

“Strengthening the Feminist Movement to Fight Against Violation of Rights”

Report on
Upazila-level Dialogue Sessions on GBV, gender norms, decision-making, and inclusion



Venue: Conference Room of Upazila Parishad
Organized by: Nice Foundation
Supported by: CREA

Introduction:

The Nice Foundation organized two dialogue sessions at the Upazila level at Dumuria and Batiaghata Upazila of Khulna on 26 May 2025 and 28 May 2025. The dialogues, conducted at each conference room of upazila parishad, brought together a diverse set of stakeholders, including Government Officials (Upazila Nirbahi Officer, Upazila Social Welfare Officer, Youth Development (Jubo Unnayan) Officer, Women Affairs Officer and others), NGO workers - covering men, women, adolescents, persons with disabilities (PWDs), and transgender individuals. There were 85 (Male: 58, Female: 27) participants in these meetings.

The sessions were aimed at fostering inclusive discussions on gender-based violence (GBV), harmful social norms, community-based decision-making, and inclusive governance, with a strong focus on local leadership and inter-sectoral collaboration.

Objectives of the Dialogue Sessions:

To raise awareness and encourage community-based discussions on:

- Gender-Based Violence (GBV)
- Harmful gender norms
- Gender-inclusive decision-making

Protection and inclusion of marginalized communities, including women, children, transgender, and Dalits.

Key Discussion Points and Outcomes:

1. Introduction and Opening Remarks:

- At both venues, the sessions began with greetings and a brief overview from Nice Foundation, focal person of the FON project, **Ms. Rabeya Sultana**, who described the foundation's vision of a just and inclusive society.
- She highlighted the ongoing work under the FON (Freedom from Oppression and Neglect) project, which addresses GBV, promotes legal awareness, and supports marginalized communities through advocacy, meetings, and service linkages.
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2. Introducing the session's topics:

Afroz Zahan, the Project Coordinator of the FON project, briefly discussed on key topics of the sessions. She explained:

- Gender is what society imposes, while sex is the biological identity one is born with.
- Experiencing sexual violence as a woman or as a third-gender individual is considered **GBV (Gender-Based Violence)**.
- Violence is not only physical abuse, it includes mental, economic, political, and the obstruction of women's participation in decision-making.
- She also stated that adolescents sometimes make poor decisions, and often parents fail to guide them at the right time. Every family should make an effort to raise awareness among their children.

3. Government Official's Participation and Reflections:

- In **Dumuria**, **Mr. Subrata Biswas**, Upazila Social Services Officer, praised the initiative and sought more information on services provided to survivors. He emphasized the importance of comprehensive victim support, including legal aid and shelter.

- In **Batiaghata**, **Ms. Hosne Ara Tanni**, Upazila Nirbahi Officer (UNO), stressed the need for coordination between NGOs and government, especially for certification and support mechanisms. She encouraged transparent reporting of NGO activities to facilitate collaboration.

4. Health and Adolescent Support:

- **Ms. Nabonita Dutta**, Women Affairs Officer (Batiaghata), discussed government initiatives like the **HPV vaccination** program for adolescent girls, underlining the importance of proper nutrition before vaccination and addressing fears around injections.
- The sessions also focused on **‘Good Touch’ and ‘Bad Touch’**, with speakers emphasizing early education for children and the role of teachers and parents in creating safe environments.

5. Community Engagement on GBV and Inclusion:

- Participants discussed social attitudes toward GBV and harmful practices like **child marriage**.
- **Ms. Hasi**, Women Affairs Officer (Dumuria), shared challenges faced in preventing child marriage and highlighted the need for joint intervention by NGOs, local administration, and community leaders.
- **Mr. Samir Kumar Pandey**, a representative from the ‘Dalit’ NGO, emphasized collaboration opportunities and offered support for outreach and inclusion efforts.

6. Recommendation from the Dialogue:

- Strengthen community awareness about subtle forms of violence, including those occurring within family structures.
- Expand legal and psychosocial support services for survivors, particularly women and children.
- Promote early education and parent-teacher awareness on sexual abuse prevention.
- Improve coordination between NGOs and government departments for project approvals, service delivery, and joint advocacy.
- Increase focus on marginalized communities (e.g., Dalits, indigenous groups) to ensure inclusive development.

Conclusion:

The Upazila-level dialogues in **Dumuria** and **Batiaghata** brought together key local stakeholders to discuss and reflect on persistent issues of gender-based violence, inclusion, and harmful norms. The sessions reinforced the importance of multi-sectoral cooperation, and participants expressed strong interest in continued collaboration with the Nice Foundation to build a more equitable and safe community for all.

Photos of the Sessions:



Dumuria Upazila



Botiaghata Upazila

