

A Brief Profile  
of

**DEMOCRACYWATCH**  
Involving People, Building Democracy



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**Democracywatch (DW)** is an independent, non-profit, non-partisan organization which works towards establishing a true democratic culture in Bangladesh. It aims to establish good governance and uphold human rights through strengthening democratic institutions and the electoral process; building nationwide network of civil society organizations including NGO, CBO, Media, Trade Unions, professional groups and youths, sensitizing stakeholders about democratic culture, social responsibilities, rule of law etc. It was established as a trust in 1995 and became a registered NGO in 1997. Since its inception, DW brings citizen's concerns to government, monitors policies and encourages political participation at community level as well as provides wealth of training related to democracy, human rights and good governance.

Democracywatch (DW) is a woman headed organization governed by an Executive Committee. DW has a seven members' Board of Governors. The members are elected for three-year tenure from the 15 members' General Body. Currently, of the 15 general body members, 7 are female. The Board has a Chairperson, a Vice-chairperson, a Treasurer and a Member Secretary. The Executive Director of DW acts as the Member Secretary of the Board without any voting power. She also has the overall responsibility of running the organization. Its financial management is in accordance with internationally accepted financial principles and standards. Executive Director is respected lobbyist for election, human rights, gender issues and the devolution of autonomy to local governments.

DW has been maintaining a pleasant and gender friendly environment as almost one third of DW staff are women. The employees of the organization are young, energetic, motivated and innovative in program designing and implementing. Currently it has a workforce of 54 skilled personnel. Moreover, five interns are also assisting the program team. The Executive Director supported and assisted by Deputy Executive Director leads DW's senior management team. The team also has three Directors who look after operations, finance and programs. A Project Manager and Coordinators supervise DW projects and they form bridge between the field operations and the Head Office. The field level implementations of the projects are ensured by the Field Coordinators with assistance of the Program Officers, Assistant Program Officers and Program Organizers. In addition, a three-member M & E Department and an Internal Auditor also assist the Executive Director.

DW is a forward looking organization with all modern equipment and office set up with training centre and accommodation facilities. Apart from Head Office in Dhaka, DW has 5 offices in Jessore, Nilphamari, Mymensingh, Tangail and Gaibandha. Currently DW is implementing more than 8 projects in 447 Union Parishads, 42 Upazila Parishads and 20 Paurashavas of 12 Districts.

**Moto :** Involving People, Building Democracy

**Vision :** A sustainable democracy promoting social equity.

**Mission :**

Democracywatch aims to establish good governance and uphold human rights through strengthening democratic institutions and the electoral process; building nationwide network of civil society organisations including NGO/CBO/Media/Trade Unions/ professional groups; sensitising stakeholders about gender and promoting rule of law.

**Key strategic issues :**

- Create an enabling policy framework for social protection
- Ensure women's full participation in mainstream economic activities
- Build the capacity of community leaders, women and youth to perform their roles and responsibilities and become change agents for democratic processes and development
- Ensure social protection for women against vulnerability and risk
- Enhance women's political empowerment and participation in decision-making process, eliminate violence against women
- Create the spirit of volunteerism among the participants of our skills development program
- Strengthen institutions for monitoring and evaluation of gender equality issues
- Strengthen education programs for excluded children
- Promote Good Governance through ensuring Free and Fair Elections
- Ensure free and fair electoral process through civic and voter education for electing the right representative
- Strengthen local government to ensure transparency, participatory and pro-people
- Strengthening Accountability and Transparency (more effective parliamentary committees)
- Promote legal literacy for the poor

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<b>Status</b>	
Founded on	1 December 1995
Name of the registering agency	NGO Affairs Bureau, Bangladesh
Registration number	1174
Date of registration	24 July 1997
Name of the registering district	Dhaka
<b>PADOR</b> (Potential Applicant Data Online Registration) No. >>	EuropeAID BD-2013-FZO-1911670764
<b>D-U-N-S</b> (Data universal Numbering System) Number >>	731561226

## Committed to Right to Information:

DW produces Annual Reports and Newsletters for dissemination of all information to public and has designated person for providing information.

## Programs at a glance:

DW's work encompasses three broad program areas. These areas relate to direct interventions towards achieving its goal. Each program consists of a number of projects.

### Good Governance

- DW promotes democratic governance at all levels. It conducts programs to make Parliament more effective and pro-people. One of the major programs of DW is to strengthen civil society to act as watchdogs on laws/ policies and present public opinion to the policymakers.

- DW has been working for strengthening local government over a decade. It started working by raising citizen's perception about the quality of services provided by the local government institutions advocated for policy change by presenting citizens views to the authority. The organization has been involved in capacity building for the elected representatives, improving service delivery, increasing people's participation in UP and Municipality functions, assisting LGIs in revenue generation, promoting transparency and accountability and preparing them for their expanded roles and responsibilities. The organization had working relation with over 1,100 Union Parishads, 43 Upazilas and 22 Municipalities in 42 Districts.



- DW facilitated the formation of citizen's groups at Union, Upazila, Municipality and City Corporation levels. These groups play watchdog role over government service delivery bodies and local government performances. The groups put forward their recommendations through interactive dialogues and advocacy activities. Due to absence of people's access to information, scheme implementation quality of UPs and service provided by the Nation Building Departments (NBD) could not be assessed. Information demand of the people is limited due to lack of knowledge and awareness about the services provided and their rights to have to access these services on health education and agriculture etc. They also take part in different participatory events (i.e. planning and budgeting, 'Ward Shava', standing committees and UDCC).

- Since 1996 DW observed all the elections (national elections, by-elections, re-elections, local government elections etc.) in Bangladesh. It has working partnership with over 350 local NGOs. DW has over 20,000 observers all around the country whose professionalism have been ensured through regular training to ensure free and fair elections. The organization carries out voter education and ensures voter rights of minority marginalized community. DW also conducts opinion poll during pre and post election period to feel the public pulse on political issues. It has also gained international observer status; DW is a member of the largest election monitoring group EWG (now a coalition of 27 NGOs of Bangladesh). DW is also a member of an international Forum of Advocacy for Violence against Women (VAW) in Politics and is a keen propagator of engendering politics.

### ***Human Rights***

- DW promotes gender equity and gender issues in every sphere of the society. The organization has gained reputation in sensitizing people especially youth and development and on the issues related to gender and governance. It formed a Gender Resource Centre that not only promotes gender issues but also tracks the state of violence against women, children, poor and the minority people. The Centre holds Gender Fair every year where it arranges exhibitions, seminars, presents study reports on gender issues and gives awards to the women activists to set role-models in the fields of women empowerment.
- A significant portion of the population especially women are still denied very essential services i.e. health, access to justice, quality education and shelter. DW works in collaboration with the Local Government Institutions (Union Parishad, Upazila Parishad and Municipality) to make the services accessible to the poor, women, children and marginalized people. Also the organization is working to make various Social Safety-Net programs more transparent and pro-people.
- DW conducts research on the state of human rights of women and girls especially among the urban poor also on various gender issues as a partner of social science Research Council of Government of Bangladesh.
- DW believes that the incidents of human rights violations can be reduced if they are objectively reported in the media. Hence, the organization organizes journalist training and sensitization programs on human rights and MDGs all around the country for both print and electronic media. It also conducts media watch and produces monthly reports on human rights violations. It also developed journalists watch groups in several distend.

### ***Human Resource Development***

DW has been providing vital and very high quality 'Lifeskills Training Program' to the young people since 1995 and achieved high reputation in promoting and empowering youth, professional, media, local-government members (especially women), and developing confidence of the youth who never have had the opportunity to enter the job market or being self-employed. The primary objective of this initiative is to provide lifeskills training and build confidence of the new generation to keep pace with the ever-changing competitive world and to prepare them as the future leaders of influence through training, motivation, inspiration, and participation. The organization also organizes visits to parliamentary sessions for young students and professionals.

Over 30,000 youths in nearly two decades have been trained, who are aware of their rights and most of them are employed in leading positions in government, national and international corporate and NGOs.

It also imparts Gender and Governance Training especially for women through its Gender Resource Center (GRC).

DW has developed several programs to enhance the leadership qualities of the young people of Bangladesh and prepare them to work beyond the geographical boundaries. "Youth Leadership Program (YLP)" is one of them. This particular program enabled the young people to learn and know about contemporary issues such as Diversity and Tolerance, Gender Equity, Environment, HIV/AIDS, Consequence of Drug abuse, Culture & Heritage, Governance and Democracy in an interactive manner. DW's youth volunteers especially the women are now more conscious about their rights, political aspirations and commitments towards their society. Following are some of the key youth related projects implemented by Democracywatch :

- DW is one of the implementing partners of The Asia Foundation's "**Youth as Agents of Social Change: Authentic Civic Participation**" project which is funded under US State Department's Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor. Through YASC, DW identified 10 Secretariat Youth Members and groomed them as motivational trainers. These youth leaders then trained additional 300 community youth of Dhaka and Mymensingh. They also identified 30 community development initiatives led by the Youth Secretariat members. As part of the project DW also arranged 10 meeting with youth leaders of the major political parties and inspire them in community development activities.
- DW is one of the implementing partners of the British Council's **PRODIGY** (Promoting Democratic Inclusion and Governance through Youth) project which is funded under US State Department's Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor. DW is implementing PRODIGY activities in 3 UPs of Savar Upazila, Dhaka. As part of this project DW arranged 9 multi-day long trainings for 108 youth participants and inspired them to initiate 15 community based Social Action Project (SAP).
- Since 2013, DW is one of the implementing partners of Counterpart International's **Leadership Development Program (LDP)**. DW has been providing multi phased trainings to around 4,000 youth and community leaders in 6 Upazilas in 4 districts of Dhaka division as part of this USAID supported project.
- Training program on promoting Good Governance through Capacity Building of Youth from Higher Level Schools and Madrassahs in Mymensingh. Through this project 200 students from 10 institutions received training on accountability, transparency, participation, tolerance and responsibility to develop future leadership among them.
- Training on "Role of Constitution in Nation Building (RCNB)" under the American Center Small Grant 2011 where the 133 youth attendants became generally aware of the process a constitution protects fundamental civil rights and help to develop democracy.
- Conducted 30 Active Citizens Youth Leadership Training (**ACYLT**) and directly engaged 916 (male 507, female 409) AC trained youth in community development activities with the British Council since 2011;
- Implemented USAID's Leaders of Influence (**LOI**) Program with The Asia Foundation (TAF) between 2007 and 2011 and facilitated 51 highly successful orientation sessions in 23 districts altogether ;
- Conducted training on "Civic Education for Youth and Elected Women Leaders" with TAF in 2011-12;

- Implementing governance projects to ensure the “Political Empowerment of Women” 1 and pro-people governance in the UP management through developing leadership of UP representatives, women, faith leaders and traditional leaders under SDLG project;
- Launched Gender and Governance Unit in 2005 and conducted 18 training batches for the youth;
- Between 2004 and 2006 DW was one of the key implementing partners of the British Council and implemented the **Beyond BORDERS** program, a Connecting Futures project and provided platform for young people from Bangladesh and established a youth network with their Indian, Pakistani, Sri Lankan, and the UK counterparts;
- Community mobilization activities with RI/SOL during LINC 2005 and 2006 along with the visiting US team;
- Conducted Democracy Training Program (DTP) with support of NORAD in 2001-03.

DW also arranged two International Youth Summits in Bangladesh in 2005 and 2006. DW is also assisting youth volunteers to arrange and manage Social Action Projects (SAP) and help their communities. Some of the volunteer groups are engaged successfully and taking part in different social initiatives.

Till date, more than 60,000 participants were directly involved with DW through its training programs, festivals, and election observation (deployment of stationary and mobile observers) activities.

#### ***Democracywatch’s experience on Governance***

DW has achieved a strong reputation in promoting and empowering local government Institutions, media, government officials, gender, professionals and the youth. It has gained recognition for its work in advocacy and empowerment of communities. It takes part in all election monitoring and voter and civic education; and conducts research and opinion polls. Currently, Democracywatch has worked with about 350 local partner organizations around the country and about 20 donors and development partners. It has worked directly in 1,000 Union Parishads and 54 Municipalities and has professional networks with about 2,000 UPs and 54 Municipalities.

List of recent Governance related projects of DW:

<b>Project Title</b>	<b>Development Partner</b>	<b>Purpose</b>	<b>Coverage</b>	<b>Duration</b>
Election Program- Strengthening and Promoting Active Citizenship in Bangladesh	The Asia Foundation	Civic education, Training for observers, Election Observation and advocacy with concerned department and ministry.	National wide	1 March 2018 to December 2020
SHARIQUE-SDC local governance program	HELVETAS Swiss Intercooperation	The overall build skills of citizens and promote citizens empowerment to exercise their rights and entitlement in relation to their Union Parishads and. promote women leadership in communities in the context of local governance	Gaibandha	1 July 2017 to 30 November 2019

Project Title	Development Partner	Purpose	Coverage	Duration
Promoting Democratic Inclusion and Governance through Youth (PRODIGY)	British Council/ DRL, Department of State, USA	Increase peaceful civic participation in local governance in Bangladesh by empowering youth	Savar and Dhaka	1 June 2017 to 31 May 2019
Active Citizens Youth Leadership Training (ACYLT) Programme	The British Council	Increase the number of young people that see active citizenship as a way of overcoming traditional barriers, accessing decision makers and influencing the lives of their community.	Nationwide	1 July 2018- 31 March 2019
Justice for All (JFA) - Mymensingh	NCSC/USAID	Increasing the level of activation and coordination of the District, Upazila, and Union Parishad Legal Aid Committees within the target District	8 Upazilas, 1 Chowki and 91 Union Parishads in Mymensingh District	16 November 2014 to 31 July 2018
Justice for All (JFA) - Tangail	NCSC/USAID	Increasing the level of activation and coordination of the District, Upazila, and Union Parishad Legal Aid Committees within the target District	12 Upazilas and 110 Union Parishads in Tangail District	16 November 2014 to 15 December 2017
Coalitions and Children for Change in the Political Culture of Bangladesh under <b>Child rights governance (CRG)</b>	Save the Children	The overall goal of this proposed action research project is, “To promote children’s exercise of their civil and political rights and protect them from political violence	Dhaka and Tangail	1 April to 31 December 2017
Social Engagement for Budgetary Accountability (SEBA)	Manusher Jonno Foundation/ World bank	Enhancing local governance’s budget formulation capacity through ensuring accountability and transparency of UPs with active community engagement.	5 Union Parishads of Tangail Sadar Upazila and 5 Union Parishads of Kalihati Upazila in Tangail District	1 December 2014 to 31 July 2017
Supporting Local Governance and Local Economic Development (LED)	Commonwealth Local Government Forum	Purpose of this LED pilot project is to build up the economic capacity of a local area to improve its economic future and the quality of life for all.	3 Union Parishads of Jessore Sadar Upazila	1 July 2014 to 30 June 2016
Strengthening Civic Engagement in	The Asia Foundation	The Asia Foundation and its partners will enhance transparency of Bangladesh’s	6 constituencies (6 Long-Term Observation (LTO)	1 May 2013 to 30 September 2016



Project Title	Development Partner	Purpose	Coverage	Duration
Elections and Political Processes for Enhanced Transparency and Democratic Accountability		electoral processes in 2013-14 and beyond with comprehensive domestic and regional election observation based on international best practice standards, and long term advocacy for electoral reform.	and 720 Short-Term Observation (STO) deployment during pre and post election)	
Promoting Access to Information in Local Governance (PAILG)	Manusher Jonno Foundation (MJF)/DFID	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- To support Union Information Service Centre (UISC) in establishing LGs as local hub of information as well as promote RTI act 2009;</li> <li>- To ensure effective information sharing among UP representatives, community people and NBD at UPs for ensuring better service delivery;</li> <li>- To create opportunity of knowledge sharing, sensitizing policy planners to increase transparency, accountability of public information;</li> </ul>	12 Union Parishads (UP) in 2 Sadar Upazilas of Nilphamari and Tangail districts	1 October 2013 to 31 March 2017
People's Action for Democratic Governance (PADG)	EU/EIDHR CBSS - Bangladesh	Create a broad based constituency where the public institutions uphold democratic and human rights of the citizens.	47 Union Parishads in Barisal, Jessore, Jhalokathi, Mymensingh districts	1 June 2013 to 31 May 2015
Citizen Action for Results, Transparency and Accountability (CARTA) Program	Manusher Jonno Foundation (MJF)/ Partnership for Transparency Fund (PTF)/Japan Social Development Fund	Empower community people to establish their rights through active participation in the UP governance system. Mobilize and capacitate UP representatives and civil society to engage communities to monitor budget transparency, efficiency, participation, inclusion and accountability at the local govt.(UP) level.	30 Union Parishads in Jessore and Nilphamari districts	15 September 2012 to 15 September 2014
Strengthening Democratic Local Governance Program (SDLG)	Tetra Tech ARD/ USAID	To improve transparent and participatory public administration at the sub-national level and to enhance legal and policy reform at the national level in order to promote and expand decentralization	Jessore (16 UPs, 3 Upazilas and 3 Municipalities) and Narail (8 UPs, 2 Upazilas and 2 Municipalities), Faridpur and Rajbari	1 January 2012 to 31 October 2014

Project Title	Development Partner	Purpose	Coverage	Duration
APARAJITA : Political Empowerment of Women	Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC)	To build confidence, knowledge and capacity of the Elected Women Representatives (EWR), encourage and facilitate networks of mutual support so that the elected women representatives can fulfill their obligations made to their electorate and contribute to making local government system more responsive, especially to the needs of women and ensure good governance.	156 Union Parishads, 12 Municipalities, 15 Upazilas in 10 districts (Rangpur, Nilphamari, Dinajpur, Sirajganj, Pabna, Tangail, Mymensingh, Jessore, Magura, Narail)	15 Nov 2011 to 28 Feb 2017
Promoting Democratic Institutions and Practices ( <b>PRODIP</b> )	The Asia Foundation/ USAID	Institutionalization of effective and participatory democracy to ensure adequate representation for poor and marginalized people in the governance	91 Union Parishads, 8 Upazilas in Jessore	1 August 2011 to 31 March 2014
People's Reporting Centre ( <b>PRC</b> )	DANIDA/ HRGG-PSU	Create an enabling situation for UPs to develop their accountability and credibility	28 Union Parishads in Jessore, Gazipur, Nilphamari and Dinajpur districts	1 October 2003 to 31 December 2010
Promoting Governance, Accountability, Transparency, and Integrity ( <b>PROGATI</b> )	DAI/ USAID	Enhance civil society role to promote principles of governance, accountability, transparency and integrity.	8 districts	1 May 2008 to 31 October 2010

### Geographic Coverage:

Currently DW comprehensively works at 515 Union Parishads (UPs), 47 Upazilas and 24 Municipalities in 15 Districts. DW has an active network of about 350 local partner organizations around the country and worked with more than 20 development partners.

Division	District	Upazila	UP	Municipality
Rangpur	5	19	198	8
Rajshahi	2	2	24	2
Mymensingh	3	9	117	5
Dhaka	2	12	117	5
Khulna	3	5	59	4
	<b>15</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>515</b>	<b>24</b>



**Partnership :** DW has been closely working with Government organizations, national and local NGOs and CBOs to promote good governance and human rights at community level. It has now about 350 partner NGOs around the country. This huge network of partners not only provides ample support to ensure governance in their locality but also participate in election monitoring and is directly involve in various social and community based activities.

**Civil Society members/Organizations:**

- Journalists Forum (print and electronic Media):
- Business Forum (BGMEA, BKMEA, FBCCI, FWBCCI, DCCI, BTMEA, ICC, AMCEM, Midas)
- SKOP Sramik Kallyan Okkya Parishad (Federation of trade unions)
- Local NGOs / CBOs
- Clubs
- Library / Charitable Institutions

**Partnership with National and International NGOs:**

- **National:** Manusher Jonno Foundation (MJF), Khan Foundation, PRIP Trust, Steps Towards Development, BRAC, ASA, Grameen Bank, ASK, BLAST, Change Makers
- **International NGO:** The Asia Foundation, Counterpart International, Democracy International, IRI, ARD, NDI, RTI, Partnership for Transparency Fund (PTF), DAI, Relief International, CARE, HELVETAS Swiss Intercooperation, Action Aid Bangladesh, Save the Children, VSO, HWPL - Korea
- **International Agencies:** USAID, SDC, Japan Social Development Fund (JSDF), DANIDA, DFID, Novib, CIDA, SIDA, UNDP, UNICEF, EU, Royal Danish Embassy, British High Commission, The American Center, British Council, Commonwealth Foundation , Commonwealth Local Government Forum.

**Women Forum:**

- We Can Alliance, Kormojibi Nari, Bangladesh Alliance for Women Leadership (BDAWL)
- Women Leaders Development Forum
- CEDAW Committee, Domestic Workers' Right Committee, Alliance for Women Workers

**Member of Networking Bodies:**

Bangladesh Shishu Adhikar Forum (BSAF), Governance Coalition Forum, SUPRO, Election Working Group (EWG), Bangladesh Women Association of Leaders, Bangladesh Union Parishad Forum (BUPF - a network of elected UP representatives), Municipal Association of Bangladesh (MAB), Campaign for Popular Education (CAMPE), Governance Advocacy Forum (GAF), Bangladesh Urban Forum (BUF), Coalition for Urban Poor (CUP).

**Academia and Research Organization:**

CPD, BIDS, PPRC, Bangladesh Enterprise Institution (BEI), JATRI

**Partnership/Membership and attachment at International Level:**

Department of Public Information (DPI) of the United Nations, UN's CSONet, World Youth Movements for Democracy (WYMD), South Asian Human Rights forum (SAHR), Volunteer Service Overseas Bangladesh (VSOB), Active Learning Network for Accountability and Performance in Humanitarian Action (ALNAP), Commonwealth Association, The Asian Network for Free Election (ANFREL), National Citizens' Movement for Free Elections (NAMFREL), SAP International, Nepal,

Global Network of Domestic Election Monitors (GNDEM), N-Peace, Heavenly Culture World Peace Restoration of Light (HWPL), International Peace Youth Group (IPYG)

**Partnership with International agencies:**

USAID, SDC, DANIDA, DFID, NOVIB, CIDA, SIDA, UNDP, UNICEF, EU, Royal Danish Embassy, British High Commission, The American Center, British Council.

DW is also associated with the United Nations Department of Public Information (DPI).

**DW’s Operational Management:**

The organization has a board consisting of twenty members which includes distinguished members of the society. DW is governed by the following procedures and principles :

- Regular AGM & quarterly meetings of Board of Governors.
- Weekly management and planning meetings by the Director.
- Regular departmental meetings for participation of all in decision making.
- Bi-monthly General Meeting with all DW Staff for transparency in management.
- Finance & Admin policy developed by A. Qasem & Co.
- Gender and Travel Policy
- Partnership Manual
- Monitoring and Evaluation Manual
- Service rule including staff development initiatives
- Advocacy Strategy and Policy
- Information Disclosure Policy
- Child Safeguard Policy



**DW Offices and Training Facilities**

SL	Office address	Upazila	District	Working coverage
1	15 Eskaton Garden Road, Ramna Dhaka – 1000 (Head Office)	Sadar	Dhaka	Nationwide
2	House: 111, Block : E, Upashahar , Jessore	Sadar	Jessore	Sadar and District based
3	60 DB Road, Shehora, Mymensingh	Sadar	Mymensingh	Bhaluka, Fulpur, Haluaghat, Gauripur, Sadar, Trishal, Gofagaon and Dhobaura
4	Local Bus Stand Road (Near Bonoful Hotel)	Sadar	Nilphamari	Sadar and District based
5	Biswas Betka, Dhaka Road, Atpukurgate	Sadar	Tangail	Sadar and District based
6	Near SP Office, Gaibandha	Sadar	Gaibandha	82 UPs, 7 Upazilas