/09/07	10 August 2007

	Miscreants gang raped and later attempted to slaughter a housewife in Khulna.	Khanjahan Ali Thana 10/08/07	9 August 2007
	The rape of a young girl at Raermohol in Khulna	Daily Purbanchol 11/08/07	10 August 2007
September	A man sustained burnt in Bakergonj in Barisal	Local Daily Ajker Barta 03/09/07	01 September 2007
	The rape of a young girl at Patkelghata in Satkhira	SI Humayoun Kabir, Thana Patkelghata 21/09/07	20 September 2007

Observations

In the project areas, it was learnt that in the past when rape victims/acid survivors went to file a case in the police station the Officers in Charge were sometimes reluctant to accept the case. However, at present they take all cases to file. This was probably due to the fact that the local government officials were aware of Odhikar's activities in the project areas and they too are taking a keen interest to combat acid violence and rape. False cases are sometimes filed as a means of harassment. The following observations were made during the project activities:

- Society is more sympathetic to such victims/survivors, as awareness of the reasons behind the crime becomes more wide spread.
- Previous local government bodies, according to the district monitors were reluctant to cooperate with non-government organisations regarding issues relating to violence against women. However, in the four project areas, the situation has changed.
- District Authorities readily propose organising awareness meetings regarding these issues.

Conclusion

It is sincerely hoped that the District Acid Control Committees and the Nari O Shishu Nirjaton Domon Committees begin to function as per the mandates of the laws under which they were formed and that necessary measures be taken to repeal or amend the prevalent loopholes and flaws in the Acts of 2000 and 2002 to ensure that ambiguity is kept to a minimum and justice is done. Journalists too must be sensitive in their reporting and follow up a case till its end. Only in that way will awareness be created as to whether justice is being done. False cases should also be made public.

Women make up almost half of our population and their participation in both public and domestic life plays an integral part in the country's development. The issue of violence against women should never take a back seat and must be seen not as a social issue but as a serious legal problem, that affects not only women but also a family and a nation.

Financial Accounts 1 January–31 December 2007

INCOME	2007 Taka	EXPENDITURE	2006 Taka
<i>Fundraising</i>		<i>Odhikar Expenditure</i>	
Local Donations	354,601.00	Staff Costs	394,200.00
Member's Fee	8,000.00	Office rent	168,000.00
Miscellaneous	89,837.00		
		Travel expenses	29,934.00
<i>Sub-total</i>	<i>452,438.00</i>	Stationeries/Office Supply	50,008.00
		Equipments	13,930.00
Grants		Entertainment	47,514.00
		Communication (Postage & Courier)	2,129.00
		Utilities	93,040.35
AED	438,985.00	Other	38,629.25
		<i>Sub-total</i>	<i>837,384.60</i>
TAF (EVER)	129,903.00	TAF (EVER) Project	26,438.00
TAF (EWG)	266,449.00	TAF (EWG) Project	68,604.00
EPLC	770,072.74	EPLC Project	749,120.00
MRG	660,347.65	MRG Project	640,857.00
Action Aid (Ethnic Minority)	500,000.00	Action Aid (Ethnic Minority) Project	506,235.00
Action Aid (VAW)	600,000.00	Action Aid (VAW) Project	678,103.50
		Depreciation	45,129.20
		Total Expenditure	3,551,871.30
Total Income	3,818,195.39	Operating Surplus/Deficit	266,324.09

Appendixes

Odhikar's Executive Committee

SI No.	Name	Position	Brief Description
01.	Dr. CR Abrar	President	Professor of International Relations and Coordinator of Refugee and Migratory Movements Research Unit of University of Dhaka.
02.	Mr. Adilur Rahman Khan	Secretary	Advocate, Supreme Court of Bangladesh and founder member of Odhikar.
03.	Dr. Tasneem Siddiqui	Treasurer	Professor of Political Science and Executive Committee Member, Refugee and Migratory Movements Research Unit (RMMRU), University of Dhaka.
04.	Dr. Saira Rahman Khan	Member	Assistant Professor, School of Law at BRAC University. Freelance Researcher and founder member of Odhikar.
05.	Md. Ruhul Amin Bhuiyan	Member	Advocate, Supreme Court of Bangladesh.

Networking Profile

Odhikar is a member of the following organisations:

- World Organization against Torture - OMCT, Switzerland
- Asian Forum for Human Rights and Development – Forum Asia, Thailand
- Asian Network for Free Elections – ANFREL, Thailand
- International Movement Against All Forms of Discrimination and Racism – IMADR, Japan
- International Commission of Jurists – ICJ, Switzerland
- International Federation for Human Rights – FIDH, France
- Coalition for the International Criminal Court – CICC, USA
- South Asian Network Against Torture and Impunity – SANTI, Bangladesh

Donor Agencies that provided support in 2007

SI No.	Name
01.	Action Aid Bangladesh
02.	United Nations Development Program (UNDP)
03.	European Public Law Center (EPLC), Greece
04.	Minority Rights Group International (MRG), UK

Documentation of Human Rights Violations

Odhikar's Documentation team collates data on human rights violations and publishes the resulting statistics as monthly report. Odhikar uses information published in 12 daily newspapers plus information from its nationwide network of human rights defenders. The aim is to inform Odhikar's own work priorities, provide the press and NGOs, both nationally and internationally, with an accurate picture of the nature of human rights violations in Bangladesh and to influence policy-makers to take action to tackle such violations. Copies of the report on monthly human rights and the monitoring of the State of Emergency are available on Odhikar's website (www.odhikar.org).

Statistics of Human Rights Violations

Human Rights violations in relation to politics: 1 January 2007- 31 December 2007

Month(s)	Killed	Injured	Abducted	Total
January	23	1224	0	1247
February	9	102	0	111
March	3	32	0	35
April	3	27	0	30
May	8	33	0	41
June	5	0	0	5
July	4	34	0	38
August	3	992	0	995
September	5	79	0	84
October	10	126	0	136
November	3	7	0	10
December	3	32	0	35
Total	79	2688	0	2767

Human Rights Violations: India-Bangladesh Violence: 1 January 2007 - 31 December 2007

Name of the month	Killed	Injured	Arrested	Abducted	Rape	Looting/ snatching	Missing	Push in	Total
January	19	16	3	11	0	2	4	16	71
February	6	4	0	5	0	0	0	0	15
March	12	11	1	11	0	1	0	27	63
April	5	6	0	13	0	0	0	127	151
May	10	2	0	9	0	0	0	0	21
June	3	2	0	6	2	0	0	0	13
July	8	7	0	7	0	0	1	0	23
August	11	10	0	4	1	0	0	0	26
September	10	3	0	21	0	1	1	0	36
October	10	3	0	7	0	0	0	11	31
November	16	6	4	1	0	0	1	0	28
December	10	12	0	3	0	1	2	17	45
Total	120	82	8	98	3	5	9	198	523

Human Rights Violations in Chittagong Hill Tracts: 1 January 2007 - 31 December 2007

Name of Month	Killed	Injured	Assaulted	Abducted	Arrested	Total
January	2	0	0	0	0	2
February	1	2	0	0	0	3
March	0	0	0	0	0	0
April	3	0	0	0	0	3
May	0	0	0	3	0	3
June	0	0	0	0	0	0
July	0	0	0	0	2	2
August	0	0	0	2	0	2
September	0	0	0	2	0	2
October	0	0	0	0	0	0
November	0	0	0	0	0	0
December	1	0	0	0	0	1
TOTAL	7	2	0	7	2	18

Dowry related violence: 1 January 2007- 31 December 2007

Dowry Related Violence from January 1 to December 31 2007

Months	Killed	Tortured	Suicide	Total Incident
January	15	2	2	19
February	13	6	1	20
March	14	9	1	24
April	14	2	1	17
May	19	7	1	27
June	15	5	0	20
July	6	2	0	8
August	6	2	0	8
September	10	3	1	14
October	12	2	3	17
November	8	3	1	12
December	6	4	2	12
Total	138	47	13	198

Acid Attacks: 1 January - 31 December 2007

Month (s)	Women	Men	Children	Grand Total
January	7	2	4	13
February	7	0	2	9
March	6	7	2	15
April	4	1	1	6
May	12	0	4	16
June	7	6	0	13
July	11	3	2	16
August	4	0	1	5
September	11	16	3	30
October	9	1	3	13
November	11	2	1	14
December	7	4	0	11
Total	96	42	23	161

Rape: 1 January - 31 December 2007

Month (s)	Total number of victims	Total number of women	Total number of children	Gang Rape		Killed after being raped		Committed suicide after being raped	
				Women	Children	women	Children	Women	Children
January	32	16	16	8	2	5	0	0	0
February	40	22	18	7	5	3	3	0	0
March	44	23	21	14	6	4	0	0	0
April	50	19	31	5	8	4	1	0	0
May	46	13	33	5	5	5	1	0	0
June	42	21	21	11	5	2	5	1	0
July	33	15	18	8	6	4	3	0	0
August	45	20	25	11	10	5	4	0	0
September	33	22	11	16	1	6	1	0	0
October	37	15	22	14	10	7	1	0	0
November	28	13	15	10	4	7	2	0	0
December	29	14	15	10	10	4	2	0	0
Total	459	213	246	119	72	56	23	1	0

Killed by Law Enforcing Agencies:

Month (s)	RAB	Police	Army	Navy	Joint Force	Jail Police	RAB Police jointly	Narcotics Officers	BDR	Coast Guard	Forest Guard	Grand Total
January	16	9	5	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	32
February	9	5	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	17
March	21	4	0	1	3	0	0	1	0	0	0	30
April	5	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	6
May	15	10	0	1	1	1	3	0	0	0	0	31
June	4	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	5
July	4	8	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	12
August	5	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	9
September	4	11	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	15
October	4	8	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	14
November	2	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	5
December	5	2	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	8
Total	94	64	7	3	7	1	3	2	1	1	1	184

Death in Jail Custody and Police Station:

Month (s)	Jail Custody
January	8
February	9
March	8
April	7
May	9
June	8
July	4
August	3
September	9
October	8
November	9
December	5
Total	87