

Adolescent Rape Survivor Facing Early Motherhood and Multiple Protection Risks

Sohagi Khatun, student of class 8 at South Machhiara Dakhil Madrasa from Machhiara Village, Ward No. 8, Khalilnagar Union, Tala Upazila, Satkhira District, was born on **15 March 2009**. She comes from an economically vulnerable family, as both of her parents work as daily wage labourers on others' farmland and are often away from home during the day. On **15 February 2025**, while Sohagi was alone at home, she was raped by a **72-year-old neighbour and distant relative** following a land-related dispute between the families. The perpetrator continued to sexually assault her on several occasions by threatening and intimidating her. Out of fear and shame, Sohagi was unable to disclose the abuse to anyone. After few months later, her mother noticed physical changes and took her to a local physician, where a pregnancy test confirmed that she was pregnant. Sohagi then disclosed the repeated sexual assaults to her mother.

On **2 September 2025**, the survivor's mother filed a case at **Tala Police Station** under **Section 9(1) of the Women and Children Repression Prevention Act, 2000 (Amended 2003)**. The case was registered accordingly, and the accused was arrested and remains in judicial custody. At the age of **16**, Sohagi gave birth to a baby boy through a caesarean section. To meet the medical expenses, her family was forced to mortgage their only **five decimals of cultivable land**, placing them under severe financial hardship. Since the case was filed, the family has reportedly been subjected to repeated threats from relatives of the accused, creating ongoing safety and protection concerns for both the survivor and her family. Sohagi continues to face multiple vulnerabilities. Physically, she suffers from anaemia, postnatal weakness, malnutrition, and the challenges associated with caring for and breastfeeding her infant. Psychologically, she experiences severe trauma, fear, insecurity, and is at risk of depression. Socially, she continues to face stigma, discrimination, and persistent security threats, placing both her and her child at risk of long-term deprivation and social exclusion.

Follow-up and Rapid Response by the HOPE Project: On **28 July 2026**, the **Research Initiatives Bangladesh (RIB) HOPE Project Team** conducted a follow-up home visit to assess the survivor's current situation and protection needs. During the visit, the team observed that Sohagi's infant son was suffering from **measles accompanied by seasonal fever**. Due to the family's extreme financial hardship, they were unable to afford the required medical treatment. After assessing the situation, the HOPE Project provided **Rapid Response Support** to facilitate immediate medical treatment for the child. The team also reassessed the survivor's protection needs, provided counselling to the family, encouraged them to continue pursuing legal proceedings, and committed to maintaining regular follow-up and referral support to ensure the survivor's wellbeing, safety, and access to available government and non-government services.

Key Concerns and Recommendations:

- Ensure continued medical treatment & nutritional support for both the survivor and her infant.
- Strengthen psychosocial support services to address survivor's trauma & mental health needs.
- Ensure the safety and protection of the survivor and her family throughout the judicial process.
- Continue legal assistance and close monitoring of the ongoing criminal case.
- Strengthen referral and coordination with relevant government and non-government service providers for health care, social protection, and rehabilitation.
- Maintain regular follow-up visits to monitor the survivor's recovery, protection needs, and socioeconomic situation while ensuring confidentiality and adherence to child safeguarding principles.