RIB Annual Report on 2018-2019

Overview of Research Related Activities

Research Initiatives Bangladesh (RIB), a research based Organization, started its activities in 2002. Its key objective is to support researches aimed at identifying strategies and programs that ensures sustainability, progressive alleviation of poverty in Bangladesh. Over the past 18 years RIB implemented projects on research-based issues. During 2018-2019 RIB implemented seven projects. Research projects were categorized as: Strengthening Democratic Governance within the Civil society organizations, Women's Empowerment and Right, Accountability and Transparency of Right to Information, Prevention of Sexual and Gender based Violence and Capacity Building among Rohingya Community, Agro-based research involving community participation, capacity building.

Seven research projects were accomplished during the reporting period. These are 1. Civil Society organization Strengthen Democratic Governance; 2. Promoting Opportunities for Women's Empowerment and Rights (POWER); 3. Right to Information (RTI): Demand enhancing activity ; 4. Advancing Accountability and Transparency through the Right to Information); 5. Agro ecology from below: Pedagogy and Participatory Action (2019); 6. Prevention of SGBV through using Interactive Theatre: Rohingyas in Bangladesh ; and 7. Building Capacities of Local communities to mitigate problems created by the Rohingya influx in Cox's Bazar.

Objectives covered effective partnership between capacitated civil society organizations and responsive local authorities fosters governance and accountability processes for inclusive development; how day care initiatives can reduce burden of UCW (Unpaid Care Work) of rural women and how women use the time and energy they save alternatively; study the procedural and social aspects of implementation of Right to Information (RTI) Act in Bangladesh; promote ecological principles in different ecosystems of Bangladesh as an alternative approach to agriculture production; prevent sexual and gender based violence (SGBV) through engaging with Rohingya women through Participatory Action Research and co-produce theatre scripts with local theatre activists; and build up capacity of the host communities to face the problems due to Rohingya influx in the locality and to search an agreeable and logical way to repatriate the Rohingyas to their own country followed by the policies of the Government of Bangladesh.

Both quantitative and qualitative methods were followed in implementing these research projects. Participants of these research activities are the Government policy level personnel (UP Member), Civil Society Organizations (CBO), professional and marginalized community people included Rohingya people, both men and women. Location of the project activities covered Lalmonirhat, Nilphamari, Rangpur, Dinajpur, Satkhira, Naogaon, Rajshahi and Cox's Bazar Districts. The development partners are NETZ Bangladesh (Funded by European Union), World Bank, Action Aid, National Endowment for Democracy (NED), RLS (Germany), The University of Queensland (Australia) and MISEREOR.

Projects (2018-2019)

Sl No.	Project Name	Period	Partnership /Doner
01	Civil Society organization Strengthen Democratic Governance	January 2016 to December 2019	NETZ Bangladesh, Funded by European Union
02	Promoting Opportunities for Women's Empowerment and Rights (POWER)	September 2016 – December 2020	Action Aid

03	RIGHT TO INFORMATION (RTI): Demand enhancing activity	September 2018 To August 2019	World Bank
04	Advancing Accountability and Transparency through the Right to Information)	October 2018 to September 2019	National Endowment for Democracy (NED)
05	Agro ecology from below : Pedagogy and Participatory Action (2019)	January to December 2019	RLS, Germany
06	Prevention of SGBV through using Interactive Theatre: Rohingyas in Bangladesh	April to September 2019	The University of Queensland, Australia
07	Building Capacities of Local communities to mitigate problems created by the Rohingya influx in Cox's Bazar.	12 Months May to September 2019	MISEREOR

Project-1: Civil Society Organization Strengthen Democratic Government
1 January 2016 to December 2019 Development partner: NETZ, Bangladesh

During four years of continuation of the action, the local and regional civil society organizations (CSOs) are institutionalized and further contributed to ensure governance and accountability processes at their locality. During the reporting period, the CSOs in two working districts continued advocacy and networking and provided support to the most vulnerable people in their areas. A sense of citizenship, ownership and responsibility has been established among selected civil society actors of the population in project districts through their success in obtaining their rightful entitlements under the laws of the land from public authorities. The objective of the project is "Effective partnership between capacitated civil society Organizations and responsive local authorities fosters governance and accountability processes for inclusive development." The level of achievements of the project are mentioned below:

At least 75% of 4,200 trained civil society (CS) actors and their Organizations continued to work closely with Las at local and regional level in the reporting period.

The CSO platform facilitated seven meetings and two national seminars in the reporting period and consultative interactions of local to national level CSOs made and collective actions taken. During these seminars and meetings there were representations of local CSOs who shared their experiences in dealing with conflicts.

At least 75% of local CSOs promoted policy implementation and delivery of justice by using the RTI Act to ensure the entitlements of rights. During continuation of action each year the CSO members from Rangpur and Nilphamari joined the national Information Fair organized by the Ministry of Information in Dhaka on 28th September each year to mark celebration of Right to Know Day.

From Year Two(2) of the reporting period, all the CS actors and public authorities started applying democratic dialogue and conflict transformation approaches within their working areas which continued till end of action period.

In the following results of the project indicators are given in short descriptions:

During action Years, 100% of 128 village level CSOs continued taking actions for entitlements of rights. Based on their identified issues within their regular meetings through PAR, CSOs are claiming continuously their rights. The most efficient way to ensure the entitlements of rights is through using the Right to Information (RTI) Act. In the reporting period, 12,747 CSO and community members received entitlements under the social safety net scheme.

During the continuation of the action in Four years, 1,700 RTI applications have been submitted to LAs. 58% of those submitted applications have already been answered. The remaining applications either went through appeal and complaint submission to the respective authorities. The indicator has been achieved at the end of the action.

100% of 44 regional level CSOs used participatory planning tools during their meetings in the reporting period. The target under the indicator has already achieved and the same can be reflected though very case studies reported during 4 years of action which has also been submitted in the year wise interim report.

During the continuation of action best practices regarding the successful application of the RTI Act have been documented and distributed in dialogue meetings of CSOs and LAs. From the beginning of the action already Seven (7) best practices comprising of all partners RIB, Pollisree and MKP have been documented.

Activities for Result 1 are briefly given below:

In 2016 about 4,200 CS actors in 172 CSOs were organized. CSOs were trained and facilitated on internal governance, accountability and participatory planning, PAR, democratic dialogue and Right to Information (RTI) Act. In total, 2,990 monthly group meetings were held during the reporting period. Total numbers of meetings at community level was 2,560, at union and sub-district level 400 bi-monthly meetings and at district level 30 quarterly meetings. The average attendance rate in the meetings was 95%.
During the reporting period, 40 public awareness raising events were organized to celebrate different national and international days.



Rally organized by RIB and civil society organizations of Taragonj Upazila of Rangpur

RIB was required to submit 1600 but during four years of action 1700 RTI applications were submitted to LAs on issues relating to access to social safety net programmes, accountability, education, health, etc. 58% of the submitted applications have already been answered. As per plan 10,000 leaflet on RTI, 2,000 posters on 4 themes and 1000 booklet on RTI and PAR were printed and disseminated in the working districts as well as to others for developing knowledge and awareness during action years. In 2018, four information fairs were organised in the

working districts of the action on Right to Information Day on 28 September. Along with the CSOs and local authorities, around 1,000 community people joined in each fair.



Copy of leaflet used for advocacy on Right to Information (RTI)

Four best practices regarding the successful application of the RTI Act have been documented in the reporting period. Further best practices will be documented continuously in the following years of the action. A summary of the cases is state below:

One Upazila CSO President from Taraogonj Upazila of Rangpur maintained an APS (DPS) account with local Sonali Bank in Taragonj. When his DPS was matured he approached bank to withdraw his money but officers at bank misguided him on the pretext of collecting more fund from him. After hearing this CSO member Shahidul Islam filed RTI with Branch Manager sought information on how many days are required to withdraw matured fund under DPS scheme and enquired whether there was any charge to be paid to withdraw the fund.

Result 2: A functional structure for democratic dialogue and inclusive partnership between CSOs and LAs is established.

Indicators for Result Two are narrated here:

The regular dialogue meetings between CSOs and LAs in each working district created the spaces to develop joint action plans for the benefit of the community in their respective working area. By the end of action period 70% of CSOs-LAs alliances developed and executed joint action plans. The eligible queries on development initiatives and social services were recorded by LAs directed at the established RTI Resource Centre. Almost 95% queries on development initiatives and social services were answered by the concerned Advocacy and Information officer

deputed at Resource centre. Joint training workshops for CSOs and LAs on democratic dialogue were facilitated local in the regional level.
Local and regional CSOs and LAs jointly were trained on accountability related to social services and delivery of justice. A total of 96 quarterly dialogue meetings of regional CSOs and LAs were organized in the reporting period. 4 joint exposure visits on effective cooperation between CSOs & LAs at country level and one exposure visit in two SAARC countries were organized during the reporting period.

A module prepared in Bangla on democratic dialogue was developed and disseminated to much wider audiences through dissemination seminar organised by NETZ Bangladesh, lead applicant in this action as well as it is posted on the online portal (www.csosdg.org).

RIB and Netz Bangladesh who is the lead applicant in this action jointly took initiatives and an online portal on RTI has been established. The link to the web portal is www.csosdg.org. This web portal contains information on the action's progress of all PNGOs under the action, initiatives, training modules developed under the action, relevant laws and policies and best practices.

In Year Two(2), RIB engaged Three (3) students from Dhaka University as the research fellows who were recruited to conduct the study on democratic dialogue, conflict mapping and non-violent conflict-transformative approaches in the working areas of RIB.



Workshop on Right to Information and its practice in the working fields

Visibility
How is the visibility of the EU contribution being ensured in the Action?
The communication and visibility plan has been developed in Year 1 of the action and thus followed throughout the project period. There has been cap, t-shirt, banner used for some events like exposure visit, trainings information fairs and public events contained visibility as per EU guideline has been followed strictly. The 'disclaimer' is clearly printed at the posters as well as per the EU guideline. Every object used during project year in public events and other project activities, have clearly displayed the name and logo of EU.



Discussion session on occasion of the International Women's Day 2017

Project-2: Promoting Opportunities for Women's Empowerment and Rights (POWER)
Dec. 2018- Dec 2019 Development partner: Action Aid Bangladesh

A research preceding the POWER project was conducted under the name of FLOW 2 where one of the outcomes was outlined in the following way: "By the end of 2020 Women's unpaid care work (UCW) is more highly valued within households, communities and Government, more evenly distributed within households and hours spent by women on UCW is reduced, resulting in more free time for women to engage in social, economic and political activities." As part of this outcome one of the interventions was suggested as some initiatives could be taken to reduce the burden of UCW of women by establishing child day care centers in the project area.

Objectives: To conduct a research on how day care initiatives can reduce burden of UCW (Unpaid Care Work) of rural women and how women use the time and energy they save alternatively in the project areas of the POWER project in Bangladesh.

Research Methodology

Quantitative Method: As of Final Data of 2019, 719 respondents for time use survey were reached on the basis of stratified random sampling. Initially people were categorized by geography, gender, age, marital status, education, occupation, and household head, and then a simple random sampling was applied to identify the sample from five Unions (Fazlupur, Gozaria, Kanchipara, Udakhali, and Uria) of FulchhariUpazilla under Gaibandha district, and five Unions (Harati, Khuniagach, Kulaghat, Mogolhat, and Rajpur) from LalmonirhatSadarUpazilla, and from AAB's direct intervention areas of Ghoraghat, Dinajpur.

Qualitative Method: During December 2019, Nine FGDs were targeted, but 8 were carried out- 2 at Gaibandh, 3 at Lalmonirhat, and 3 at Ghoraghat. The research period coincided with rice harvesting season, and so it was difficult

for the farmers and community people to appear in the group session. Even though the community mobilizers of the project tried their best to reach people and request for their time. Non-intervention community people at Gaibandha could not be reached. Around 10-15 participants were intended, but fewer men appeared due to their hectic time in harvesting. Three FGDs were conducted with all woman groups among participants of the program, three FGDs were held with the male family members of the woman participants, and two FGDs were with control groups that fell outside the program beneficiaries. They were a mixed group and consisted of approximately 50% women and men.

The following findings were recorded in the study through individual conversations.

"We are poor people, Nun Ante Panta Furai (hand to mouth), we do not have the rest. If we get some free time, we go to the field for earning…,

Jorina Khatun, a mother of Kornopur child day care center Said "I send my child at Kornopur DCC and then I go to Walton office as I am a sales person, I work as tailor also..,.,

Morsheda Khatun, a mother of Panatipara child day care center said "I feel less tension doing my family work. Rather I have been involved in many works that give some cash and it has given me an extra identity."

Time spent by women/mothers before and after getting day care services:

The information regarding the time spent by women before and after sending children to the DCCs came more in Focus Group discussions in qualitative form as the mothers found it too hard to qualify. 15 Focused Group Discussions (FGDs) were conducted at 12 day care centers. Nine (9) FGDs were carried out in three following categories: a. Six FGDs with mothers, b. Six FGDs with spouses/husband, and c. Three meeting with neighbors and other family members. A total of 16 Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) were held in Government, Local Government, NGO sectors and communities. The following table shows how women were benefitted by sending their children to the Day Care Center (DCCs):

Table: Benefits got by the women by sending their children to DCCs

Benefits	Percentage
Women can now do household works	44.8
Women can rear cattle	24.8
They can be involved in income generating work	11.6
They can do sewing	9.1
Women are now go for farming	5.5
They can have some leisure time	2.3
Women get time for Personal Care	.7
They can work now in the garments factories	.5
Women can involve in social work	.5
firewood collection	.2
Total	**100.0**

It was revealed that as a result of sending children to the Day Care Centers 44.8% women could be involved in households works, 24.8% were benefitted from cattle rearing, 11.8% from income generating works, 9.1% from Sewing, 5.5% in Farming, 2.3% could invest time in Leisure, 0.7% could go for Personal care,0.5% in Garments, 0.5% in Social work and 0.2% women could collect Firewood.

Fulbanu is relieved of the burden of caring for her physically challenged daughter

Fulbanu (35) is a poor women who lives at Fazlupur village of FulchhariUpazila in Gaibandha district. Her husband Jahangir Alom is a day labour**.** They have two daughters and two sons. Their younger daughter is a physically challenged. It was very difficult to do the normal work, moreover, the caring of a physically challenged child made it worse. She sent her physically challenged daughter to Fazlupur Day Care Center (DCC) and got relief from the burden of caring for the child until pick-up time. After sending them to the DCC she got some time to do the household chores and additionally she worked in the maize field as a day labour and earned some money. Her elated expression: **"**I am earning money and it is helping my husband. If I give cash money to my husband, he feels happy and gives priority to my opinions before taking important decisions of our family.'

Findings: The mean time spent by women respondents in unpaid care work ranks the highest in all districts ranging from 7.04 Hours in Gaibandha to 6.99 hours in Dinajpur (Ghoraghat Upazila), while mean time spent in unpaid and paid work in all three districts fell by half or even less i.e. 3.11 hours in Dinajpur (Ghoraghat) to 2.72 hours in Lalmonirhat and for paid work 1.92 hours in Dinajpur (Ghoraghat) to 1.68 hours Gaibandha. Socio-cultural activities such as attending meetings or visiting cultural functions showed the women who used to spend least time are now able to spend the most time in Gaibandha.Cooking, cleaning the house, caring for the children and the elderly, collecting fuel, fetching the water, chopping the vegetables, supervising the children's study at home are what constitute unpaid care work. Majority of women responded that they saved from 4hrs (25%) to 6 hrs (29%) everyday due through sending their children to the DCCs.

Impact of child care on the community

Before sending to the DCCS children were hindering them doing family chores, tools for tailoring work were misplaced by children, disturbing at cooking specially in the morning time while everyone was hurrying up to go to work and during noon time when it is the peak time for work and they were at risk from getting burnt. But after attending the DCCs children are not hindering them anymore. Rather they can work freely, their mothers can do the work and have time to tidy up at the same time without disturbance and now cook without any disturbance from children.

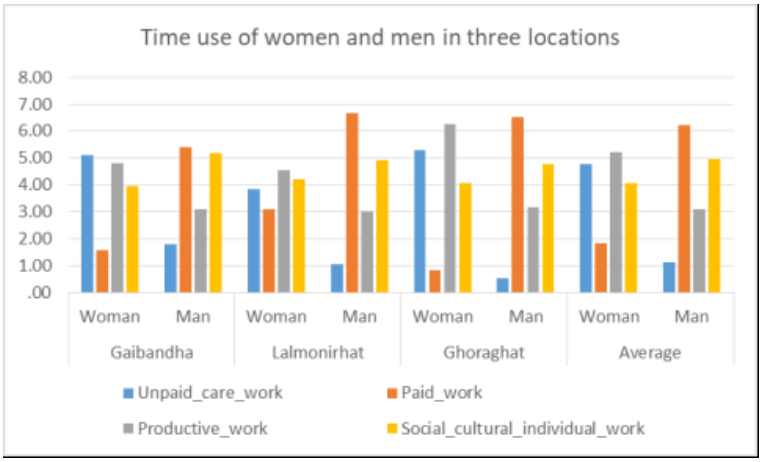
Whether the day care centers help women to reduce unpaid care work (UCW)?

100% of the respondents said that burden was reduced by sending children to the DCC but on responding to the type of burden, the response was 99% on child caring which consisted of feeding, washing, quarreling within the family, protecting and buying things) and.9% on household work. The fact that mothers had mostly to deal with child care before the DCCs.It was found that about 71.4% were cared for by the mothers while grandparents came second (18.2%) and 3.7% only were under the care of the father.

Time use

It was seen that women were getting more involved in productive work but still at the cost of lesser time for personal care, entertainment and socio-cultural activities, with slight positive change in 2018 and 2019. In terms of current figures between the Gaibandha and Lalmornirhat, the gender gap in Gaibandha was slightly greater than Lalmonirhat especially in case of individual and socio-cultural work.

Chart: Time use of women and men in three locations (Gaibandha, Lalmonirhat and Ghoraghat)



Unpaid care work:

With the inclusion of data from Ghoraghat, the average duration of unpaid care work by the woman respondents is around 4.60 hours, and the maximum duration extends up to 15.50 hours a day (See Table 16). Unpaid care work includes child care, care for adults, elderly care, cooking, cleaning, washing, and other household chores. For men the care work occupy 1.17 hours on the average

Paid work

Average duration of paid care work by the women respondents is around 2.13 hour, and the maximum duration extends up to 14.00 hours a day. For men the paid work occupies 6.18 hours on the average.

Productive work

Average duration of productive work by the women respondents is around 4.90 hours, and the maximum duration extends up to 14.67 hours a day. Productive work includes production of home consumption, cattle rearing, poultry and duck rearing, tailoring, collection of water and firewood/fuel. For men the productive work occupies 3.09 hours on the average.

Individual and socio-cultural work

The average duration of individual and social-cultural work by the woman respondents is around 4.08 hours. Individual and social-cultural works include reading, social and cultural activities, watching TV, rest, bath, and personal care. For men the individual and socio-cultural works occupy about 4.97 hours on the average.

Work hours according to generation and age

2019 data show that women aged between 15 and 30 years do more unpaid care work than those of 31 plus age group. In terms of paid work and productive work, it is the opposite – elder women (31 plus of age) work longer average hours. In social-cultural and individual work category, elder women enjoy slightly more hours of leisure.

Impacts on women's empowerment

"Working women are getting more advantages from the DCCs as they do not need to take the children with them to work. It is increasing the income of women" – A community leader told at Gaibandha. "Attitudes are changing toward the women. The government will help and will cooperate with the program. It is a door to door service and gives visibility to the development of women"– Upazila Women Affairs Officer, Ghoraghat. Women FGD respondents in general expressed that they saw a great impact of day care centers in the empowerment of women. Mothers felt empowered economical and socially. They also said that women are gradually becoming self-dependent as well as participating in decision making process.



Joba Khatun is the new change make. Her children stay at school from 9 am to 4 pm and already she is involved in different kinds of income earning works

Women's perception of security and well-being

In women's perceptions they related in the semi-structured interview how they saw their security increased as a result of DCCs. 99.6% said that that they now feel secure in going out to do work. One respondent said that they could compare themselves to be on the same ground as men.This is corroborated with the following figure which illustrate that approximately the same or a little more percentage (78.1%) actually helped women in their household chores.

Table: Who helped the women in doing household chores

Benefits	Percentage
Husband	29.9
Daughters	19.2
Mother-in-law	11.6

There was a broad consensus across the respondents that the DCCs have had a positive socio-economic impact as well as DCCs contributed towards women's empowerment. However, wider participation in economic activities were yet to be achieved. More significantly, the DCCs have been foregrounded the recognition of unpaid care work by women and men in the community and the hours spent by women in such work outnumbering men.

Recommendations for further improvement in operation and policy advocacy or collaboration:

The recommendations for further improvement came from all the categories respondents interviewed, mothers, fathers, other family members and neighbors as well as local authorities and community leaders. Local authorities and key informants expressed their unanimous support for the programme and their desire to be involved with it in the future. The Upazila Women's Affairs Officer at Ghoraghat said, "I will help and support the DCC if they need it. Government has much training for women's development, I will involve them, they just need to inform me and coordinate. I have heard about the DCC and I want to visit it, then I will meet with the mother. The mothers should get training on additional income generating works. It would be an NGO-GO partnership works."

Project-3: Right to Information(RTI): Demand Enhancing Activity
September 2018 To August 2019 World Bank

The current study is an action research which seeks to study the procedural and social aspects of implementation of Right to Information (RTI) Act in Bangladesh by generating about 18301 initial applications from conscious citizen as well as marginalized and underserved communities so that they are tracked, followed through and analyzed in order to learn more about the implementation of RTI from a peoples' perspective.

In keeping with its past focus on mainstream and marginalized communities, The Hunger Project-BD(THP-BD) and Research Initiatives, Bangladesh (RIB) have through the method of participatory action research formed male and female groups in mainstream as well as marginalized communities. The marginalized are the indigenous Rajbangshi, Bagdi and Munda of Satkhira and Sautals including Orao, Pahani from Rajshahi, Dinajpur and Naogaon. Also the mainstream groups formed with professionals including lawyers, teachers, journalists, retired army personnel, and University and college students from 4 Districts namely Dinajpur, Rajshahi, Satkhira and Naogaon.

Through an extensive field research the groups were formed and an intensive training was provided for capacity building of RTI Activists groups because we understand that access to information is such an important prerequisite for transparency and accountability therefore a group of RTI Activists were created who played an essential role in assisting community members to seek vital information from public offices, autonomous, statuary organizations and other development agencies for establishing their rights. The created groups of RTI Activists included youth, women activists, journalists, traders, teachers, social activists, farmers, entrepreneurs and other community leaders from all tiers including unions, sub-districts and districts. For RIB the selection of RTI activists took place following participatory process. Individuals representing various professions from sub-district and district level were selected to form RTI Activists group. Existing local networks, particularly those nurtured by THP for example, SHUJAN and RIB has been mobilized and engaged in the selection process of these participants. The researchers from THP &RIB, formed groups, each guided by respective local staffs of THP-BD & RIB they were capacitated to perform the following tasks:

1. Develop a complete understanding of the law; identify challenges associated with practical use and application of law.
2. Promote and create an enabling situation for others to use the law.
3. Generate RTI applications that will help in creating a sense of belonging as citizens as well as among deprived sections of the area.

Similarly through intensive training process, participatory action researchers from RIB, formed community groups, each guided by local 'animators'. They were capacitated to perform the following tasks:

1. Enable marginalized communities to use the law to solve problems identified and prioritized by themselves individually as well as from a broader public interest
2. Generate RTI applications that will help in procedural analysis in the implementation of the law
3. Promote a sense of citizenship among deprived sections of the population through claiming rightful entitlements from public authorities
4. Analyze institutional mechanisms of the law in practice from a people's perspective and needs.

The expected outcomes of the one year project were:

- Awareness about the law among mainstream group was developed. An increased access to and transparency in public services have increased.
- Access to and transparency in public services for marginal groups has been increased through use of RTI Act in four project areas.

- Dissemination of the cases and processes of achievements of citizen's groups as well as the good practices of the public authorities has been achieved.

The filed applications were categorized into three categories: **(1) those seeking primary information**; **(2) those seeking institutional accountability**; and **(3) those seeking transparency**. It was the objective of the study to create RTI activists to enhance demand for RTI in the project Districts at the same time enable and empower communities so that they may learn to upscale their information needs from asking basic primary service-related questions to the level of addressing and engaging public authorities on accountability and transparency issues. The core findings were:

The Hunger Project-BD, out of a total of **14,958 RTI applications** submitted during project period, 8970 applications received full and partial responses. The rate of response was considered 60% and out of 5988, a total of 48 (01%) went through the process of appeal, 13 (0.174%) went for complaint and some 5940 are still pending for information (applications submitted in June & July). A detail breakdown is attached as **Annex-1**

Similarly we see that RTI Activists and marginalized community people formed as PAR group under RIB's supervision submitted a total of **3,343 RTI applications**, 2,105 applications received responses including full and partial. The rate of response was considered 63% for responses including full and partial. 318 (9.5%) were not responded to and 103 (3.1%) returned to the sender and 298 (8.9%) applications were still pending information as their due dates were not yet over, the same being filed in June & July.

About 25% of all non-responded applications (837) went to appeal as well as appeal generated from incomplete or partial information provided. 10 complaints were made that constituted of all non-responded and returned applications from the appeals level. Only 1 hearing was held at the complaints level. Thus it is seen that in case of information sought are in nature of first category like information on services and so on, the rate of responses by DOs are relatively higher than information sought on transparency and accountability, in these categories the responses received from DOs are lower than primary category. The number of appeals generating from three categories were almost the same but the responses to the appeals were higher in second and third category than the previous category, which is interesting. This may indicate that such categories of application once they cross the first level may generate a kind of pressure on authorities from senior officers as well pressure from the community.

The rate of appeals although relatively low was nevertheless encouraging. Applications at the appeal level were highest on transparency issues which were least responded to by authorities. Most of the appeals were backed by a broader public interest and this had the effect of boosting the determination of RTI activists to take it up to the next level. Another factor responsible for higher response rate for appeals could be that in the RTI appeal process, more pressure is exerted at a higher level of administration than at the lower.

The nature of the questions asked in application forms were often the same in all communities. Issues related to land featured more among minority communities such as Santals than in mainstream communities as were questions regarding the allocation of funds for development works in the region. Rural based communities and sometimes even the mainstream communities were prone to asking information on safety net services, distribution of khas land and repair works of infrastructure like culverts, roads while communities with more urban exposure tended to ask pointed questions on accountability and transparency of institutions such as schools, hospitals, trainings, narcotics control department and environmental issues.

District wise number of RTI applications: In the table below it was found that under the Hunger Project-BD, out of a total of 14,958 RTI applications submitted during project period, 8,970 applications received full and partial responses. The rate of response was considered 60% and out of 5,988, a total of 48 (01%) went through the process of appeal, 13 (0.174%) went for complaint and some 5,940 are still pending for information.

Table: District wise number of RTI Application for THP-BD

District	Number of application submitted	Information Received	Appeal	Complaint	In-Process
Dinajpur	3614	1823	31	3	1219
Naogaon	1824	1306	03	0	518
Rajshahi	7503	3007	09	09	3601
Satkhira	2017	1367	12	04	650
Total	**14958**	**7503**	55	**16**	**5988**

Challenges came both from the supply and demand side: From the supply side, the main challenges were intimidation from service providers who used both avoidance and pressure techniques. From the demand side, the challenges were lack of motivation, discouragement and also less than effective leadership skills. But despite such impact, there are gaps still remain in the implementation of RTI Law. According to data, 25% of applications were not responded to by authorities, appeals were being discouraged through avoidance and pressure tactics and the hearings that are held whether at the Appeal level or Commission level were few and far between.

Experience sharing by a field activist:

Nazneen Ara Begum Koyel from Parbatipur, Dinajpur: Ms. Koyel informed present participants at the seminar that she personally had submitted 65 applications, and she has agreed to most of the challenges that has been added in the key note presentation but brought to the notice of participants one more challenge which is most of the DO's in government offices have a tendency to shift liability to other authorities saying that this office does not have information rather those are kept with other authority. She said that one particular Ministry accepted that they do not preserve documents on sensitive issues but upon receiving her letter from now onwards they would keep records and preserve documents properly. She further discussed on content of her RTI applications.

Learning:

The following points may be made by way of learning from the current project:

1. More investment is needed in making supply side more service oriented. Both lateral advocacy methods such as dialogues between RTI interest groups and designated officers is needed. But there is also a need for continuous effort from higher authorities to promote the cause of RTI.
2. The deepening of RTI applications on knowledge based resources need to be continued. It can be seen from our findings that it is possible to develop a conscious citizenry who can act as watchdogs through RTI and this has great potential for local governance. This can be better achieved as an interactive process as has been demonstrated through the participatory action research method followed in the current research. The practice also brings out responses from the supply side, which may be initially hostile, but at the same time taps the potential for '***reformative practice'*** that is equally embedded in structures of local authorities. In short it is a methodology of practice that goes beyond the usual "awareness" program commonly envisaged in the developmental arena and hence could form a rich resource for adaptation.
3. Education and exposure to the public domain is essential for the success of demand driven RTI. It has been seen that ways of addressing RTI at high school and college level has helped broaden a RTI friendly constituency.
4. Continuation of service related knowledge based resources and accountability issues are also necessary as an organic link can be developed between the needs of the underserved and socially excluded and an inclusive regime of local governance.

5. All Union Parishad (UP) offices in the country have *Tathya Sheba Kendra* (Information Units) that have been currently digitalized. There is a rich potential for these units to be converted to receptors and processors of RTI applications on behalf of the people, even at the cost of a nominal fee.
6. Offices that work under a particular Ministry (e.g. education, health agriculture etc.) which receive the maximum number of RTI applications could be kept under regular monitoring and coordination, if possible, by a specific officer assigned for this purpose.
7. Where multiple applications are received on particular subjects, the authorities concerned should consider publishing such information proactively on their notice boards and websites in order to reduce their workload.
8. DC's office and UNO offices could consider keeping an eye on DOs against whose decisions large number of appeals or complaints are filed. They should also consider taking the necessary corrective measures in this regard.

Project-4: Advancing Accountability and Transparency through the Right To Information (RTI)
October 2018 to September 2019 Development partner: National Endowment for Democracy (NED)

The current study is a research which seeks to study the procedural and social aspects of implementation of Right to Information (RTI) Act in Bangladesh by generating about 6197 RTI applications from conscious citizen as well as their communities so that they are tracked, followed through and analyzed in order to learn more about the implementation of RTI from a peoples' perspective. In keeping with its past focus on mainstream and communities, Research Initiatives, Bangladesh (RIB) have through the method of participatory process selected groups of various professional organizations and conscious citizen forums formed in mainstream as well as deprived communities. The mainstream groups formed with professionals including lawyers, teachers, journalists, civil society members and 2 university students from Project Districts namely Dhaka and Gazipur.

Through an extensive field research and multiple inception meetings, the groups were formed and an intensive training was provided for capacity building of RTI Activists groups because we understand that access to information is such an important prerequisite for transparency and accountability therefore a group of RTI Activists were created who played an essential role in seeking vital information from public offices, autonomous, statuary organizations and other development agencies for establishing their rights and ensuring a culture of using RTI law for greater national interest. The created groups of RTI Activists included youth, women activists, journalists, lawyers, teachers, social activists. Most of group members were chosen who have proven their commitment to community development and has the necessary skills and status within their vicinity.

The expected outcomes of a little more than one year grant were:

- Awareness about the law among mainstream group was developed. An increased access to and transparency in public services have increased.
- Creation of 101 RTI Activists who would be using the RTI law in their respective area.
- Access to and transparency in public services for deprived communities has been increased through use of RTI Act in four project areas.
- Dissemination of the cases and processes of achievements of citizen's groups as well as the good practices of the public authorities has been achieved through monthly publication in the Daily Star newspaper.
- Through filling high profile application accountability of responsible offices increased and changes were evident.
- A large number of students were motivated to use RTI law and willing to take it further.

- A documentary film which can be used as a best tool to create mass awareness on RTI and prepare people well ahead on the very objective of this law.

The filed applications were categorized into three categories: (1) those seeking primary information; (2) those seeking institutional accountability; and (3) those seeking transparency. It was the objective of the study to create RTI activists to enhance demand for RTI in the project Districts at the same time enable and empower them so that they may learn to upscale their information needs from asking basic primary service-related questions to the level of addressing and engaging public authorities on accountability and transparency issues.

The core findings were: Under the grants all activists established submitted RTI applications, a total of 6197 applications were submitted, of which 3222 applications received full response and partial responses. The rate of response was considered 52%. 2541(41%) were not responded and 434 (7%) applications were still pending information as their due dates were not yet over during grant period till 31 January. 879 non-responded applications went to appeal and 57 complaints were made.

From the above we see that it has been possible to deepen and scale up the process of implementing the RTI Act among mainstream and communities in the sense of generating more applications on accountability and transparency of local level public institutions and authorities. Applications at the appeal level were highest on transparency issues which were least responded to by authorities during application stage. Most of the appeals were backed by a broader public interest and this had the effect of boosting the determination of RTI activists to take it up to the next level. Few goals like End Poverty, Education, Health, Gender Equality and Goal 16 which talks about strengthening institution and access to justice as well as corresponding goals from government's 5 Year plan based on which RTI requests will be filed to concerned government offices. The mainstream communities were prone to asking information on safety net services, distribution of land, registration process and repair works of infrastructure like culverts, roads while group members with more urban exposure tended to ask pointed questions on accountability and transparency of institutions.



RIB had sought to engage Eight (8) categories of experts representing multi-sector professional groups and bring them under one umbrella. Simultaneously, effective communication was established with state authorities, NGOs and civil society organizations for implementation of the proposed approach. The innovative nature of the concept and resistance to it by some potential stakeholders affected the uptake of the strategy. The year 2018,

especially the last quarter of the year, was particularly difficult as it was the election year in Bangladesh which considerably delayed kick-start of the project activities.

However, by gradually overcoming the challenges, the project was able to achieve the following outcomes:

a. **Organization for social development: U**nder the project, RIB 8 Experts who were selected from various civil society Organizations university professors and RTI activists each formed a group with 10 prospective RTI users who turned into activists. The project trained 80 Social Mobilizers, who became responsible for motivating community members providing information to them about government service programmes, promoting linkages with service providers and supervising activities to ensure submission of RTI requests to the concerned authorities.

b. **Capacity building and knowledge development:** During 15 months exercise under the current grant, RIB provided technical assistance in filling RTI requests, extension and advisory services, and involved RTI users in various initiatives through follow-up training and workshops for capacity-building for the students, professionals and individuals. The main objective for this initiatives were to promote the participation of RTI users in matters which are of public and personal interests which helps government in identifying grey areas which hinders effective implementation of development goals.

c. Linkage with government agencies: This project saw a shift in the reaction of public official before and after submission of RTI requests. Many officials who were earlier reticent about the law became more accommodating in the course of the project. It has been observed that in a few cases information-providing officers have shown genuine interests in taking the law forward by sending in their replies within prescribed time-frame under the law or guiding the applicants for proper submission before the assigned authority.

d. Achievements of the project during the year: A sense of citizenship, ownership and responsibility has been established among selected sections of the population through their success in obtaining their rightful entitlements under the laws from public authorities. In some instances, a better understanding of the institutional mechanisms of the law in practice, from a people's perspective and needs, was achieved. Awareness about the law among mainstream groups was developed. In few cases through RTI intervention an increased access to and transparency in public services were achieved, however limited.

Projects performance

A. Relevance: RIB succeeded in working with different segments of society in a differentiated manner. It adopted a pragmatic approach by identifying the need for relevance in the work of organizations and individuals who were associated with this project as Experts and gathering them as an interested groups focused on generating more RTI activities.

b. Effectiveness: The project was characterized by satisfactory performance in terms of effectiveness for few Experts who were associated with the project. RIB invented a compelling and easily communicable concept in the form of SDG related questions to promote the idea that it is possible for citizens to establish a sustainable relationship with their government and at the same time develop their knowledge skills to promote for future development policies to raise demand for RTI.

c. Impact on Stakeholders: The impact of the project on selected stakeholders was satisfactory. Most significantly, the project had a strong impact on those RTI Experts who were part of organizations working on empowerment and building self-esteem of community among their target groups, including women, workers and young people. This resulted from factors such as number of RTI requests on sensitive matters, on issues affecting life and liberty of individuals were increased.

d. Innovation: The project was characterized by various innovative measures i.e. the adoption of a development strategy to raise demand for RTI with focus on SDG Goals and a multi-dimensional approach to reduce stress in the relationship between service-providers and service-seekers through dialogues and involvement of a wide range of experts, including social organizers, individuals and universities.

Limitations / challenges

- The awareness regarding RTI law among both demand and supply sides have increased but at a very slow pace. Mostly demand and supply side both need greater awareness and advocacy programs towards applicability and use of RTI law.
- Awareness on law have shown to be increased but conscious citizens still feel disinterested in using this law. Sometimes authorities tend to adopt an attitude of or lie about not to receive applications.
- Developing RTI activists is still a very difficult task in Bangladeh because the people who are aware of the law do not understand the full potentiality of it.
- Finding names of DOs have remained a challenge throughout project period, this has been experienced by students groups and those organizations that are not RTI complaint faced it most.
- There is a constant conflict on using RTI for personal need vs national/public interest.
- There is still a lack of interaction between the supply side and demand side of RTI law.
- Applications targeting issues of transparency or accountability tend not to receive the desired responses.
- Sometime applicants were even threatened with dire consequences by the service/information providers, this would deter prospective applicants.
- There were threats against RTI applicants from concerned authorities from whom the information was sought.
- Some group members have resorted to filling provocative/pin-pricking RTI requests which brought them into loggerheads with the Information Commission and the concerned authorities.

Project-5: Agro-ecology from below: Pedagogy and Participatory Action (2019)
01 January 2019 to 31 December 2019 RIB

Agro-ecology from below: Pedagogy and Participatory Action project was initiated to promote ecological principle different ecosystems of Bangladesh as an alternative approach to agriculture production. The target people of project were the small farmers, women farmers, youths and students, members of peasant organisations concer government authorities, GO/NGOs, political actors, and left actors and activists and academics working in the fiel agriculture. The activities were implemented in the districts of Nilphamari, Bogura (earlier name Bogura), Satkhira Dhaka in Bangladesh.

Details of the Activities:

Activity 1: At least 8 meetings were held each on regular basis with at least 9 Participatory Action Research (PAR) groups to promote agro-ecological methods and to sensitise them about the agrarian, ecological and public health issues. In 2018, there were 6 farmers' PAR groups in Nilphamari, Bogura and Satkhira. Those groups were re-organized in January 2019. Besides, a new group in each area was formed. Each PAR group organized 9 group

meetings. The old group members extended their agro-ecological activities and the new group members started conducting agro-ecological practices.

Activity 2: A research by PAR group members was conducted o Agricultural and ecological changes and challenges of the project areas and impact, and on Local ecology-friendly resources (food, seed, goods etc.) and skills in Nilphamari, Bogura and Satkhira during August- December 2019. Through the data collection process to conduct this research the PAR group farmers and villagers become aware about the agricultural and ecological changes and the consequences. This was helpful for them to become sensitized on these issues and to take steps towards sustainability.

Activity 3: At least 3 knowledge sharing workshops (1 in each area) on agro-ecology with the local youth and non-PAR farmers were held on Agricultural & environmental crisis, agro-ecology during 29 June, 2019 at Fulbari Union Parishad, Sariakandi, Bogura. The non-project farmers and other actors become aware regarding the challenges of chemical dependent agriculture and become informed about agro-ecological farming as alternatives.

Activity 4: At least 3 agro-ecology fairs were organised at union level to display and disseminate the agro-biodiversity, seeds, local foods/medicine/products and agro-ecological methods on 30 July 2019 at Bongshipur Market, Shyamnagar, Satkhira. It was a nice demonstration of agro-ecological farming.

Activity 5: At least 3 orientation workshops were conducted and PAR training for farmers to increase their capacity on participatory action research and agro-ecology on Participatory Action Research (PAR), project orientation & agro-ecology from 05-07 March, 2019 at Shyamnagar, Satkhira, from 11-13 March, 2019: Sariakandi, Bogura and from 18-20 March, 2019 at Nilphamari; all the 3-day long non-residential workshops. The new PAR group members learned the principles of PAR and the old PAR groups' members recapped their understanding on PAR.

Activity 6: At least 1 exchange visit of selected PAR Group members and farmers was organized to exchange learning from other field/areas where agro-ecological principles have been adopted. The visit was from 04-05 December 2019 at Manikganj where 21 (Female 6, Male 15) (15 farmers, 6 staffs) participated. Manikganj district was selected to conduct the Exchange Visit. Series of discussions were conducted with BARCIK and Prakritik Krishi staffs to organize the visit effectively.

Activity 7: At least a farmers' camp was held of selected PAR Group members, non-project farmers (who are practicing agro-ecology in different areas) and experts for mutual learning and reflection from 14-15 July 2019 at CCDB Hope Foundation, Savar, Dhaka. At least 2 agro-ecological schools were visited to enhance the farmer's capacity on Agro-ecology, food and nutrition from 03-04 April, 2019 at Nokkhotrobari Resort & Conference Centre, Sreepur in Gazipur. Visit to another school was held on Agro-ecology (Multiple cropping, weed management, seed bank etc.), Participatory Action Research from 22-25 October 2019; CCDB Hope Foundation, Savar, Dhaka. Where participants discussed the techniques of multiple cropping and integrating non-crop plants to enhance farm bio-diversity.

Activity 8: At least 18 local agro-ecological schools were visited to spread the knowledge gained from the residential school. Two educational booklets were printed titled "Rice" and "Food Security and Food Sovereignty" and Three agro-biodiversity calendars titled "Crop Calendar" in Bangla language to promote agro-ecology and alternative farming practices those were published December 2019 in Bangla. Md. Iftekhar Ali and Suraya Begum were involved in this process.

Activity 9: Three local dialogue meetings were held with local government authorities, government organisations, non-government organisations and politicians to generate synergy on agro-ecology on 9 December 2019; Upazila Parishid Hall room, Nilphamari Sadar, Nilphamari. Another two similar dialogues were held on 11 December 2019 and on 14 December 2019; Shyamnagar Upazila Parishad Hall room, Shyamnagar, Satkhira.

Activity 10: Four booklets/resource materials were printed and disseminatioon overall agriculture situation and policies of Bangladesh so as to generate discussion among relevant actors in Bangladesh. The books were on

"Importance of Seed in Agriculture" published in December 2019, "Pesticides in Agriculture" in published in December 2019 and "Fertilizers in Agriculture: Importance of Organic Fertilizer" published in December 2019. The report on "Agricultural Policies in Bangladesh" was published in December 2019.

Activity 11: One residential school was visited on agriculture and climate crisis and to develop deeper understanding on climate change and agriculture to learn about Climate change & crisis, gender, agriculture & agro-ecology. The visit was held from 06-09 September 2019 at CCDB Hope Foundation, Savar, Dhaka. This school brought together the experts of climate politics and climate science.

Activity 12: A round-table dialogue was held with government actors, policy makers and civil society organisations with special focus on climate change and agriculture from 14 November 2019 at CIRDAP Auditorium in Dhaka. Different issues of agro-ecology (good life, sustainability) were introduced to adapt with climate crisis. Different govt., civil society and political actors learned and discussed the facts and issues and committed to integrate in their activities.

Expected Results 1: Members of PAR groups and local activists in the field of agriculture are motivated to spread their knowledge to other farmers in their locality. PAR group members are now becoming more independent to organize all local events to fulfil their objectives. Knowledge sharing workshops, agro-ecology fair and local school were some noteworthy events that they organized. 24 group members are now acted as resource persons and were nominated by the other group members. These resource persons encouraged to get other farmers (outside of the PAR group) involved in the concept of agro-ecology. Primarily 107 students and farmers participated in the knowledge sharing workshop. The number of participants was 431 in student and agriculture programme and about 560 in the agro-ecology fair. The local school programme saw the participation of 109 farmers outside of the PAR group who proactively to disseminate the knowledge they have gathered among others.

Expected Results 2: Farmers in the project areas are encouraged to use alternative methods in agriculture.The PAR group members have actively gained new knowledge in 2019 through the means of residential schools and other activities. The topics that were highlighted include BARI IMU 1 & 3, BAUFAR, seed purification, use of weed, soil treatment and conservation etc. These techniques are being used by the group members and the practice level is between 60-98% approximately. It is noteworthy that the women group members are using the IMU-1, IMU-3 and BAUFAR techniques more and this has drawn attention from the other women of the village.

Visible changes brought by the project:

- The PAR groups' farmers of new groups started following agro-ecological principles in their village and of the old groups enhanced their agro-ecological activities to overcome their agrarian and environmental challenges:
- Local crop cultivation: Local crops and varieties of those crops are suitable with the local weather and environment, don't require any chemical or industrial inputs, more tolerant with pests and diseases, the farmers are the owner of these seeds, farmers can freely produce, reproduce and exchange these seeds etc. The farmers of new groups started cultivation these crops and the farmers of old groups increased their land to cultivate these crops.
- Seed conservation: Understanding the importance of seed the farmers are exploring, collecting and conserving seeds of local crops and varieties. They are documenting the characteristics to conserve the rice seeds.
- Organic fertilizer: Farmers are preparing and using different types of organic fertilizer (compost, vermicompost etc.) to increase soil fertility and to reduce the use of synthetic fertilizer. Farmers are not using any synthetic fertilizer in local crop fields.
- Micro-organism fertilizer: Farmers are producing and applying BARI IMO-1 (Indigenous Micro-organisms) and BARI IMO-3 to enhance soil organic matters.
- Organic pesticides: Farmers are preparing and using different types of organic pesticides from locally available ingredients.

- Multiple cropping: Farmers are following different techniques of multiple cropping to make the farm-ecosystem more complex.
- Enhancing farm and village biodiversity: Farmers planted different types of local trees, set kolsi (mud-made pot) in trees to invite birds to make nest, implanted bamboo-stick in agricultural field for birds, took steps to stop killing birds, incorporated non-crop plants within crops in their agricultural plots, explored and enlisted the name and use of locally available non-crops and insects etc.
- Traditional food: Some of the farmers prepared muri (puffed rice), chira (flattened rice) and khoi (pop rice) from their cultivated local rice.
- Motivating from the Community Agricultural Equipment Centre at Dhumghat, the PAR group farmers of Bonshipur and Patrakhola village established same type of centre in their villages at Satkhira.

Success Story:

Now Aeisha is playing active voice in promoting agro-ecology

Aeisha Siddeka is a woman farmer of Sorkarpara village of Nilphamari district. She joined RIB's PAR group in January 2019 to explore agro-ecological farming methods. She become sensitized about the demerits of chemical farming and learned the alternatives by actively participating in the Residential Schools and Local Schools organized by RIB. She determined to cultivate local varieties of rice and collected seeds of 16 local varieties from the farmers of RIB's old PAR groups at Joychondi and Berakuthi village. She cultivated those varieties in 64 decimals of land in last aman season (rain-dependent). The villagers made fun with her local rice cultivation, but she told the demerits and challenges of chemical dependent cultivation. Besides those varieties doesn't require any chemical inputs. She applied organic and micro-organisms fertilizers and successfully harvested all the varieties and shared her experiences with villagers. She is conserving the seeds of all the rice varieties for next season. She will share the seeds with other group members and villagers. Her family started consuming local rice and her husband appreciated her efforts as she successfully managed chemical free food for family consumption. Besides she focused to increase the collection of local vegetable seeds. She also learned the preparation process of those environment-friendly fertilizers during the Residential Schools. She also became motivated to conserve different local plants and to identify and disseminate the knowledge related to those non-crops, edible or medicinal plants. Now she is playing active voice in promoting agro-ecology.

Project-6: Intervention / Prevention of Sex-and gender based violence (SGBV) through using Interactive Theatre- Rohingyas in Bangladesh
14th May 2019- 30th May 2019 Development partner: The University of Queensland

The status of women continues to be an area in which Bangladesh lags behind, particularly with regard to the levels of sex- and gender- based violence. According to the 2011 Bangladesh Demographic and Health Survey, 87% of Bangladeshi women and girls will experience sex and gender-based violence in their lifetime.

In the context of the recent Rohingya refugee influx into Bangladesh from Myanmar since August 25th 2017, 52% of the refugees have been estimated to be women and girls and a large number are children. On top of that 3,00,000 refugees were previously settled in makeshift sites and settlements in host communities.

SGBV is an important component in humanitarian assistance. Lack of access to the basic services and formal livelihood opportunities, makes them vulnerable to severe Labour abuse. On top of that, due to dearth of protection mechanisms women refugees particularly become vulnerable to trafficking and domestic violence.

In light of this reality, women refugees avoid approaching law enforcement agencies even when serious human rights violations have been committed against them. This ultimately results in serious abuse, such as SGBV, trafficking, torture and even killings that can be committed against this population with impunity for the perpetrators.

Purpose of the present consultancy

To prevent Sex-and gender based violence (SGBV) through engaging with Rohingya women through Participatory Action Research (PAR) and co-produce theatre scripts with local theatre activists leading to staging performances in the locality and audio-visual documentation of the whole process so that it may be adapted elsewhere across the country and other areas of the world.

Methodology

a. Conceptualizing and Activating PAR
b. The Role of Interactive Theatre in Deepening Existing Trends in Development Theatre

Excerpts from KII and testimonies

Mr. X, a local lawyer prefers not to be named and works in a leading NGO engaged in providing legal service to victims. He serves as lawyer in that organization and is involved in providing legal protection to victims. During conversation with him, he observed that the 2017 influx brought many Rohingyas to Cox's Bazar and during camp visits he directly heard narration from victims who spoke at length about the atrocities committed against them while in Myanmar. He said that there women were brutally raped and murdered, some had been forcefully detained by the army in Myanmar about their whereabouts till date no one knows. Mr. X further observed that women are most vulnerable and became subject of several many violence like beating by their husbands, their husbands marrying several times as getting married in camps is relatively much easier, also women are subjected to stalking, rape (only when they are in some remote places or when they go for relieving themselves to toilets during dark). Also there is a local extremist group named "Alkine" exist in Kutupalong, Ukhia camp which issues verdict against women who make complaints against their husband to CIC, sometimes this Alkine group pass verdict in the form that there should be 4/5 men commit sexual advances with a woman who has filed complaint against her husband. Mr. X further observed that they (Alkine) openly issue threats to young women in camps who takes up job with UNHCR and other organisations as volunteers. He heard that women face such threats living in camps in Teknaf.



Camp sites

Add korte hobe Picture ; Meghnadir

Testimony of Sahera (not real name) from Camp 26

Sahera had been married for 6/7 years to one Karim (not real name). Sahera is from host community and Karim used to live in Myanmar but had been a frequent visitor to Cox's Bazar. During one of such visit Sahera's mother got her married to Karim and they were living in camp, they have been shifted to camp 26 after August 2017. After her marriage to Karim Sahera was not able to visit her parents nor they can come to her place as Karim inflicts upon her various forms of physical and emotional torture. During one of such violence Karim broke Sahera's legs and injured it very badly as he demanded dowry and mostly because he was having extra marital affair. Victim Sahera shared that her parents gave consent about her marrige as women are not supposed to express their opinion in cases of marriages here. As Karim has threatened her that if she complains to anyone then he would chop her off even though he has to go to jail but he would kill her first. She manages livelihood to receive from her husband but mostly he spends his earning for other woman he has relationship with. Her husband threatens her that he will marry another woman. She ever thought of taking divorce from her husband. She is unable to raise her children alone, she is even ready to accept other woman too if he marries but still she will continue with this marriage.

Summary Analysis

- It was seen that single female headed families are more vulnerable and deprived in the area. There is an extreme need to address their vulnerability especially economic distress and protection.

- It is a good start that there are local organization taking up criminal cases including murder, rape etc and taking them to court but there is a lacuna in the process which remains same because it raises a question on rights of Rohingyas to file these cases and obtain redress in the long run.
- Healing centre in camp 14 is a good thing to provide socio-psycho treatment to the traumatized women and this practice should be replicated in other camps too. Women who have undergone through violence and survived it often emerged stronger and with more voice than before.
- Local justice mechanisms need severe reformation, there should be representation of women and there should be a strong mechanism to monitor it by local authority or administration.
- There is lack of proper leadership in the camp sites, Majhis are not skilled enough to understand dimensions of conflict in one hand and secondly, there is extreme level of corruption that takes place through them so it is necessary to bring others who can take leadership responsibility.
- Men experiencing violence themselves should also undergo counseling as it was found in the study that much of their violent behavior stems from their own experience of violence and economic distress.
- Adolescents (Both boys and girls, separately) may be brought in as part of a study circle to address SGBV.
- Livelihood programs should be rolled out as well safe income sources are necessary to prevent SGBV and also occupy men in meaningful work.
- There is an emergent need to address the growing extremism in the camp sites, and recruitment of young men in various criminal activities needs to be closely monitored and addressed.
- There should be greater awareness and monitoring of unlawful activities in camp sites including sex trade, sex slavery, etc.
- There should be a better coordination among organizations working on SGBV in Cox's Bazar.
- Rohingya men and women should be exposed and there should be awareness on safe sex and reproductive health.



Victim of domestic violence

Project-7: Building Capacities of Local Communities to Mitigate Problems Created by the Rohingya Influx in Cox's Bazar
May-October 2019 Development partner: Misereor

Description

"Building capacities of local communities to mitigate problems created by the Rohingya influx in Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh" is a project which is undertaken by Research Initiatives Bangladesh (RIB) and supported by the Misereor, Germany. The main objectives of the project is to build up capacity of the host communities to face the problems due to Rohingya influx in the locality and to search an agreeable and logical way to repatriate the Rohingyas to their own country followed by the policies of the Government of Bangladesh.

Working Groups: There are 12 Participatory Action Research (PAR) groups at the field level; Six (6) groups are in host communities and Six (6) groups in Rohingya camps. Six (6) groups are composed with females and 6 with males. 6 groups are formed under Ukhia PS and Six (6) under Teknaf PS.

Progress of Project Activities: Out of 6 target meetings of the PAR groups Four (4) meetings were held and one planned workshop was held within the project period.

Findings from meetings and workshops Problems facing

- House rent- the refuges of camps 24 and 27 pay monthly rent to the land owners, which is a big burden for them
- Lack of water- sometimes the dwellers of camps can't take food timely due to irregular supply of water
- Toilet- this problem is mostly related to women. Besides, almost all toilets are now unusable because these are full of dirties and Bathroom- lack of bathroom; especially for women
- Lack of electricity- in summer season the women of the camps who generally lives in home, suffer from
- Education- there are some initiatives for education for early childhood, but no initiatives for youths
- Medicine- in some particular cases, they cannot get proper treatment
- Attack by rats- at night a large number of rats attacks in home; a women shown her fingers where rats bit
- Limited movement- they cannot move anywhere as they wish
- Lack warm cloths- especially for children

Demands

- Technical training for youths who are going to earn for their families
- Space of living; replace to a suitable place except Bhasan Char or Thengar Char of Noakhali District
- Return to home; some members of the camps (mostly women) wants to go back to their land as early as possible
- To distribute reliefs to the poor families in the local communities.
- To exclude the house rent (camps 24 & 27)
- To provide allowance for Majhis
- To organize meetings jointly with local communities and representatives of local government.

A dialogue with the development partners working in Cox's Bazar area and the local communities was held on the 31st October, 2019 in the auditorium of the local NGO, PHALS, Bypass Road, Jhilongja, Cox's Bazar which was facilitated by Dr. Meghna Guha Thakurta, the Executive Director of Research Initiatives Bangladesh (RIB) and Project Coordinator of "Building Capacities of Local Communities to Mitigate Problems created by the Rohingya Influx in Cox's Bazar."

Problems identified in PAR group meetings

In the monthly meetings of PAR groups, some local problems have been identified by the members as follows.

Unemployment among the day-labourers and local people

The Rohingya men works with a very low wages in agriculture, construction and other fields. Each refugee families got two gas cylinders monthly for their cooking; generally a family use one cylinder and they sell other one to the local peoples. Thus the labourers engaged with wood- cutting are apparently unemployed. A source said that the Rohingya people do not take dal (pulses) in their food- they sell dal to local people in low prices. The local grocers count losses for this. A number of Rohingya people opened groceries near their camps and bazar areas. In the meetings of the host community, it was also discussed that the only literate persons (from class nine) of the locality got jobs with the organizations working in the areas because of the language and locality. The Cox's Bazar-Ukhiya- Teknaf road is a local road. After the influx, a large number of Government and non- Government local,

national and international services organizations came with an uncountable number of vehicle like private car, microbus, Noah, Litace, jeep, truck, pick up etc. One man one vehicle is a common scenario here. There is no control over the price. Except the Rohingya Refugees, a lot of organizations with their huge activists are living in the areas. They generally do not bargain with the sellers, because the goods are so few as needs.

Social instability, violence and fear

The situation of local community is now instable. The organizations working with distribution of relief to the refugees, both are out-siders. There is no relief for the poor people of the locality, who are now almost unemployed. Sometimes, quarrels occur among people of the locality versus refugees. The local people are in fear specially for their children, who are experiencing a double standard and peculiar socio-cultural environment mixing with Bangalee and Burmese.

Increasing theft and related crime

In the Bazar areas and also in villages, theft is now a considerable problem. The local people cited that the refugees are engaged in such activity. They also said that the refugees tend to engage in brawls, always seeking quarrels. In quarrels, according to a UP member, local people are always in fear, because the refugees are organized and police, BGB, army and services organs work favouring the refugees. According to the local source, seven lakh people are living in Ukhiya and Teknaf areas. After the influx, the population increased more than twenty lakh. Besides this, the authority made camps for refugees in hilly places and agricultural land cutting a huge number of trees and plants which is harmful for health, hygiene and environment.

There are 6-7 check posts in Teknaf- Cox's Bazar road, where police, BGB, army and RAB conduct search in all kinds of vehicles and passengers. They ask for national ID cards with some related questions. Women and female students wearing Bourqaare the main victims in the check posts. They are generally checked in a room by female checkers of the posts. The local people consider it as a harassment. PAR groups discussed that a number of Rohingya people engaged in the business of many kinds of narcotics like, wine, yaba, etc. with the help of some local people. Thus the narcotics go to all spheres of society.

A large number of activists of services organs and others are dwelling in areas nearby Rohingya camps. They rented houses for office and residence with a much higher rent. Now an office will face scarcity to find out a room to rent; some activists and offices are located in one or two rooms in a village home. The local employees working with small organizations or shops in rented spaces are now facing problem of sufficient funds for meeting rent costs.

Some Rohingya people are engaged with local and international criminal groups (trafficking, narcotics etc,) using mobiles and other electronic tools as weapons. So the authority limited the internet services in the areas, which has become a big problem for the local people.

Once Rohingya musclemen kidnapped two female primary school students claiming ransom to their father. They kept the children hidden in the hills. When the children felt ill, the kidnappers left them in the roadside. In Ukhiya and Teknaf area, some Bangladeshi people were killed also by the refugees.

The religious faith and physical structure of Burmese and Adivasi people of the locality are same (Rakhaine Buddhists). In some cases, the Adivasi people face rude behavior from the refugees.

Purpose of the present consultancy: To prevent SGBV through engaging with Rohingya women through Participatory Action Research and co-produce theatre scripts with local theatre activists leading to staging performances in the locality and audio-visual documentation of the whole process so that it may be adapted elsewhere across the country and other areas of the world.

The RIB publications produced during 2018-2019 with the support from Rosa Luxemburg Stiftung, Germany are as follows:

Title of the Publication	Researcher/s	Year of publication
Agricultural and Ecological Changes in Rural Bangladesh	Participatory Action Research Group on Agro-ecology	Dec. 2019
Climate Change and Agriculture in Bangladesh: How to return from commercialization to agricultural biodiversity	Suraiya Begum, SaidurRahman, and Md. Iftekhar Ali	October 2018
Climate Change and Agriculture in Bangladesh: Future of our agro-ecology	Suraiya Begum, Saidur Rahman, and Md. Iftekhar Ali	November 2018
Fertilizers in Agriculture: Importance of Organic Fertilizer	Md. HamidurRahman Dr. Syed Rafiqul Amin Dr. Joynal Abedin	December 2019
Food Security & Food Sovereignty	Suraiya Begum	December, 2019
Importance of Seeds in Agriculture	Md. Hamidur Rahman Dr. Shukdeb Kumar Das	December, 2019
Climate Change, Environment & Agriculture	Md. Iftekhar Ali	December, 2018
Agro-ecology : Tradition, Present & Future	Suraya Begum	December, 2018
Pesticides in Agriculture	Md. Hamidur Rahman Dr. Faruque Ahmed Md. Fakhrul Hassan	December, 2019
Agro-ecology from Below: Pedagogy and Participatory Action (2017-2018)	Action Research group on Agroecology	December, 2018
Rice	Md. Iftekhar Ali	December, 2019
Undervalued and Barely Recognized: Women Farmers in Bangladesh	Meghna Guha Thakurta	December, 2018
"Women and Agro-ecology" A translation and adoption of the book "Women, Agro-ecology & Gender Equality", Author- AshleshaKhadse and published by Focus on the Global South, India	Suraiya Begum	December, 2017
Seed Diversity & It's Political Economy	Nilufer Hye Karim PhDs	December, 2017

Selected special Events RIB

After a two-year consultation in Bangladesh and UK the publication and launching of a Guideline and Graphic Novel titled **`Birangona'** was held.

In collaboration between Durham University (UK) and Research Initiatives Bangladesh (RIB) Nayanika Mookherjee and Najmunnahar Keya gave a presentation on the publication of "Towards Ethical Testimonies of Sexual Violence During Conflict" on 10th April 2019 at the CIRDAP Auditorium, Chameli House, 17 Topkhana Road, Dhaka. The Graphic Novel and Guideline was launched by the Honourable Minister AKM Mozammel Haque, MP, Ministry of Liberation War Affairs, Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh.

Summary List of Special Events

Sl. No	Events	Date	Venue
01	3 days TOT on facilitation and communication skill (eu)	April' 2018	Pollisree office, Dinajpur
	Public Awareness Raising Day (EU)	March, august, September, October, December of 2018 and March 2019	Badargonj, Taragonj Upazila of Rangpur district Saidpur, Nilphamari sada rupazila of Nilphamari district
	Road show (eu)	September'2018	Saidpur, Nilphamari sadar upazila, Badargonj, Taragonj Upazila of Rangpur dst.
	Rally organized by RIB and civil society organizations, Right to Information Day **Discussion Meeting**	28 September 2018	Rangpur City, Taragonj Upazila
02	2 Information fairs Annual information fairs on governance and accountability(**EU)**	September'2018	Saidpur Upazila of Nilphamari district and Taragon jUpazila of Rangpur district
	38 Dialogue meetings between CSO members & LAs	April'2018 to June' 2019	Saidpur, NilphamariSadar, Nilphamari and Taragonj, Badargonj and Sadar, Rangpur
	2 In-country Exposure visit	July'2018	Kurigram and Naogaon districts
	SAARC Exposure visit (EU)	November'2018	Nepal and India
	Training on conflict transformation and peace building (EU)	April, June 2019	Savar
	Training module preparation (NED)	December 2018 & January'2019	Dhaka
	2 Project Inception meetings (ned)	Nov & Dec 2018	RIB office, Dhaka & Gazipur

	PAR & Orientation Workshops (3-day) with PAR group members (farmers), project staffs, local leaders	05-07 March,, '19 11-13 March'19 18-20 March'19	Shyamnagar, Satkhira Sariakandi, Bogura, Nilfamari
	2 quarterly follow-up meetings with RTI Experts and facilitators (ned)	March & June' 2019	Dhaka
	2 TOT day long Training-workshop on RTI, ned	January-February'2019	Dhaka
	40 monthly meetings of RTI experts & activists (8 groups x 5 times) ned	Feb - June'2019	Dhaka
	8 Dialogue meetings with RTI Activists, women leaders, government officers, journalists and project staffs	February'2019-June'2019	Sadar, Dinajpur Sadar, Naogaon, Sadar, Satkhira Sadar, Rajshahi
	4 RTI Workshop-training to RTI Activists	Dec'2018 & Jan'2019	
	16 RTI campaign and awareness program	April'2019 to June' 2019	Parbatipur and Sadar, Dinajpur Porsha, Naogaon, Sadar, Satkhira, Tanor &Godagari, Sadar, Rajshahi
	2 RTI Fair and camps	June'2019	Parbatipur, Dinajpur Sadar, Rajshahi
	3 PAR & Orientation Workshops (3-day)(Rils) Aagro	05-07 March 11-13 March 18-20 March	Shyamnagar, Satkhira Sariakandi, Bogura Nilphamari
	One Residential School on Agro-ecology (4-day)	03-06 April' 19	Sreepur, Gazipur

	9 Local Schools on Agro-ecology (2-day)	24-25 April	Sorkarpara, Nilphamari
		29-30 April	Berakuthi, Nilphamari
		05-06 May	Joychondi, Nilphamari
		26- 27 April	Majhbari, Sariakandi, Bogura
		30 April- 01 May	Baluartair, Sariakandi, Bogura
		03-04 May	Noyapara, Sariakandi, Bogura
		20-21 May	Dhumghat, Shyamnagar, Satkhira
		23-24 May	Bongshipur, Shyamnagar, Satkhira
		28-29 May	Patrakhola, Shyamnagar, Satkhira
	Training module preparation (World. Bank events)	September'2018	Dhaka
	4 Project Inception meetings.	Oct-Nov'2018	Sadar, Naogaon, Sadar, Satkhira, Sadar, Rajshahi, Sadar, Dinajpur
	8 Dialogue meetings	February'2019-June'2019	Sadar, Dinajpur,Sadar Naogaon, Sadar Satkhira, Sadar Rajshahi
	4 RTI Workshop-training to RTI Activists	Dec'2018 & Jan'2019	Sadar, Naogaon, Sadar, Satkhira Parbatipur, Dinajpur, Sadar, Rajshahi.

	4 PAR & RTI trainings	Dec'2018 & Jan'19	Parbatipur &Nawabgonj, Dinajpur. Godagari&Tanor, Rajshahi, Sadar and Tala, Satkhira, Porsha & Sapahar, Naogaon
	16 RTI campaign and awareness program	April'2019 to June' 2019	Parbatipur and Sadar, Dinajpur Porsha, Naogaon, Sadar, Satkhira, Tanor&Godagari, Sadar, Rajshahi
	Two RTI Fair and camps	June'2019	Parbatipur, Dinajpur Sadar, Rajshahi
	Two Road shows	June'2019	Tala, Satkhira Tanor, Rajshahi

Rosa Luxemburg Stiftung (RLS), Germany

The RIB Secretariat / 2019

Program Department			
Name	Designation	Project Designation	Project
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Rashida Akter	Program Officer	Liaison Officer	World Bank

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		Associate Coordinator	Action Aid
Iftekhar Ali	Associate Program Officer	Field coordinator	RLS
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