

PROJECT COMPLETION REPORT:
CEMB PROJECT
COMBATTING EARLY MARRIAGE IN
BANGLADESH



National Development Programme (NDP)
NDP Bhaban, Bagbari, Kamarkhanda, Sirajganj 6703
www.ndpbd.org

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COMBATTING EARLY MARRIAGE IN BANGLADESH PROJECT

**IMPLEMENTED BY: NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT
PROGRAMME**

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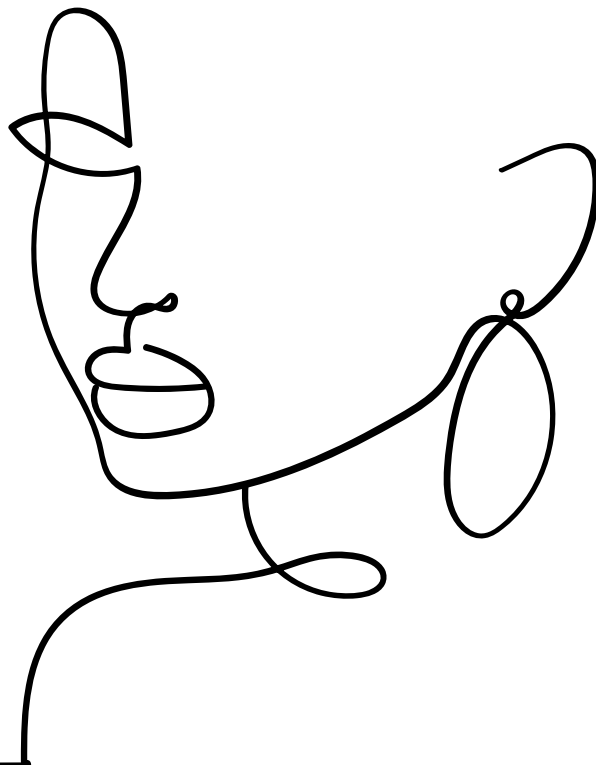


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WELCOME MESSAGE

CEMB project was designed to support MOWCA in achieving the commitment of our honorable Prime Minister and NPA 2018-2030 to end early marriage for girls under the age of 15 by 2021 and completely eradicate early marriage for girls under 18 by 2041. Our key objective was to enhance the institutional responsiveness of duty bearers at national, district, and sub-district levels in preventing and addressing child rights violations, particularly child early and forced marriage (CEFM), among vulnerable girls. CEMB project successfully organized and conducted various activities, including workshops, refresher courses, orientations, school campaigns, and observance of important events. These efforts were aimed at raising awareness, empowering stakeholders, and strengthening implementation plans at the district level to combat CEFM. CEMB project also ensured effective data management and reporting, engaging with donors, and maintaining regular coordination. Despite the challenges we faced, CEMB team frequently communicated with the district administration, adopted alternative plans, engaged government officials, and kept donors informed about the progress.

We greatly value the engagement of our stakeholders throughout the implementation process, valuing their suggestions and recognizing them as essential advocacy forces in the prevention of child marriage. We are grateful to Global Affairs Canada-GAC and Plan International Bangladesh for their support and commitment.



MD. ALAUDDIN KHAN

Executive Director, NDP



ABOUT NDP

National Development Programme (NDP) is a non-governmental organization (NGO) established on January 1, 1992, in response to the devastating flood of 1988. Initially, a group of local youth, led by Md. Alauddin Khan, dedicated themselves to emergency response and rehabilitation work under the guidance of national and international NGOs. Inspired by their experiences, NDP was founded with the vision of building a nation free of exploitation and poverty.

Registered with various authorities, including the Department of Social Welfare and NGO Affairs Bureau, NDP operates as a non-political and non-profit organization. Its mission is to promote access to services for better life and livelihoods, focusing on economic development and participation of the poor. The organization aims to improve livelihoods, establish rights, and contribute to national development.

NDP's objectives include raising community awareness, building human resources, enhancing poor people's participation, creating employment opportunities, empowering individuals, reducing food insecurity, improving healthcare access, promoting education, linking people with special abilities, building disaster resilience, conserving biodiversity, and advocating for human rights and gender equality.

The organization primarily works with various categories of beneficiaries, including poor and extreme/ultra-poor individuals, women, children, Persons with Disabilities, and minorities. Currently, NDP serves over 700,000 project participants, with 86% being female.



ABOUT CEMB PROJECT

CEMB project aimed to enhance institutional responsiveness in preventing and addressing child early and forced marriage (CEFM) among vulnerable girls. Throughout the project period, various activities such as workshops, campaigns, and orientations were organized to raise awareness, empower stakeholders, and strengthen implementation plans at the district level. Effective data management, donor engagement, and regular coordination were maintained.

Despite challenges like the initial impact of Covid-19, proactive measures were taken to address them. Alternative plans were adopted, government officials were engaged, and regular progress updates were shared with donors.

The project embraced good practices, fostered common understanding, and aligned with the Prime Minister's commitment, SDGs, and NPA. Experiences from other projects and partners were leveraged, and all planned activities were successfully implemented with the involvement of the district administration.

The engagement of stakeholders was highly valued, recognizing their suggestions and advocacy as crucial in preventing child marriage. Gratitude was expressed to all team members, partners, and stakeholders for their contributions to the project's success.



PROJECT DETAILS

PROJECT TITLE	COMBATTING EARLY MARRIAGE IN BANGLADESH
PROJECT NUMBER	BGD100234
BUDGET	BDT: 10397723
PARTNER NAME	National Development Programme (NDP)
START DATE	1st JANUARY 2021
END DATE	30th June' 2023
PERIOD COVERED	30 Months

Project Objectives: Strengthening the effectiveness and functioning of institutions and governance mechanism to prevent Child Early Force Marriage (CEFM)





BRIEF SUMMARY

SL	Name of Activities of CEMB Project - NDP	Target	Achievement
01	Endorsement of inception meeting with Deputy Commissioner	2	2
02	Inception meeting with District Administration	2	2
03	ToT with Resource Persons of District Administration	2	2
04	DCMPC Orientation on CMRA-2017, CP and GE	2	2
05	Observed 16 days Activism and Rokeya Dibosh	4	4
06	Observed IWD	4	4
07	Monthly Meeting of DCMPC	All	All
08	Semi-annual progress review meeting	4	4

BRIEF SUMMARY

SL	Name of Activities of CEMB Project - NDP	Target	Achievement
09	School Campaign for raising awareness against CM	4	4
10	Orientation of Media Personnel on CMRA-2017, CP and GE	2	2
11	Orientation of Youth Group & CSO Networks on CMRA-2017, Child Protection & Gender Equality	1	1
12	NPA 2018-2030 Workshop with DCMPC	2	2
13	NPA workshop with Youth Group and CSO Networks	2	2
14	Observed Child Marriage Presentation Day	2	2
15	Observed National Girl Child Day	4	4
16	Refresher of DCMPC on CMRA-2017 and Gender Equality	2	2

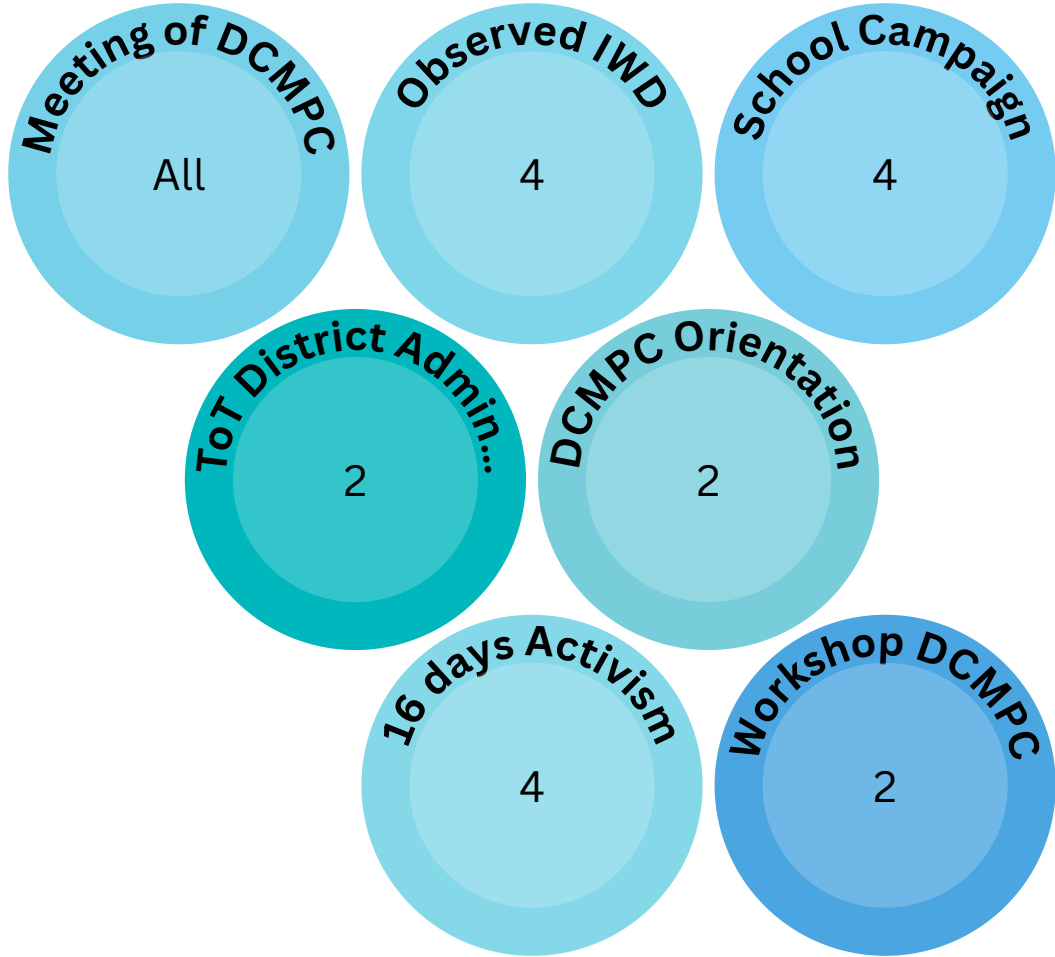


BRIEF SUMMARY

SL	Name of Activities of CEMB Project - NDP	Target	Achievement
17	Donor's Quarterly Narrative Reports - PIB	8	8
18	Data entry in the software and Reporting	All	All
19	Developed Safeguarding Policy of Children and Youth for NDP	2	2
20	Orientation on Safeguarding Policy and finalized Focal of NDP	2	2
21	Assessment of Safeguarding Policy and Incorporated Safeguarding issue in the recruitment and ongoing monitoring system of NDP	1	1
22	Prepared required report of NDP (Quarterly and Annual)	all	all
23	Prepared Financial Report of donor-PIB	8	8
24	2018-2030 with DCMPC	2	2

INTERACTIVE CHART

ACTIVITIES AT A GLANCE



RESULT & PERFORMANCE

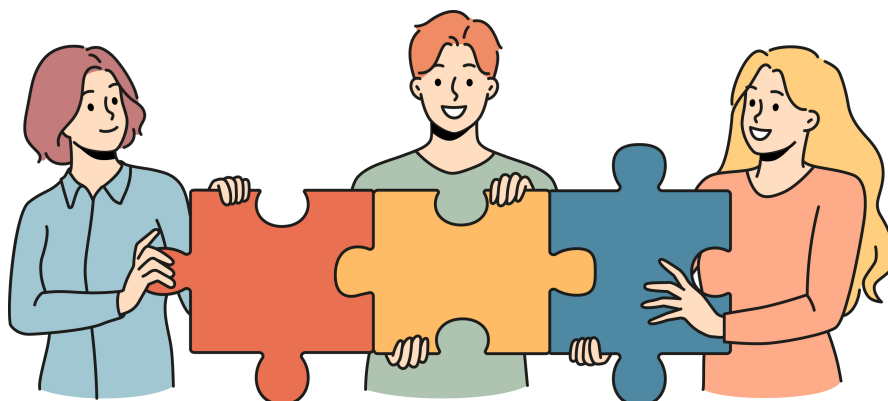
Outcome: Duty bearers at national, district, and sub-district levels become more responsive to preventing and addressing child rights violations, particularly CEFM, among vulnerable girls.

Output: Sensitization of adolescent peer leaders, Champion Mothers and Fathers networks, and civil society organizations on CMRA 2017, gender equality, child rights, and protection to mobilize actions and share experiences related to CEFM.

Activity: Orientation of adult and adolescent networking group members on CMRA 2017 and Rules 2018 in 39 districts.

In Joypurhat and Pabna, two daylong orientation sessions were held with the participation of YESB, NCTF members, and CSO leaders. The sessions focused on increasing their understanding of Gender Equality, Child rights and Protection, CMRA-2017, and Rules 2018. The aim was to equip them to take action against child marriage and raise their voices as advocates. The participant selection ensured a gender balance with 60% female and 40% male attendees. Through interactive sessions, the participants learned about the causes and consequences of child marriage.

Action plans were developed to raise awareness of the harmful effects of child marriage, with CSO leaders taking the lead in conducting awareness sessions. YESB and NCTF members coordinated with CSO leaders, while youth groups provided overall support. The capacity building of these groups enabled them to advocate for the prevention of child and early marriage.



RESULT & PERFORMANCE

Activity: Organizing events to observe national and international days related to CEFM issues and facilitate the sharing of evidence and experiences.

Collaborating with district administrations, DD, DWA, and other stakeholders, we observed 16 days of activism in Joypurhat and Pabna districts for the past two years. The theme for this year's 16 days of activism was "UNITE! Activism to End Violence Against Women and Girls." The events included human chains and discussions emphasizing the importance of women's rights, empowerment, and the prevention of violence in various settings. Participants acknowledged that achieving the SDGs and creating a prosperous country is dependent on women's empowerment.

International Women's Day (IWD) was also observed in collaboration with district administrations, DD, DWA, and other stakeholders in Pabna and Joypurhat districts. The theme for this year's IWD was "DigitALL: Innovation and technology for gender equality." The events included colorful rallies and discussion meetings, with the participation of government officials, women leaders, political leaders, CSO leaders, and youth groups. The speeches highlighted the opportunities provided by innovation and digital technology for women's empowerment and emphasized the need for gender-responsive approaches to technology, digital education, and achieving the Sustainable Development Goals by 2030.

Immediate Outcome: Enhanced capacity of government officials and CP actors on CMRA 2017.

Output: Orientation of District-level CMPC members on CMRA 2017, gender equality, child rights, protection, and their roles and responsibilities as per relevant laws and policies.

RESULT & PERFORMANCE

Activity: Project Introductory/Inception meeting with Deputy Commissioner officials at the district level.

Project-related documents were handed over to the respective Deputy Commissioners of Pabna and Joypurhat. An introductory session was conducted during the monthly meetings at the DC offices, where the CEMB project's goal, objectives, strategies, activities, and donor information were presented. The feedback and engagement of the DCs and other stakeholders, including DCMPC, were sought.

Activity: Training of Trainers (ToT) for Master Trainers, including government officials, on CMRA 2017, gender equality, child rights, and protection at the district level.

ToT sessions were conducted in Pabna and Joypurhat, involving five participants, including ADC-G, ADC-R, ADM, ASP, and DD, DWA. The training module was reviewed, and session responsibilities were assigned among the participants. Later, orientation sessions were conducted by the participants with DCMC accordingly.



RESULT & PERFORMANCE

Activity: Meetings with District administrations to obtain endorsement for orientation sessions for CMPC members.

Permission was obtained from the Deputy Commissioners of Pabna and Joypurhat to present the CEMB project during the monthly meetings with stakeholders at the DC offices.

Activity: Orientation sessions for district-level CMPC members.

Orientation sessions were successfully conducted for DCMPC members in Pabna and Joypurhat. The sessions included an inauguration and introduction, pre and post-tests, discussions on gender equality, child rights, child protection, the link between child protection and early marriage, CMRA 2017, NPA strategies, and activities to prevent early marriage. The sessions were facilitated by DD, DWA, ADC-General, ADC-Revenue, Deputy Commissioner, and the Division Manager of the CEMB project. Participants recognized the link between gender inequality, child protection, and early marriage and committed to taking initiatives from their positions to prevent child marriage.

Activity: Refreshers sessions with district-level CMPC members.

Refresher sessions were conducted in Pabna and Joypurhat with the support of district administration and DD, DWA. The sessions involved presentations on CEMB project activities and open discussions on the child marriage situation. Participants shared their experiences and provided feedback. The focus was on raising awareness through activities such as school campaigns and engaging all stakeholders in preventing child marriage. Participants committed to working from their positions to prevent child marriage.

KEY ISSUES ADDRESSED

Project Operations:

Staffing Change: A new District Coordinator was appointed to replace the resigned District Coordinator.

Meetings: Monthly staff meetings and participation in Projects Coordination meetings were held alongside other NDP projects.

Communication and Travel: Regular communication with the District administration and PIB ensured project activities were completed as per target, requiring necessary travel.

Gender Equality Aspects:

Female Participation: Ensured active participation of women in events, trainings, and activities.

Consideration of Gender Equality: Applied gender equality considerations during resource person training, DCMPC and Youth/CSO Networking group orientations, as well as during observations such as 16 days activism, International Women's Day, school campaigns, and NPA workshops with stakeholders.

Environmental Aspects:

Disaster Risk Reduction: Addressed disaster risk reduction and climate change concerns in project activities.

Environmentally Friendly Approach: Ensured environmentally conscious actions, decisions, and procurement, utilizing eco-friendly training materials like banners.

Risk Analysis:

Project Risks: Conducted risk analysis, assessing the likelihood of occurrence, level of impact, and identified risk mitigation strategies.

Compliance Advisor: The Compliance Advisor performed the risk analysis and shared findings with partner staff.

CHALLENGES

Impact of Covid-19: Initial implementation of the project was hindered by the Covid-19 pandemic.

Absence of Tripartite MoU: Lack of a Tripartite MoU, including the District Commissioner (DC), affected collaboration and implementation.

Strategic Gaps in Project Design: The project design focused mainly on DCMPC, while district administration pushed for work at the Upazilla and Union Parishad (UP) levels.

Challenges with Staff Transfers: The transfer of key officials such as DC, ADC-G, ADM, DD, and DWA posed challenges as rapport-building and project briefings had to start anew. Incharge positions for DD and DWA further impacted their dedicated work to prevent child marriage.

LESSONS LEARNED

Advocacy forces (CSO Networks, Youth Group, Media personnel) are well-oriented about CMRA-2017, NPA, and committed to preventing child marriage from their positions.

Earlier engagement of advocacy forces could have significantly contributed to preventing child marriage.

Advocacy projects need to work with both rights holders and duty bearers, but the focus of CEMB project was mainly on duty bearers.

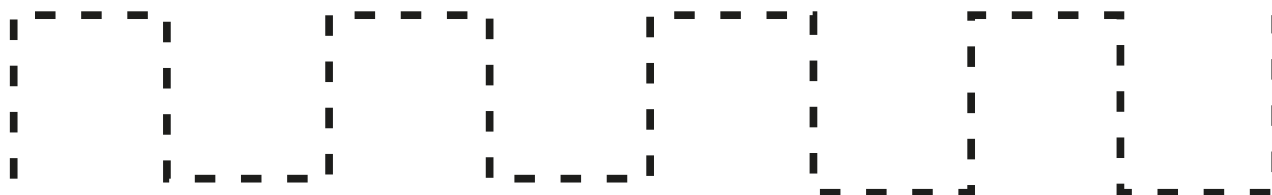
The duration of the project ended when there was a growing awareness about preventing child marriage, but there was a need to facilitate advocacy forces for consolidating project outcomes.

Incharge positions in DD, DWA led to time management issues and limited engagement with child marriage prevention.

Dependency on the decisions of DC, who are engaged in administrative issues, posed challenges in working with speed.

National-level coordination and advocacy could have added significant value, but it did not work effectively with stakeholders at the national level.

There were gaps in the project design, such as limited opportunities to work at the sub-district level and inadequate engagement of different stakeholders.



SUSTAINABILITY & RECOMMENDATIONS

Local CSOs, Youth organizations, Union Parishad, and Upazilla Parishad should collaborate to establish comprehensive awareness campaigns, develop educational programs, and implement community-based interventions to prevent early child marriage, ensuring long-term sustainability.

District Administration (DC) can assign a responsible person to monitor the reporting system of child marriage from UP to Upazilla and District levels, ensuring sharing of monitoring findings for accountability and better outcomes.

District administration can engage stakeholders, including Media engagement, CSO networks, to utilize their existing groups/forums for awareness campaigns against child marriage.

Periodic training and refreshers on CMRA-2017 and NPA can be organized for DCMPC members to increase their engagement and monitor progress effectively.

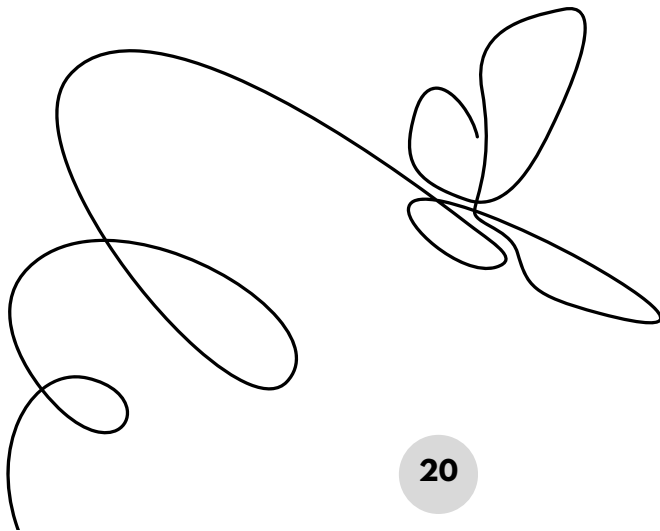
CONCLUSION

CEMB project was designed with the aim of supporting MOWCA and NPA 2018-2030 to end early marriage for girls under the age of 15 by 2021 and eradicate early marriage for girls under 18 by 2041. The project successfully carried out a range of activities, including workshops, campaigns, and data management, to raise awareness, empower stakeholders, and strengthen implementation plans at various levels.

Despite facing challenges such as the initial impact of Covid-19, absence of a Tripartite MoU, and strategic gaps in project design, the team proactively addressed these obstacles. They maintained open communication with the district administration, adapted plans, engaged government officials, and kept donors informed. The project implemented innovative approaches and best practices, fostering a common understanding among stakeholders, aligning with the Prime Minister's commitment and the SDGs, and utilizing experiences from other projects and partners.

The engagement of stakeholders throughout the implementation process was crucial, and their suggestions and support were greatly valued as essential advocacy forces in preventing child marriage.

CEMB project stands as a testament to the commitment and collaborative efforts of all involved, and it serves as a beacon of hope in the ongoing fight against child marriage. With continued dedication, it is possible to create a future where every girl can grow up with the opportunities and rights she deserves.



CASE STORY

Empowering Change: Shantana Parveen's Fight Against Child Marriage

Shantana Parveen, a 23-year-old resident of the Iraqnagar area in Jaipurhat district, is playing a pivotal role in the fight against child marriage. Shantana, the second child among two sisters and one brother, hails from a family where her father, Shahid Mandal works as a businessman and her mother Nazmun Nahar is a homemaker. Currently in her third year of university, Shantana is an active member of the NCTF-District Volunteer and YES BD, where she participates in various activities organized by the NDP-CEMB project to prevent child marriage. These activities include events like International Women's Day, the 16 Day Campaign, Girl Child Day, School Campaigns, and workshops with CSO Networks.

Before attachment to the project, Shantana was unaware of the Child Marriage Prevention Act, the adverse effects of child marriage, the rights of the girl child, the activities of the district child marriage prevention committee, and the National Action Plan 2018-2023. However, through her involvement in this project, she has gained knowledge in these areas. Shantana, along with her family, community, and fellow members of NCTF and Yes BD, actively spreads awareness through various means and even takes the initiative to promote hotline number to prevent child marriage.

Shantana recognizes poverty, ignorance, illiteracy, traditional attitudes, insecurity, social customs, superstitions and the lack of proper enforcement of laws as the underlying causes of child marriage in Jaipurhat district. She acknowledges that changing this deep-rooted practice cannot be accomplished overnight, but believes that change is possible through awareness raising and strict enforcement of laws. Shantana and her team of volunteers are committed to precisely these actions.

Shantana expresses her determination to work hand-in-hand with the local administration to prevent child marriage. She envisions a future where every child has the opportunity to grow, thrive and fulfill their potential, free from the shackles of child marriage.

PHOTOS



CEMB project commemorated International Women's Day in 2023 by acknowledging and honoring the significance of women's contributions and achievements.



CEMB project organized an orientation session aimed at equipping journalists with knowledge on preventing early child marriage



The project inauguration occurred with the participation of stakeholders at various levels