

# DIALOGUE FOR CHANGE

## PLATFORMS FOR DIALOGUE QUARTERLY HIGHLIGHTS



Stevie Spring, British Council Chairman, visited the Platforms for Dialogue office to meet with project staff and discuss the multi-year project during her tour of British Council Bangladesh projects on 22 November 2021.

### Stevie Spring Visit to P4D Office

For more than half a century, the British Council has been building cultural relations and people-to-people connections between Bangladesh and the UK. In honour of the 70th anniversary, British Council Chairman, Stevie Spring, visited Bangladesh to tour the headquarters as well as British Council implemented projects like Platforms for Dialogue (P4D).

On 22 November, Ms. Spring met P4D staff at our project office where she was welcomed by a brief reception followed by a presentation of P4D's mission, vision, activities, and purpose. During the presentation, led by Team Leader Arsen Stepanyan, Spring showed keen interest in the project's progress and asked thought-provoking questions on P4D's impact and relevance to the British Council and the Government of Bangladesh's priorities. During the discussion, topics like, 'where does P4D fit in overall British Council strategy?', 'what is P4D's mission and vision?', 'what does P4D do for Bangladesh and how do we do it?', and 'why is this work important for Bangladesh and for the British Council?' were addressed.

Spring was highly inquisitive and brought up many interesting aspects of how projects like P4D fit into the British Council's overall global approach to partnerships and development. The visit continued with a photoshoot where Spring was able to speak with project staff on their impressions of P4D's impact and on P4D's influence on promoting the Social Accountability Tools (SATs) in Bangladesh.

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## Mr. Mokhlesur Rahman Joins British Council's 70th Anniversary Event

To celebrate the 70th anniversary occasion of the British Council in Bangladesh, the British Council hosted an event on 21 November 2021 to highlight their work of more than half a century with their stakeholders. At the event, which was held at the Fuller Road office in Dhaka, Team Lead, Arsen Stepanyan, Deputy Team Lead, Najir Khan, and special guest P4D DPD, Mokhlesur Rahman, were in attendance along with several P4D partner CSO representatives. The event showcased the British Council's work on education, non-formal education, the arts, TMTE, PROKAS, exams, Teaching Center, and P4D. The event was highlighted by speeches from Tom Miscioscia, Director Bangladesh British Council, HE Robert Chatterton Dickson, British High Commissioner to Bangladesh, Stevie Spring, Chairman, British Council, HE Hellen Grant, Honourable Member of Parliament, UK, and Dr. Dipu Moni MP, Honourable Minister of the Ministry of Education from the Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh. Following the speeches, guests enjoyed a cultural event followed by project showcases where P4D management, including Mr. Mokhlesur Rahman, shared key project activities with various visiting stakeholders.



Mr. Mokhlesur Rahman joins Team Lead, Arsen Stepanyan, and Deputy Team Lead, Najir Khan at British Council's 70th Anniversary event.



BC Global Chairman, Stevie Spring, poses with SAP Leader, Prokash Chandra Mahalder at Climate Connection Discussion Panel

## MAP Member joined Climate Event with BC Global Chairman

Tackling climate change is one of the British Council's key missions. Launched in 2021, the Climate Connection is a call to create dialogue and propel action to address climate issues through British Council initiatives and projects across the globe. In Bangladesh, the Climate Connection held a panel discussion on Climate Change and COP26 on 21 November 2021. At that panel discussion, one of P4D's SAP leaders from partner CSO Polly Welfare Association in Jashore, Prokash Chandra Mahalder, presented some of the environmental work that our Multi-Action Partnership (MAP) group members are spearheading under P4D. Prokash, who led the SAP on tree planting in his community, distributed saplings among community members, planted trees, campaigned against deforestation, and communicated with Upazila Administration, Union Parishad officials, local civil society, and local residents to ensure effective implementation of the SAP. Stevie Spring, who was also in attendance, was very enthusiastic about the impact of this work, and Prokash was grateful for the opportunity to present the work completed by his MAP's Social Action Project (SAP).

**I think local people should be engaged in identifying their own issues and activities to solve those issues. This is helpful for identifying the real issues and appropriate measures that could be taken accordingly. It was a great opportunity for me to engage with the MAP- Payra Union. This is helpful for me to raise my voice on behalf of my community to the respective authorities of Abhaynagar Upazila, Jashore. I want to thank P4D for providing us with the necessary training and support to build our capacity to act as community leaders.**  
- Prokash Chandra Mahalder



## International Anti-corruption Day Celebration

The 2021 International Anti-Corruption Day highlighted individual rights and responsibilities with the theme “Your right, your role: Say no to Corruption”. Anti-corruption is especially significant at this time, as the Government of Bangladesh has taken measures to curb corruption in public and private spheres with the introduction of social accountability tools. P4D has been working with local and regional civil society organisations, youth groups, the media, and government officials to help facilitate the implementation of and raise awareness about four key social accountability tools. These include the NIS, the Right to Information Act, Citizen's Charters, and the Grievance Redress System. NIS sits at the pinnacle as a vade mecum to fight corruption and ensure good governance.

In December, P4D's 12 District Policy Forums (DPFs) organised discussion meetings and cultural programmes to celebrate International Anti-Corruption Day 2021. Government officials, DPF members, representatives of civil society organisations, community leaders, teachers, college students, members of youth groups, youth entrepreneurs, indigenous leaders, and local journalists participated in these discussions. In total, nearly 800 participants joined both in person and online. Appropriate measures were taken at each event to ensure proper health and safety protocols. The participants enthusiastically engaged in the discussion against corruption and expressed their views on how to fight corruption and promote a strong culture of integrity throughout a socioeconomic and sociocultural lens.

Md. Zakaria, Deputy Director of the Anti-Corruption Commission in Kushtia, said, “we must say no to corruption from an individual level. Your rights, your responsibility, that is, every person must know the law, understand the law, and know the correct information”. He reiterated that children are the future of the nation, adding, “to engender anti-corruption sentiment in children, anti-corruption debates, discussion meetings, and rallies have to be organised at schools and colleges. This way, we will be able to create a corruption-free Bangladesh for the next generation”.

Hearing from such prominent members of society throughout the 12 DPF discussion meetings has given these communities momentum to continue their work to promote social accountability and integrity. With the common goal of a corruption-free Bangladesh, communities that reinforce anti-corruption policies will continue to bolster good governance practices.

The DPFs also carried out online campaigns on Anti-Corruption Day through social media platforms to ensure reaching a wider audience base. The celebration activities organised by the DPFs were picked up by local and national news outlets and published in different newspapers and news portals.

Rani Halder, a transgender civil society activist from Bagerhat district said, “we should promote joint efforts against corruption through empowering communities, with special focus on women and youth.”



Left: Discussion meeting on Anti-Corruption Day 2021 organised by Natore DPF  
Right: Ms. Morsheda Zaman, Deputy Commissioner and District Magistrate of Jamalpur District



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## DPF Activities: Public Hearings and Consultations

A core component of our Year 5 activities has been to expand from the local level to the district level. The formation of DPFs has propelled many of P4D's activities forward, a concentration of which has taken place during the last quarter. They have been busy implementing the action plans on key thematic issues, conducting various public discussions and events including the Right to Information and Anti-Corruption day celebrations, hosting public consultations, and gearing up for public hearings to formalise approaches to addressing important local issues.

As a part of their action plan, 10 DPFs organised public hearings this quarter while 2 DPFs organised during the previous quarter where the public could testify on local issues or proposed government actions. Most of the events were conducted in person with a limited number of participants joining online. Only one public hearing was conducted fully online due to the restrictions imposed against the spread of Covid-19. In total, 592 participants joined the public hearings, including government officials, journalists, businesspersons, teachers, students, political leaders, community leaders, representatives from NGOs, civil society, community-based organisations, youth groups, and school managing committees along with women activists, DPF members, and P4D representatives.

These public hearings tended to cover issues like areas of improvement in public services, especially on the issuance of birth certificates, passports, driving license, etc., legal issues related to land ownership, COVID-19 and other public health-related issues, points related to allowances under social safety net programme of the government, and issues related to agricultural practices.

Participating government officials listened to the points raised and assured rapid solutions. Chief Guest of the Bagerhat public hearing, Muhammad Azizur Rahman, DC –Bagerhat, said, “we have a responsibility to provide proper services to the people. The people also have a responsibility to be fully informed about the services. It is the responsibility of every department to identify its own problems and make arrangements to solve them.”

P4D Team Leader, Mr. Arsen Stepanyan, participated in the public hearing in Bagerhat along with Mr. Mokhlesur Rahman, Assistant Project Director-P4D from Cabinet Division. P4D facilitates such events through their partners and stakeholders to promote an environment of respectful dialogues where the community members, civil society representatives, and different interest groups can share and exchange their opinions with government officials and local government representatives. This platform is helping to bridge the gap for everyone to come together, identify the challenges and opportunities, and work towards progress for all.

District	Date	Total Participants
Bhagerhat	12 December 2021	58
Bandarban	27 September 2021	87
Brahmanbaria	28 December 2021	57
Jamalpur	30 November 2021	55
Kishoreganj	29 December 2021	55
Kushtia	3 January 2022	55
Moulvibazar	24 November 2021	55
Munshiganj	18 October 2021	61
Natore	25 November 2021	59
Nilphamari	31 January 2022	79
Panchagarh	2 January 2022	60
Patuakhali	29 December 2021	59



## Fourth Social Awareness Raising Campaign Comes to a Close

During the last two quarters, P4D has been implementing the fourth concentrated Social Awareness Raising Campaign (SARC) to promote the key Social Accountability Tools (SATs). The fourth campaign began on 26 September 2021, with content on RTI in line with Universal Access to Information Day on 28 September, and concluded on 23 December 2021 with a focus on the National Integrity Strategy to align with International Anti-Corruption Day activities. During the campaign, we also covered the Citizen's Charter and Grievance Redress System. Altogether, we reached 5.9 million unique accounts, which is approximately 1.3 times higher than the third campaign we ran earlier in 2021.

In previous campaigns, our primary focus was to improve awareness of the SATs. However, since most of our audience has already been exposed to our content in previous campaigns, we shifted our approach to a 'Call to Action' mode, encouraged our audience to engage with policy tools, and prompted them to share their learning among their community members. The impact of this shift is evident from the increase in the campaign key performance indicators (KPIs). Additionally, due to ongoing 'like-ads' to encourage our target audience to follow our page, our Facebook following has increased by 60K during the course of 2021. This elevated base following has helped us increase our reach, engagement, conversion, and advocacy KPIs.



During the Fall SMC, we published a total of 106 posts on our Facebook page and promoted 37 of them (in Bangla only) to the project's working districts.

## Thematic Workshops held on Quality Education, Child Marriage, and Community Clinics

P4D organised three weekend thematic workshops for DPFs in January 2022 on quality education, child marriage, and community clinic service, respectively. The workshops were held in Dhaka both online and in-person, and P4D ensured maximum compliance to maintain health and safety standards by encouraging the use masks, distributing hand sanitiser, and verifying proof of vaccination.

P4D organised these thematic workshops so DPF members could share their experience and document clear learning from the policy dialogues. The core objectives of the thematic workshop were to (1) document the lessons learned from district-level policy dialogues, and (2) discuss and (3) document best practices, challenges, and mitigation measures of organising policy dialogues in order to determine what worked well and where there is room for improvement in the future.

The workshop was facilitated to encourage interactive discourse among all participants. Much of the discussion was spontaneous, and participants were motivated to join discussions, group work activities, and presentations. The participants were divided into several groups during the sessions to share their experiences where they reflected on the thematic issues and identified areas of improvement.



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## Thematic Workshops



Quality Education: 7-9 January:  
DPFs of Nilphamari, Patuakhali,  
Munshiganj, and Kishoreganj



Child Marriage: 14-16 January:  
DPFs from Brahmanbaria,  
Bandarban, Kushtia, and Natore



Community Clinic Service: 21-23  
January: DPFs from Jamalpur,  
Bagerhat, Panchagarh, and  
Moulvibazar

214 participants joined the workshops in person, among them 33% were women, while 39% were aged below 35 years. 292 participants also participated via online platform in the last two workshops.

Some of the key best practices that were identified by the participants in the workshops were (1) the importance of conducting research to generate evidence and prepare position papers based on local context, (2) continuous communication and follow-up with the local administration were key to organise the dialogue event, (3) blended approach (both online and in-person) enabled more people to participate, (4) democratic practices such as listening and valuing the opinions of fellow DPF members in planning and organising the dialogue event ensured its success.

In the workshops, the DPFs expressed their concern about the sustainability of their activities and, as a way forward, recommended further capacity building for the DPFs. The next stage of P4D is to build national policy dialogues, and the DPFs are hopeful they'll have the opportunity to influence action at the national level by working to improve the education system, stop child marriage, and improve the condition of the community health services in Bangladesh.



P4D Virtual CRC is now online. To visit the VCRC, go to our website or visit: [www.p4dvirtualcrc.info](http://www.p4dvirtualcrc.info)

## P4D Launches New Virtual CRC

After months of research and development, P4D launched the first-ever Virtual Community Resource Centre (VCRC) on 5 January 2022. The VCRC is an interactive space where visitors can tour a life-like Community Resource Centre in rural Bangladesh and learn about each of the four key Social Accountability Tools. In each room, visitors can find videos on the key policy tools, leaflets, photographs, infographics, and more. Our animated characters are also featured in the VCRC, and each has a short speech when a visitor enters their policy room. The VCRC is designed for Bangla speakers, however, there are subtitles available for visitors needing English translation. P4D will monitor the use and interaction pathways visitors take to better understand how this online tool can be used and improved in the future.



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# Programme Trainings for Government Officials



Mr. Md. Mokbul Hossain, PAA, Secretary, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, shared his remarks as Chief Guest in the closing session of the Kushtia journalist training on 29 January 2022. The closing session was chaired by Ms. Shahin Islam, NDC, DG-NIMC.

## NIMC continues to Train District-Level Journalists

This quarter, the National Institute for Mass Communication (NIMC) conducted trainings on the SATs in 8 districts including Bagerhat, Gopalganj, Netrokona, Jamalpur, Patuakhali, Pirojpur, Kushtia and Pabna. In total, 296 journalists participated in the 2-day, online trainings. Unfortunately, participation of female journalists in these training activities is very low. A female journalist who joined the Kushtia training, Ms. Jannatul Ferdous, recommended that a separate training for female journalists should be

organised. This was later endorsed by the chief guest of the closing session, Mr. Md. Mokbul Hossain, PAA, Secretary, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting. P4D and NIMC have commended this recommendation and are exploring avenues to incorporate this component in future programming. NIMC will continue its activities in the remaining project districts over the coming months.

Completed Activities	Date	Administrative Unit
Training workshop for District level Journalists	5-6 November 2021	Bhagerhat
Training workshop for District level Journalists	7-8 November 2021	Gopalganj
Training workshop for District level Journalists	12-13 November 2021	Netrokona
Training workshop for District level Journalists	14-15 November 2021	Jamalpur
Training workshop for District level Journalists	7-8 January 2022	Patuakhali
Training workshop for District level Journalists	9-10 January 2022	Pirojpur
Training workshop for District level Journalists	28-29 January 2022	Kushtia
Training workshop for District level Journalists	30-31 January 2022	Pabna





## BCSAA Training on Consultation, Facilitation, and Management

The Bangladesh Civil Service Administration Academy (BCSAA) organised a training from 6 to 7 November on Consultation, Facilitation, and Management. The training engaged forty local government participants, mostly District Commissioners, and trained them key administrative tactics to improve good governance and transparency. The participants in attendance joined the training remotely, and all 21 P4D districts were represented among the participants. Organisation of this training with the participation of district administration leadership helps the implementation of public hearings and policy dialogues to ensure an inclusive policy process on the district level.

## BPATC Focuses on SAT Training

In November, the Bangladesh Public Administration Training Centre (BPATC) conducted two trainings on Social Accountability Tools (SATs) to newly appointed civil servants. Over two weekends, 7-8 November and 14-15 November 2022, 373 young civil servants were trained on the SATs, as part of their foundation course. Among the participants, 297 were male and 76 were female. Integration of P4D supported SA Tools training into foundation course for young civil servants is an important step towards sustainability of project results.

Additionally, the BPATC organised a policy-focused workshop on SATs on 16 January 2022 with 25 senior government officials. The discussion focused on the Citizen's Charter, Right to Information Act, and the Grievance Redress System. The workshop took place at the BPATC training room with 11 Additional Secretaries and 13 Secretaries (total of 24 participants) from different ministries.



## Project Support to National GRS

During the last quarter, P4D has continued its support for regular maintenance and troubleshooting to support the national GRS system and to ensure smooth its functionality. Currently, P4D is supporting the Cabinet Division with the transfer of the GRS system from the current Direct Client-to-Client (DCC) server to the more secured National Data Centre (NDC) server under the ICT division. With this, the system will be more integrated into the national ICT plan and will have more space and security mechanisms to protect information and data collected and stored through the GRS.

*This publication was produced with the financial support of the European Union. Its contents are the sole responsibility of Platforms for Dialogue and do not necessarily reflect the views of the European Union.*



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