RIB Annual Repor on 2019-2020

Overview of Research Related Activities:

Research Initiatives, Bangladesh (RIB) is a Not-for-Profit Organisation registered under Companies Act, 1994 of Bangladesh and NGO Affairs Bureau of Prime Minister's Office under Foreign Donations Regulation Ordinance, 1978. RIB was founded in 2002 by some prominent educators, social scientists and human rights activists to promote knowledge on multi dimensional aspect of poverty including human rights, gender perspective. Its key objectives is (1) Supports marginalized and minority groups who are unable to access basic services due to social discrimination and (2) Conducts people's research (*gonogobeshona*) on the especially issues that affects excluded section of the society the most, in order to develop ownership and generate community mobilization.

Five research projects were accomplished during the reporting period. These are 1. Building Capacities of local communities to mitigate problems created by the Rohingya influx in Cox's Bazar. 2. Advancing Accountability and Transparency through Right to Information 3. Agro-ecololgy from below: Pedagogy and Participatory Action (2020); 4. Promoting Opportunities for Women's Empowerment and Rights (POWER); 5.Promotion of Social Partnership for Empowerment of marginalized communities in 6 districts and at national level in Bangladesh (PROSPECT). The development partners are MISEREOR, National Endowment for Democracy (NED), Rosa Luxemburg Stiftung (RLS), Action Aid, NETZ Bangladesh.

Project 1 : Building Capacities of Local communities to mitigate problems created by the Rohingya influx in Cox's Bazar.
Duration : November 2019 to April 2020 (2nd Phase) July to December 2020 (3rd Phase) Development Partner : MISEREOR

The Project title "Building capacities of local communities to mitigate problems created by the Rohingya influx in Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh" has been implemented by Research Initiatives Bangladesh (RIB) in Cox's Bazar district in the fiscal year of 2019-2020. The two major components as stipulated in the project proposal are :

a. building capacity of local community to mitigate problem created by the Rohingya influx in cox's Bazar and
b. creating community based awareness among the Rohingya refugee community shelter camps.

The project used the Participatory Action Research (PAR) methodology to engage with the host and refugee communities in two Upazillas in Cox's Bazar district. In addition, the Right to information Act (RTI) was used as a tool for creating awareness aroung the categories of rights and citizenship among the host communities in Cox's Bazar.

Project Description :

The main objectives of the project was to build up capacity of the host communities to face the problems due to Rohingya influx in the locality and to search for an agreeable and logical way to repatriate the Rohingyas to their own country followed by the policies of the Government of Bangladesh.

The key instruments :

1. Participatory Action Research (PAR) or its Bangla equivalent *gonogobeshona* (literally translated as people' research) is a research paradigm within the social sciences which emphasizes collaborative participation of trained researcher as well as local communities in producing knowledge directly related to the stakeholer's community. The knowledge produced through PAR does not just intend to contribute towards theory in social sciences but inherently contains and agenda of social change. RIB in supporting marginalized and minority groups who are unable to access basic services due to poverty or social discrimination have applied PAR in the form of people's research or gonogobeshona on problems identified and prioritized by local communities and taken steps to address them in the form of social mobilization and action. The PAR approach had demonstrated that when ordinary people are involved in a research process aimed at improving their lives, they begin to reflect on the conditions and initiate change . This cyclical process of reflection and action termed as praxis is embedded in the heart of participatory action research .
2. Right to Information (RTI) Act : Bangladesh adopted the Right to information Act in 2009, joining over 100 others countries worldwide that have enacted similar laws to empower their citizens to seek accountability and transparency of public authorities in their respective countries. Bangladesh's RTI Act compels public authorities to disclose hitherto undisclosed information of public interest to enquiring citizens. The idea is that by accessing and utilizing such information, citizens will be better able to claim their rightful entitlements from authorities and make them more transparent and accountable. The Bangladesh RTI Act notably also includes in its purview, NGOs who use foreign and public funds. A successful RTI regime serves the interest of individual citizens and society in general it can be apotent force in combating corruption through enabling and empowering a conscious citizens and promoting good governance.

Process, challenges and lesson learned

These process, challenges and lessons thereof will be dealt with in four phases of the Project. a) Formation of PAR groups b) Training c) Monthly meetings, d) learning visits.

a) Formation of PAR Groups

RIB formed 12 PAR groups at the field level (Ukhiya and Teknaf))
Status of Male/Female groups in Rohingya camps.

- in Camp no. 14 of Ukhiya Upazilla, the male and female PAR groups organized meetings jointly, Female sit in a separate room
- In camp no. 24 of Teknaf Upazilla, the male and female PAR groups organize meetings jointly in a meeting room but here there is no one mixed of male and female.
- In Camp no. 27 of Teknaf Upazilla, only female PAR group organizes meetings in a living room. Generally the females sit in a separate room
- In Camp no 24 and 27 of Teknaf Upazilla, the members of all PAR groups although registered with the respective camps, lives as tenants in houses of local communities in the vicinity of such camps.

(b) Trainings : PAR and RTI

Capacity building workshops in PAR and RTI were held in all groups. Most of the female participants of the programs were housewives, some were NGO activists and some were students. In male groups, they were day-labourers, some were samall traders, auto drivers, shop workers, some were NGO activists and students. interestingly, almost all NGO activists were students.

The structure and content of the Program were as follows :

Day 1 : Participatory Action Research (PAR)
Day 2 : Right to Information (RTI)
Day 3 : RTI Application filling practice as member of PAR group and duties and responsibilities of an ideal animator
Day 4 : Learning visit

The discussions on PAR and RTI were divided into i) understanding the basic concepts and processes of PAR and RTI ii) issues which stemmed from this discussion of basic concepts.

i) Main concepts of PAR

- What is PAR
- Related concepts of PAR like rights, empowerment, poverty, development, self-development, creativity, self- analysis
- Process of PAR meeting
- Animator, role of animator, self-liquidation, difference between animators and facilitators
- Praxis and PAR

ii) Some issues which emerged from the above discussion of PAR were

- How PAR helped to generate organizational strength and efficiency
- How it promoted social communication and representation in the local community

- How it helped to spark social consciousness
- its role in networking
- How it engendered solidarity and empathy among group members

i) Main concepts discussed on RTI

- RTI –what, why and how
- Identification of problems won, family, community, social and national
- Nature of information and process of obtaining information from authorities
- Discussion on present status of RTI in Bangladesh
- Role of actors including demand and supply side, information Commission, Cabinet Division, Local Authorities
- Practical exercise on RTI Appilication, Appeal and Complaint writing

ii) **Some issues which emerged from the above discussion of RTI were**

- Understanding citizens' ownership of information and the right to know as opposed to mere access to information
- Justifying the need for information
- The importance of information in both demand and supply side
- The particular significance of RTI law as opposed to other laws.
- The limits of information
- Correct use of information
- The relationship of RTI and PAR

Participatory Action Research (PAR) and Right to information are new items to the participants although, we were trying to make clear the concepts in monthly meetings. But the concepts were items which could only be understood clearly by practice. But in the group meetings after the workshops, the understanding and eagerness of the members were seen to be increasing.

As part of the ways to motivate the group members as well as to find a place where they could meet socially and go on outing, an extra tool called learning visits were introduced which also helped as a team-building exercise.

(C) Monthly Meetings: Discussions, talking points and implementing RTI

During the project period a total of 48 group meetings were held, 24 in host community and 24 in Rohingya camps.

Host Communities

- Unemployment among the day-labourers: Rohingya men works with very low wages
- Traffic jam on the roads and broken roads

- Loss in small business due to shops started by Rohingyas
- Prices of daily necessities shot up
- Social instability and insecurity including violence
- Increasing risk in health and hygiene
- Environmental risk
- Harassment by security forces in the roads
- Increasing use of narcotics
- Increasing house rent
- Barriers to using internet 4G
- Grudges towards indigenous peoples
- Rohingya influx was a boon for the local literate community but not for the illiterate
- Barriers faced to be enlisted in the voters list and in birth registration

These have been detailed below from the perspective of the participants

- Unemployed among the daly-labourers and local people

The Rohingya men work with very low wages in agriculture, construction and in other fields. Each Rohingya family got two gas cylinders monthly for their cooking, generally one family use one cylinder and they sell the other one to the local people. Thus the labourers engaged with collecting and selling wood for fuel became unemployed. A source said that the Rohingya people do not take pulses in their food-they sell the pulses to local people at lower than market prices. The local grocers suffer losses for this. A number of Rohingya poeple opened groceries near their camps and bazar areas. It is also a matter of loss for the local people, as a shop keeper told us that he has to close his shop after the influx.

In the meetings of the host community, it was also discussed that the only literate persons of the locality (from class nine upwards) got jobs with the humanitarian organizations working in the areas by virtue of their education and of knowledge of the local language and locality.

- Traffic jam and broken roads

The cox's Bazar Ukhiya Teknaf road is a local road but after the influx, a large number of Government and non-Government local, national and international services organizations came with a huge number of vehicle like private car, microbus, jeeps, trucks, pick-ups etc. ` One man one vehicle' is a common scene here. Thus the traffic jam has become almost insurmountable. On top of that, the road is so broken in parts that over-loaded vehicles (bus, truck) fails to run property.

- Loss of small business fue to shops started by Rohingyas

Many shops have been started by Rohingyas in and around the camps as part of their survival strategies. This has created a dent in the small business and trade of the locality like grocery and utility stores fun by the local community. In one area of the camps, one could observe pawn

shops which kept gold ornaments as a bond from Rohingyas in exchange for cash. The shop had posters which were written in the official Burmese language indicating that all or most of their clients were from the camp population.

- Increased prices of daily necessities

The prices of daily necessities are so high that the poor families of the locality are facing a challenging situation. There is no control over the price. Asides from the Rohingyas, a lot of organizations with their huge number of staff are living in the areas. They generally do kot bargain with the sellers, because the goods are so few for their needs and this rockets up the prices.

- Social instability, violence and fear

The situation of the local community in now unstable. Rohingyas and the organizations working with distribution of relief to the Rohingyas, both are outsiders and yet they outnumber the locals. The poor families of the locality feel deprives. This often results in conflict between Rohingyas and the local people.

The local community are in fear especially for their children, who are experiencing a double standard and peculiar socio cultural environment by interaction between Bangladesh and Roingyas. In the Bazar areas and also in villages, petty theft is now a considerable problem. The local people cited that the Rohingyas are engaged in such crimes. They also said that the Rohingyas are more susceptible to violent behavior and consequently party to local conflicts. In such conflicts, local people are always in fear, because the Rohingya are organized and to them it seems that the police, BGB, army and services organizatios work in their favour. They cited incidence like the following: Once Rohingya musclemen kidnapped two primary school girls claiming ransom from their father. They kept the children in a hill. When the children fell ill, the kidnappers put them by the side of the road from where they were rescued.

- Risk in health, hygiene and environment

According to a local source, seven lakh (7,00,000) people were living in Ukhiya and Teknaf areas. After the influx, the population increased to more than twenty lakh (2,000,000). Besides this, the authority made camps for refugees in hilly places and agricultural land cutting a huge number of trees and plants which was harmful for health, hygiene and environment.

- Environmental risk

The environmental risk was felt by the local community not only because of deforestation but also by policies taken by the Government and humanitarian agencies to mitigate the risk. For example in order to stop the further felling of trees the donors and the government decied to distribute fas cylinders to the camp dwellers. But as was mentioned in the first section of this discussion it worked adversely for certain local people. Each Rohingya family got two fas cylinders monthly for their cooking, generally one family used one cylinder and they sold the other one to the local people. Thus the labourers engaged with collecting and selling wood for

fuel remained unemployed. they said that their collection of firewood was minimal not affecting the environment. but it did give them an extra avenue for earning an income from which they felt deprived.

- Harassment by security forces in roads

There are 6-7 check posts in Teknaf Cox's Bazar road, where the polce, BGB, army and RAB check all kinds of vehicles and passengers. They ask for national ID cards with some related questions. Women and female students wearing Bourqa are the main victims in the check posts. They are generally checked in a room by female checkers. The local people consider it as a harassment.

- Increasing use of narcotics

PAR groups discussed that a number of Rohingya people were engaged in the business of many kinds of narcotics like, alcohol, yabba, etc, in collaboration with some local people. Thus they feared the spread of the narcotics culture in all spheres of society.

- Increasing house rent

A large number of staff from humanitarian organizations are dwelling in areas nearby Rohingya camps. They have rented houses for office and residence at a much higher rent. Even some staff and offices are located in one or two rooms in a village home. The local employees working with small organizations or shops are now facing problem in meeting this high rent.

- Barriers in using internet, 4G

Some Rohingyas are engaged with local and international criminal groups (trafficking, narcotics) using mobile and other electornic tools. so the authority has limited the internet services in the areas, which is a big problem for local people especially the youth in the times of pandemic when online connections were the only way they could connect with the world

- Grudge towards indigenous people

The religious faith and physical structure of the Burmese and ethnic people of the locality are the same (Buddhists). in some cases, ethnic people faced rude behavior from the Rohingyas because of their same ethnic origins as that of the Rakhine people in Burma who had been responsible for the hostile behavior towards the Rohingyas.

- Rohingya influx was a boon for the local literate community but not for the illiterate

Local people also felt that for some in their community the influx of Rohingyas had proved to be a boon because of the job and business opportunity they fained from the humanitarian organizations. But they said it benefitted only those with education and literacy. Those who did not have such advantages felt deprived. They also believed that they were not taken in consideration not had a say in the policies framed by national and international actors.

- Barriers faced in enlisting in the voters list and birth registration

After the Rohingya influx, the registration of birth was suspended for an uncertain period. The enlistment of names in the voter list was aslo suspended. the reasons for the above were that Rohingyas in want of official documentation were often found to be registering their new born babies using false identities and also gaining national ID cards. But in order to concrol this, the Government suspended the further distribution of birth registration and National ID cards for the local population as well. Mothers became anxious about their child's future education as birth registration would be needed in times of admission. A National ID card is essential for any citizens and those applying for it faced extra hurdles than people in other parts of the country. These were concerns that were brought to the discussions during our PAR meetings.

Roohingya Community

The members of the PAR groups from the Rohingya community were very glad to participate with a program like this. They welcomed us and commented that they felt as they belonged to a common humanity, they realized for the first time that their opinions also carried some value.

The people of Rohingya community marked some problems facing them :

- lack of pure drining water and sufficient number of bathrooms and wash room
- Lack of arrangement of technical education among the youths
- Living in a very small and restricted space
- Living with the mental agony of displacement

The also cited some opportunities provided by the Bangladesh Government and other organizations, like

- cordial assistance of CIC offices
- Support of local government authorities
- Employment of some Rohingya men with some organizations
- Permanent arrangement of medicine
- Arrangement of food and housing

The problems are elaborated here,

Most of the nature of the problems by the Rohingya community in the camps had to do with services:

- Lack of pure drinking water and sufficient number of bathrooms and wash room

The region in which the Rohingyas were settled was normally a water scarce area in the dry season and hence access to drinking water and wash and sanitation facilities was a great problem especially during the hot dry season.

- Lack of arrangement of technical education among the youths

The lack of access to education for young people in the camps who had little else to do and hence were likely to fall prey to explotation by local trafficers or criminal gangs was reiterated by the PAR groups in the camp.

- Living in a very small and restricted space

Crowded and cramped living was a general concern as well. Such congestion created unhygienic. Conditions which made the camps prone to diseases as well as environmental hazards such as rat infestation.

- Living with the mental agony of displacement

PAR group members talked of the mental anguish they faced on a daily basis on being displaced from home and health. They also spoke of the trauma that they still felt as a result of the mass atrocities that forced them to flee.

Despite these discomforts, Rohingya community took time to talk of the generosity of the Bangladesh Government and of those officials from whom they received understanding and good treatment. They particularly mentioned food, housing and health care. However almost everyone talked of the security they faced in the camps as opposed to their hostile condition of living in the Rakhine state. However as increasing incidents and future prospects of violence arises in the camps, this sense of security many not be long lasting.

Right to Information (RTI)

Right to information knowledge was imparted by RIB to the local host community only as this Act was meant for citizens of Bangladesh

Over the project period as a result of their RIT training and orientation and discussion, the group members of the local community filed 107 applications.

Categories of RTI applications

Health

Education

Women, child services and youth

Disability related issues

RTI applications and related matters

Population and demography of the region

Social safety net services

Agricultural services like krishi card, trainings

Livestock and fisheries

Cooperatives

Water resources - Tubewell distribution

Land-related issues: khas land distribution

Identity document: passport

Railways: Dhaka CXB Railway

Some of the challenges in working in with the local community consisted of implementation of RTI Act and making RTI applications to local authorities

- The PAR group members were initially not so interested to seek information from their local Union Parishad in some areas the applicants were not acquainted with the services being provided by their local Union Councils.
- A number of Designated Officers (RTI) have been transferred from the area. But the new officers replacing them did not respond to the applications as the application was not in their name.
- Some officers kept making mobile calls to the applicants to understand the matter for which the RTI was being filed
- Some officers asked about the causes to seek information, which was not within the RTI law.
- The post office always discouraged applicants to register their RTI applications as it took time and meant extra work for them.

The impact of practicing PAR and RTI in the area was summarized by the evaluation team as follows :

- The PAR group members were psychologically impressed and committed to work with the research tools. They expressed their trust in the tools and operating methods of our organizations and activities
- The people of the area now gained cooperation from people with finalcial involvement. The members told the evaluation team that the tools (PAR & RTI) are stronger than money.
- They found some active persons working in PAR groups. It was expected that when the activities of the project closes, they will be able to carry on some of the work.
- They realized that sixty persons (sixty families) in an area was a powerful body that could influence public authorities in the region.

- The groups which were comparatively inactive in practicing RTI, were impressed by the stronger RTI activists and practitioners and of responses they got from the Government.

(d) Learning Visits :

As an adjunct to the workshops, visits to recreation grounds like the Safari Park or the beach or a historical Buddhist temple was organized so that they could combine learning with recreation. It also helped in social bonding and team building.

There were four training programs with the six PAR groups according to geographical locations. Each training groups were entertained with a learning and recreation visit.

In the visits, the participants shared their feelings of the training programs. They sat sown or stood up in a circle as they did during PAR group meeting. The elements of PAR ad RTI were also introduced with songs, Story telling etc. They were motivated to do something to improve the conditions of living of their localities.

Public Communication: Poster and Materials

In order to inform and motivate the PAR group members as well as communicate with public authorities and the broader community about the training, some brochures, leaflets and posters were distributed. These consisted of :

a. RTI Act 2009 at a glance
b. The RTI Act 2009, Bangladesh

The posters were printed in two batches once in the midst of the project (October 2019) and the other towards the end of the project (February 2021)

The first batch of posters were mostly about the use of RTI in the community

a. The demands of the disadvantaged to public authorities
b. Gender equality
c. The right to access social safety nets provisions of the Government
d. RTI as a way of ensuring transparency and accountability of the government

The second batch of posters actualized the lessons learned from the project by PAR group members. They were

a. The positive role played by the local community as frontrunners of aid and assistance during the Rohingya influx
b. Gonogobeshona (People research)
c. How to RTI Act benefits people

Public Events : Dialogues/ National Seminar

Originally we supposed to have the following public events in the locality : 6 dialogue meetings with local authorities, a public rally, and validation seminars. But due to both the lockdown following the onset of pandemic and the situation in the locality, we could only manage to have 1 dialogue with the local level NGOs and civil society organizations, and validation seminars were integrated with the National Seminar/Webinar by zoom which included local level actors in addition to national actors. The public rally and the dialogues with local authorities of the region could not held

Dialogue in Cox's Bazar between local communities and development partners

The dialogue that was held between local communities and development partners was an excellent example of mutual learning. Local communities felt that they could voice their concerns and communicate effectively. Development partners learned a lot about the difficulties and challenges that local communities felt and what their needs were, which could be addressed by appropriate service delivery mechanism and future agenda setting by such partners. Further Continuance of such dialogue we believe will contribute towards and set a pace of developing a rights discourse in humanitarian response.



National Webinar and RTI Dialogue

The National Webinar was held in a local hotel in Dhaka in a hybrid mode partiipants joined both in person as well as by zoom. More than 25 participants joined through zoom connection. They came from academia, international agencies like UNHCR, National NGOs, independent researchers, lawyers, journalists and rights activities, even from local government offices in the camps.

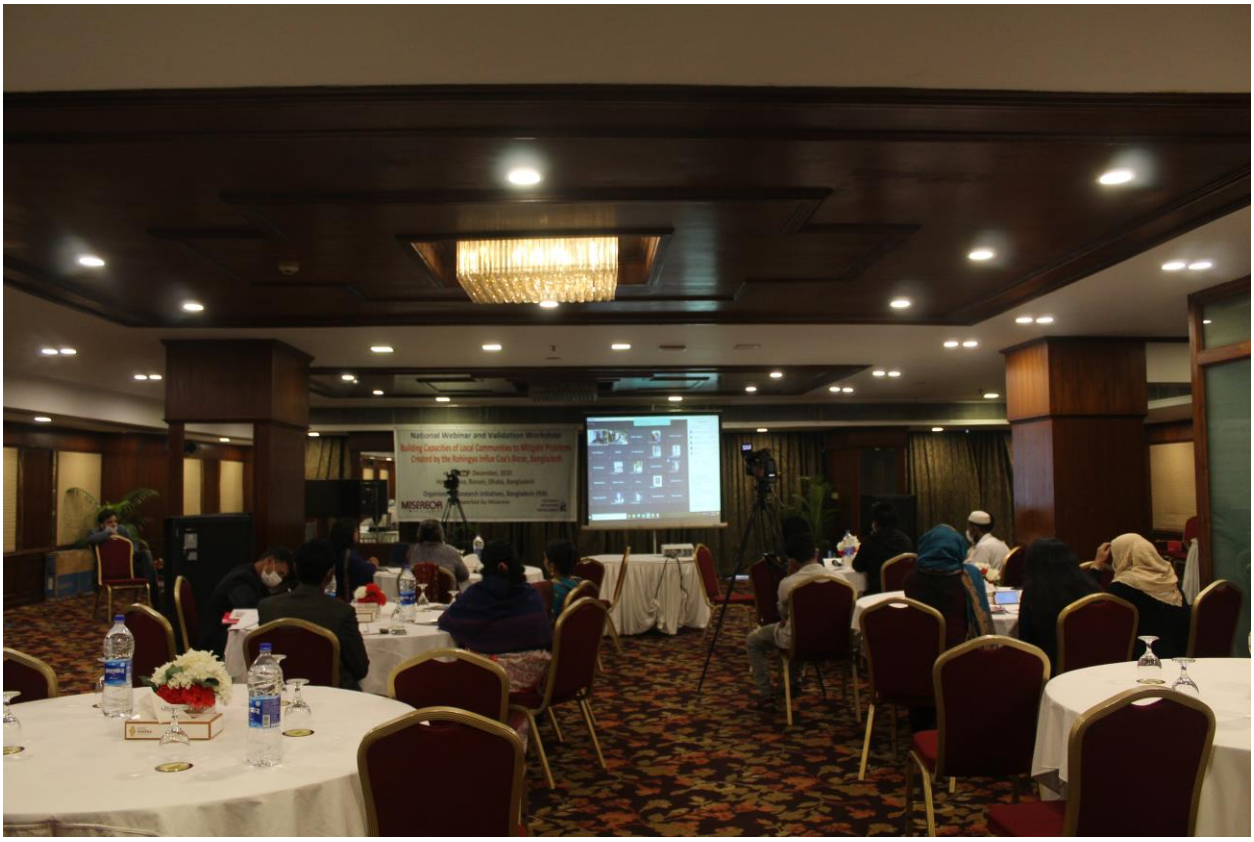
In person invitees consisted of representatives from the local community in cox's Bazar, participants from other areas of RIB's activities who had similar experiences, representatives of national NGOs and RIB staff.

The objectives of the seminar was to promote the findings from the ground and to construct and implement a multipronged advocacy strategy that would serve to inform local communities as well as humanitarian actors, (local and national) on addressing the rights that may be accessed by the local community and the Rohingya population in Bangladesh as well as negotiate the challenges that lie on the way.

After the formal presentation of RIB, the participants from the local community in Cox's Bazar presented their stories from their own perspectives. At the end there was a lively discussion on the findings. The webinar was covered in the national media where the plight of the local community and the Rohingya were highlighted

RTI Dialogue

An in-person dialogue was held between Cox's Bazar participants and RTI activist from other regions along with representatives from national NGOs who were implementing RTI in their own programs. They discussed the nitty-gritty details of RTI in an atmosphere of mutual learning. The Cox's Bazar participants also sat with RIB's agro ecology team to learn about climate change and how it affected their regional agriculture.



Concluding Summary

The project succeeded in inspiring the local community to understand their rights and empowered them in engaging with local authorities and the Rohingya felt enervated that their opinions on policy issues were being asked of them. They also felt eager to dialogue with the host community. We were progressing stealthily on these issues through our regular PR process. Local community members made significant number of RTI applications on the basis of the knowledge they have gained on RTI law.

It is felt that project impact could be made sustainable if some kind of links or communications is still maintained by RIB in the form of mentorship. RIB is alrady thining that even after withdrawal from the area, they will continue to include members of the PAR

group in other related projects as part of an internship that will enable them to learn from others as well as impart their own experiences to newer groups in other areas of the country.

The project outcomes are considered to be extremely relevant especially with reference to empowerment of the local community. Access to public services and information could help them incluene public authorities to become more responsive to people's demand and hence more accountable. this can be considered an important lesson to learn in their daily survival.

Project 2 : Advancing Accountability and Transparency through the Right to Information
Duration : July 2020 to May 2021 (2nd Phase) Development Partner : National Endowment for Development (NED)

1. Objectives:

To advance accountability and transparency through the application and implementation of right to information mechanisms.

The project has following objectives:

One, to advance accountability and transparency through the application and implementation of right to information mechanisms

Two, To mobilize/create RTI activists RTI activists from among existing social activists who would be capacitated to operationalize the RTI law by filing applications on issues of public interest, or issues which involves greater public impact. The objective is to ask questions that envisage a **systemic change.**

Three, to identify the challenges that impede citizens' exercise of their right to information and to encourage the importance of using the RTI Act to promote transparency, accountability and good governance in the country, by mitigating the challenges.

The methodology:

There will be three components in the process followed to attain the above objectives.

1) Build capacity of prospective RTI activists to use RTI i.e. Right to Information Act on accountability, transparency issues;
2) Support the filing of applications;
3) Document and disseminate the results towards greater advocacy program.

2. Activities from August-October 2020:

Due to Covid 19 situation many of our planned activities which we should have completed in earlier months could not do so, we took those up during reporting period.

Inception Meeting

As part of its first activity under the project, a virtual inception meeting was organized by RIB on 29 July 2020 through Zoom meeting platform. Dr. Shamsul Bari, RIB's Chairperson presided over the meeting.

Participants: The meeting was attended by 56 participants from 4 organizations and platforms, namely BLAST, BELA, ALRD and SHUJON. Syeda Rezwana Hasan, Chief Executive from BELA, Dr. Badiul Alam Majumder, Country Director, THP-BD and Founder-Secretary of Citizens for Good Governance

(SHUJAN), Shamsul Huda, Executive Director, ALRD, participated, among others. Together with their colleagues, both from their Headquarters and field offices, they briefed the meeting on their activities and explained how RTI plays a role in them and could play even a greater role in the future.

PLANNED ACTIVITIES & ACHIEVEMENTS OF THE QUARTER

Name of the activities/sub activities	Type of activity	Target (Aug-Oct)	Achievement (Aug-Oct)	Remarks
Activity 1: Project Orientation to staff, selected network-partners and activists	Meetings	5 (Aug)	5 (Aug)	
Activity 2: Conduct Training	Training	5 Batches	4 Batches	As BLAST was a partner from earlier project with NED, training was waived for them.
Activity 3: Bi-Monthly meetings of network-partners	Meeting	10	8	2 meetings could not be held because network-partner's busy schedule
Activity 4 :Coordination meeting on project progress	Meeting	01	01	
Activity 5: Data bank maintenance for tracking information and RTI	Research	03 (Month)	03 (Month)	
Activity 6: Number of RTI applications generated.		900 (3 months)	522 (3 months)	Few network-partners could not complete the target
Activity 7: Information Fair	Event	01 (Sep)	01 (Sep)	
Activity 8: Awareness raising non budgeted event on importance of RTI during pandemics.	Activity	01 (Sep)	01 (Sep)	This event took place with participation of NED project network-partners and CSO members from other 4 districts
Activity 9: RTI questions formation	Research		250	

For the current research RIB has partnered with 4 different organizations chosen from different sectors like governance, legal, environment, land, civil society members. Additionally, one human rights defender and RTI group which is very actively working in Dinajpur for participation in the project.

The selected groups are as follows:

1) Legal Aid Organization- Bangladesh Legal Aid &Services Trust (BLAST)
2) Bangladesh Environmental Lawyers Association (BELA)
3) Citizens for Good Governance (SHUJAN)

4) Association for Land Reform and Development (ALRD)
5) An established Human Rights & RTI Defender group in Dinajpur District

Each of these 4 organizations have formed group with 20/30 selected individuals who would turn into RTI activists and 30 members in RTI defender group of Dinajpur who are already established RTI activists. RIB's network partner under the project has selected their group members from their network partners and RTI promoters. These activists shall also work to create more activists in their individual localities.

During the regular meetings and discussions, these network partners highlight issues and discussions with focus on what challenges impede effective implementation of RTI Acts and how selected activists can play an effective role in taking the law forward.

During these meetings the group members also highlighted their experiences of submitting RTI applications, how they have been dealt upon by the designated officers, what was the level of responses on their applications, how the existing challenges can be mitigated, what are the pertinent issues of RTI that should be taken up by other group members as well and so on.

It further needs mentioning that

- Most of human rights defender group members and partner organizations with their activists have started to submit RTI applications and under the project each of them are required to file applications during project period from any areas in Bangladesh.
- RIB bears all costs for RTI applications submission activities.
- The cost reimbursement may be slightly limited during the complaint hearings as that involve transportation, accommodation and food costs for complainants however RIB will provide support through representation by lawyer from RIB and its other associates shall be arranged.
- RIB shall track all the 3000 applications that are made.
- All information shall be maintained and shared through Google Drive with access to all the RTI group members and network partners.

- Expert Selected network partners some of them are already activists, who shall disseminate knowledge and encourage people in their network to become RTI activists.
- Every selected group members through network partners and human rights defender groups received regular training and supervision from RIB and network partners. These, activists would submit RTI applications.
- By the end of the year, a total of 600 applications shall be filed per network partners.
- RIB arranged to provide trainings on RTI to partners and their selected activists in the month of September and October.
- After capacity building through trainings they hold bi-monthly coordination meetings to discuss on nature of RTI requests submitted and challenges if any.

- A Google drive has been created for each partner organizations for documenting the process of RTI fillings.
- So far during month of August, September and October total number of RTI requests filed were 522.

3. Nature of RTI Questions based on issues identified during training and meeting

As we progressed with our project, we identified certain challenges that needed to be addressed at this stage. The primary findings that came forth during ongoing project period was that still large number of publics are afraid of filling RTI requests as the mindset still very strong in them that being asked they will be subjected to harassment in various forms by public officials and of course they have justified grounds for such fears.
RIB and networking partner during trainings and meetings have identified RTI issues and formed questions on the followings:

(1) Environment

On this identified issues, partners and activists formulated questions like what are government plans to control emission of smokes from factories and transports. What actions government has taken to control use of polythene and chemical fertilizers for harvesting agricultural produce? Felling trees lead to environment hazards, what are government policies to restrict such actions.

(2) Climate change

In the fiscal year 2019-2020 how many funds have been allocated to deal with climate change? What actions government has taken to deal with climate change during fiscal year 2019-2020 and what is government plans to deal with climate change for the next year.

(3) Food securities

To deal with disaster situation, how much food is available in the LSD godown of Food Ministry for the fiscal year 2020-2021. What actions government has taken in its 5 Year plan to ensure food security? What is the progress so far in this regard?

(4) Governance and administrative

What laws have been amended to protect women and girls? What actions have been taken to make these laws effective? What laws have been amended to prohibit child labour. To prohibit child labour what are government's next five year plans. Without following due process like calling for bidding and so on forest department trees are being cut, what actions government has taken to restrict these? When a citizen is taken to police station without any warrant and without any evidence of crime against him/her what actions government has taken to protect citizens against such harassment?

(5) Localization of SGD Goals

Government has aligned its 5 Year plan with the goals under SDG, so far what progress has been made and what actions have been taken to complete target under SDG goal. What actions have been taken and how much progress have been made to meet the target of reducing child mortality rate as set forth in SDG Goals. What actions have been taken and how much progress have been made to meet the target of strengthening institutional mechanism to make it more accountable and ensuring transparency in government works as set forth under SDG goal 16.

Other than above identified the nature of the questions asked in application forms was often dependent on the need of communities as well as activists. These were questions which had mostly to do with how school managing committees are running, land acquisition and khas land allotment, government projects initiated for development works and whether these development works interfered with peaceful living of citizen or violated their rights, basic services such as safety net measures and sometimes even corruption e.g. the misappropriation of government money, students' stipends by school authorities, mismanagement of project fund and so on thus indicating that some form of malpractices were systemic in local governance. Other questions were however distinctively related to the political or social context of each district or community. Rural based group members in Dinajpur were prone to asking information on safety net services, distribution of khas land and asked pointed questions on accountability and transparency of institutions such as schools, hospitals.

The deepening and slight scaling up of the RTI implementation process was possible because of (a) capacity building of professionals who are conscious citizen and to many extent contribute in working/non-working of governance system, (b) learning from past experience of RIB in such districts/communities; (c) the inclusion of mainstream groups i.e. college students and educated youth and other groups who are more exposed to public life than rural-based marginalized groups and hence can overcome the hesitancy to deal with pubic officials; (d) the inclusion of 2 districts Dhaka and dinajpur, which enabled frequent interfacing with local authorities and services compared with remote rural areas; (e) enhanced skills of project staffs including field level expertise on RTI and participatory discussion. All these factors have to be taken together as not one single factor can be seen to be responsible.

4. OUTCOMES:

On Training:

Throughout the month of September and October extensive trainings were held with each of the network-partners along with their respective activists. The objective behind these training sessions was to outline the features of the Right to Information Act 2009 and instill the enthusiasm within the participants to actively participate in the project. The training programs were conducted by RIB through online platform as well as physical presence. At the training discussions were aimed at making participants aware about the RTI law in a simplest manner at the same time familiarizing participants with the difficulties and challenges they would

encounter when they start sending in applications and techniques to counter these challenges as well as seeking solutions to mitigate those issues were also discussed. As a result, we could bring much more clarity about the path that shall be taken by the Experts and the facilitators in framing their RTI questions for this project. We decided to keep our questions holistic, instead of targeting individual public officials in order to not agitate them. The training programs also carried out a practical activity where the participants were asked to identify in their locality and frame RTI questions and use the RTI application form that was provided to each one of them along with an RTI booklet. The questions were then discussed with trainers and facilitators who guided them further on improving the questions for achieving better aims.



On information fair event

A fair on Right To Information was organised on the 28 September, 2020 at Dinajpur. As Covid 19 crisis is going on, in the midst of considering risk factor and govenrment restriction as well as guideline on maintaining social distancing, we opted for alternative plan to make the event more meaningful. The whole programme was divided into three parts; A) indoor programmes with

panel discussion, B) Outdoor programme with cultural activities and C) Awareness campaign activities with moving vehicles covering sub-district level places of Dinajpur District.

(A) Indoor Programmes: A panel discussion program was organised with the collaboration of Deputy Commissioner (DC) office, Dinajpur at the DC office conference room on 28 September, 2020. Deputy Commissioner of Dinajpur started the discussion as the chair of the programme. He spoke as the spokesmen of the government. There were also additional Deputy Commissioner General (ADC), Upazila Parishad Chairman, three executive Magistrates, the representatives of civil society, NGO representatives and the community people were present in the meeting to take part in the discussion. Deputy Commissioner stated that he expected more RTI application from the people. He said if the people will demand more information through RTI, it will help the government to do work in a more transparent manner. The output of discussion was DC office will take initiative to hung the name of DO at every authorities. DC office will report to the information commission for updating their website to include correct names of Designated officers.

(B)Outdoor programme with cultural activities including 1. Moving vehicle with cultural activists who performed on RTI themes, made stop over at 8 places and disseminated knowledge on RTI, 2. More than 3000 leafelet on RTI and other IEC materials were distributed during the fair to locals.

(c) Awareness campaign- Cultural teams prepared local folk songs on RTI and while moving around the area, they sang those RTI songs and raised awareness on RTI. People who came to the fair got clear message through these traditional music's. Also those help disseminating information on RTI to much wider public.

As the event took place during Covid 19 pandemic therefore all safety measures and health guidelines were strictly followed and enforced by RIB's project team.



Case studies under the present project

(1) A public road in one of sub-district of Dinajpur was closed for public use for the sake of repairing works and it remained closed for the past 18 months. One RTI activists under the project filed a RTI to concerned authority seeking information on why the particular mentioned road was closed and how long will it take to open the road for public use. Following his application the concerned sub-district authority took initiatives and the road was again made open for public use.

(2) One RTI activist from Rangpur made RTI request to sub-district government office who was looking after government implemented development project. Through RTI he sought information that in the year 2019-2020 how many development projects were implemented in the area and what was progress. Accordingly he received information from designated office. But after receiving information from records it was seen that local government office of the same department withdrew money twice for the same work of sand filling in that area whereas no sand filling was done. Following this revelation, RTI activist along with other residents of the area took up the matter with highest administrative officer of local government.

Book and leaflet publication on RTI

RIB published a total of 500 books on Use of RTI and 1000 leaflet on RTI and its related theme was printed in the year 2020 and disseminated to the large number of publics. We are confident that the published book is going to be very useful to the readers because it covers all possible issues and matters under the RTI law relating to demand side (general people), supply side (designated officers) and adjudicatory body (information commission). Also a set of more than 100 possible RTI questions have also been included prepared with focus on SDG goals and 7th five year plan of Government. This book gives comprehensive idea on how to use RTI and a kind of hands on resource material to self educate on concept of RTI

Project 3 : Agro-ecology from Below : Pedagogy and Participatory Action (2020)
Duration : January to December 2020 **Development Partner : Rosa Luxemburg Stiftung (RLS)**

Purpose of the Project : To promote ecological principles in Bangladesh as an alternative approach to agriculture production.

Target Groups : Small farmers, women farmers, youths and students, members of peasant organisations concerned government authorities, GO/NGOs, political actors, and left actors and activists and academics working in the field of agriculture.

Gerographical Area : Nilphamari, Bogra, Satkhira and Dhaka

Details of the Activities :

Activity 1: Conduct at least 72 meetings on regular basis with at least 9 participatory Action Research (PAR) groups (8 meetings per group) to promote agro-ecological methods and to sensitise them about the agrarian, ecological and public health issues. The group members are extending their agro-ecological activities.

Activity 2 : Organise at least 9 knowledge sharing workshops (3 in each 3 areas) on agro-ecology with the localy youth and non-PAR farmers. The participants become aware about the negative impacts of conventional farming and the possibilities, importance and principles of agro-ecological farming. They decided to check the viability of agro-ecology and steps will be taken to conserve village biodiversity.

Activity 3 : Undertake around 3 promotional activities in project areas with school and college students (like discussion, sessions, lecture, essay writing or debate events etc.) to spread agro-ecology. And to conduct an action research with students on farming in project areas. Due to COVID-19 outbreak, the educational institutions remain closed. So the Promotional Activities has been organized at village level. The Students and youth become aware about the importance of village biodiversity and the role of biodiversity in agriculture. They decided to take steps to conserve biodiversity.

Activity 4 : Organise at least 3 agro-ecology fairs at union level to display and disseminate the agro-biodiversity, seeds, local foods/medicine/products and agro-ecological methods. it was a nice demonstration of agro-ecological farming. Local authority and peoples informed about the existence and importance of different types of local seeds and plants which do not required any chemical input to cultivate. They also become familiar with different types of ecological agro-inputs prepared with local ingredients and different techniques of agro-ecology. the importance of different non-cultivated edible and non-edible and medicinal plants and the health and environmental hazards of chemical farming were also discussed during the fair and discussion session. interested farmers wrote down their name to collect seeds from project farmers. Most importantly the PAR group members become more inspired to continue agro-ecology from the positive response of the visitors.

Activity 5 : organise at least 1 exchange visit of selected PAR group members and farmers to exchange learning from other field /areas where agro-ecological principles have been adopted. Earlier it was planned to take the farmers from Nilphamari and Satkhira to Bogura for participating tin the Exchange visit. But due to COVID 19 pandamic, the visit was restticted only for the farmers of Bogura. There are three project villages in Bogura. SO the farmers visited each others village, observed agroecological and PAR activities and participated in intensive discussion. Farmers of each village showed their multiple cropping, seeds, composts, microbial fertilizer, bird nest, and encouraged others to practice and increase Agro-ecology. in the discussion round, they have agreed on specifying a corner in the local market by local authority to sell their agro-ecological products, and they framed the timetable to be finished within March 2021/ the enthusiasm of each village encouraged others and they promised among themselves to produce 100% agroecological crops in the days ahead. the woen farmers enjoyed the visit very much, as they have limited scope to visit other villages and to share their opinion.

Activity 6 : Conduct at least 1 residential school to enhance the farmer's capacity on agro-ecology. Due to COVID-19 pandemic, the Residential School was organized in changed manner. It was quite problematic and risky to gather the farmers of different areas and resource persons in one place. So, five video lectures (and one compiled and summarized video from five lectures) have been prepared under Residential School. Those videos will be projected during local schools and other activities. Besides the videos will be uploaded in RIB's website and You Tube channel for broader dissemination.

Activity 7: Conduct at least 18 local agro-ecological schools to spread the knowledge gained from the residential school. the participants learned the covered topics and will practice to enhance agro-ecology.

Activity 8 : Conduct at least 3 local dialogue meetings with local government authorities, government organisations, non-government organisations and politicians to generate synergy on agro-ecology. the participants become aware about the agriculture, ecological and social challenges and informed about the agro-ecological activities of PAR group farmers. This will be helpful to create linkages between them in order to spread agro-ecology. Concerned authorities promised to support in marketing farmers' agroecological crops.

Activity 9: Conduct at least 1 round table dialogue with government actors, policy makers and civil society organisations with special focus on climate change and agriculture on 20 December 2020. Due to COVID-19 pandemic, it was not possible to organize the Dialogue with physical presence of the participants. Instead a virtual Dialogue was organized using Zoom app. A dialogue report was published and the recorded video of the discussion was uploaded in RIB's website for broader dissemination. Experts from physical and social sciences, practitioners and policy makers attended the dialogue and enriched by each other. Besides, the concepts of agroecology, degrowth and sustainability were echoed and suggested to incorporate in mainstream climate related activities. It was found that, the earlier RIB-RLS activities on same

issue helped some of the resource persons, to relate climate crisis with agriculture and sustainability.

Publication : print and disseminate at least 2 educational booklets and 4 poster/leaflets and One Dialogue Report in Bangla Language to promote agro-ecology and alternative farming practices.

Booklet 1 : Biodervirsity and Agricultue

Booklet 2 : Questions on Agroecology

Poster 1 : Multiple cropping and the techniques to enhance farm biodiversity

Poster 2 : Agroecology is the foundation of safe food and nutrition

Leaflet 1 : Non-crop plants in Agroecology

Leaflet 2 : Agroecology & Women

Dialogue Report 2020 : Agriculture and Climate crisis

Expected Results : Members of PAR groups and local activists in the field of agriculture are motivated to spread their knowledge to other farmers in their locality.

Due to COVID-19 pandemic, it was not possible to conduct field visit and other regular project activities from last week of March to the end of July 2020. Hence project staffs regularly communicated with the project farmers over mobile phone and followed –up agroecological activities during COVID-19 lockdown. Later, from the first week of August, project staffs started visiting project areas and implemented project activities. However, it is found that, the PAR group farmers enhanced their agroecological activities and reduced using chemical inputs in their commercial farming plots. Besides, most of the PAR group farmers advocated agroecology among the other farmers, consumers and other professionals. Even some of them sensitized people to preserve biodiversity, use local medicinal plants and eat safe foods, to combat this type of pandemic. moreover, the PAR farmers and other activists shared their benefits of agroecology and tried to motivate other farmers and concerned authorities to take steps to spread agroecology and conserve biodiversity. They are trying to establish marketing mechanism to ensure the sustainability of agroecological activities.

Project 4 : Promoting Opportunities for Women's Empowerment and Rights (POWER)
Duration : September 2016 to December 2020 Development Partner : Action Aid

Pattern of Time Use of Rural Women and Men in Northern Bangladesh

Unpaid Care Work such as household chores, taking care of the children and the elderly often remains invisible in National Accounting Systems much to the disadvantage of women who spend much of their waking hours doing such work throughout their life-cycle. In order to foreground such work and make it meaningful in the overall objectives of the Bangladesh Government to attain gender equality in all spheres through women's empowerment, the current research has been designed to estimate use of time pattern (mean time hours) by women and men in different activities including Unpaid Care Work (UCW) to understand how gender roles play out. Beyond this objective, the purpose of this tool is also to enable people including women and community members themselves to start thinking about care differently – as a valuable part of their life.

The methodology included review of existing literature and documents, and both quantitative and qualitative tools were used for data collection in two project sites of Lalmonirhat and Gaibandha districts among participants of AAB's POWER project.

The pattern and trend of work for women and men had changed over the years in the POWER project area. In the beginning work pattern followed the traditional stereotypes of men working outside the home mostly in work that was paid and women engaged in unpaid care work and productive work such as raising poultry and cattle. Some very destitute women worked in the fields as daily wage labour. But over the years this trend has changed. When earlier reports are compared with there was slightly improved positive trends in decreased hours for women and in terms of paid and productive work there were slightly improved positive trends in increasing hours for women. Gender gaps in unpaid and productive work was seen to be decreasing. Hours of individual and socio-cultural work was also decreasing for women , but it was seen that they seemed to have slightly more hours of leisure than last year.

The main factors that have positively influenced the above trends were thought to be programmes of NGOs like the POWER project which gave women both opportunity for income-generation work as well as empowered them to have voice within the family as well as trained them for leadership capacities in the community. Such projects also gave women support in the form of working simultaneously with family members (natal and in-laws) and male counterparts so that the milieu in which they live and work with could also change I their favour. This multi-pronged approach of generating income from women, giving household support for her to work outside and training her in skills such as CRSA which brings benefit to the environment has created an enabling atmosphere where she enjoys work with dignity and the cooperation of her male counterpart in sharing the duties of care work.

However men have not been involved with all types of unpaid care work nor at all times. This has been due mostly to lag in the change of social attitudes where traditional stereotypes of gender-based works still remain, especially in the areas where the re is no project intervention.

Women on the other hand also feels her mobility restricted because of social values and due to the insecurity felt in public spaces from fear of sexual harassment. In order to gain social acceptance for her

work women have often to balance between paid work and unpaid care work. Her institutions like the Day care Centres who looks after her youg children and frees her to do her work without pressure helps her a great deal.

Value of unpaid work was increasing within households and family members e.g. husbands and parents in laws were joining hands with women in taking care of children, cooking and other care activities. However as was evident in the findings, men did not want to do that at all times, especially during the afternoon when they preferred to go to the market to socialize. Other family members like older daughters or mother in laws were seen to help the women in her work.

The findings also reveal that a stark difference remains between project areas and non-project areas. But over a period of years of the project some of the more conservative sentiments seem to be thawing. This has been achieved purely through observing the benefits of the project. They saw how women were earning for the household and family and enriching it. A religious leader was also seen to be giving a positive opinion about women taking up business. The growth of EPZs in the vicinity (Ghoraghat) and the consequent recruitment of many village women have also made a difference in the social milieu in creating a open space.

Overall there is indication that women are given more value by families and society for the work they do both within and outside the household and this has reflected on their comparatively higher status in society than before.

In terms of violence against women domestic violence in particular and generally violence in public places seem to be diminishing in project areas where women have better mobility. However women still fear travelling at night and also in public places for fear of sexual harassment which remain in the community. In terms of domestic violence, the POWER project has succeeded in organizing community members to rally forth in support of the victim and on top of that empowering women to have more voice within the household has enabled them to speak up against such violence than before. But at the same time it was noticed that during Corona pandemic, domestic violence had increased due to unrest and mental stress in the household caused by loss of employment and food insecurity. At the same time early marriages increased due to lack of vigilance. Thus it can be said that the issue of violence against women is still held in a fragile balance and needs constant monitoring.

There was no significant difference in the three geographical areas under consideration that is Lalmonirhat and Gaibandha and Ghoraghat except that in Gaibandha women spent lesser hours in individual and socio-cultural activities than in Lalmonirhat. This was because of lesser opportunities of mobility and entertainment in that area or because of lack of more focused intervention from the project management side. Although Ghoraghat was a new area of study which showed usual signs of resistance in terms of women working outside, the establishment of a wig factory nearby and the employment of many women in the vicinity had increased women's mobility in a striking manner. It had led both positive redistribution of sharing care work by men as well as negative reactions from society.

This year had been particularly hard for participants in the study area as it was dually affected by the damage of crops by heavy floods as well as the lockdown brought about by COVID 19. Although the area was affected minimally by the transmission of the disease, most families had to forego jobs and profit from the lack of employment and income due to lockdown. After lock down however things were returning to normal for some people and for others very slowly. Social life was affected and is still being affected by the fact that young children could not go to school. This has foregrounded the need to take into consideration future preparedness for coping with pandemics within a project lifetime.

In conclusion it can be said that the POWER project has conducted successful intervention to positively increase the hours women spend in paid work but care must be taken that women do not compensate for this by lessening hours she spend on her own care or her entertainment.

The project has done well in creating cooperative gender friendly values among members of families and households but such work has yet to be emulated by villagers and neighbors and entrenched into the society in general.

Finally rural communities in Bangladesh is undergoing rapid change, so while in some sectors because of opening up of economic benefits to women encouraged by state and NGO policies are occurring, in other sectors like domestic life, conservatism still remains. This is creating, but is also the reason why the underlying issues of the POWER project needs to be mainstreamed in future projects.

Background and objectives of current project

As part of a multi-country project being implemented in Ghana, Rwanda, Bangladesh and Pakistan the long term objective of the project is to contribute to the increased economic empowerment of women. Research on the Time Use of Women and Men in Unpaid Care Work is one of the most important components of the project.

The current study is a continuation from the earlier work conducted by Action Aid on Strengthening Women's Collective (SWC). The overall objective of the research was to estimate use of time pattern (mean time hours) by women and men in different activities including Unpaid Care Work (UCW) to understand how gender roles play out.

In Bangladesh, a pilot time use survey was first conducted by the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics in 2012 (for more detail see following section :Comparison with Previous Data" of the report) to provide estimates of the amount of time spend in various activities of the population aged 15 years and above in System of National Accounts (BBS,2012:2). Following that ActionAid Bangladesh had then developed a tool to capture time spent by adult women and men in her intervention areas in Northern areas in Bangladesh and a baseline study was done in 2013-14 where the respondents were the members of the women's collectives.

The prevailing gender norms and power relations in Bangladesh justify women's heavy workload and limited control over productive resources must be challenged if the economic participation of women is to be improved. A balance between paid work and unpaid care work (UCW) would enable women to have the time to participate equally in the society and the economy. Thus the time poverty limits women's opportunity to learn how to increase sustainable productivity and how to better access markets; and to participate in decision making which affects control over their resources. For this reason, women are less likely to take full advantage of economic opportunities and to participate in income-generating activities (IGAs).

Under Goal 5 of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (UN, 2015) gender equality and empower all women and girls have been guaranteed. The global indicators for performance management for this specific goal include percentage of time spent on unpaid domestic and care work, by sex, age group and location.

The overall objective of the current research is to estimate use of time pattern (mean time hours) by women and men in different activities including Unpaid Care Work (UCW) to understand how gender roles play out.
The specific objectives are

- To measure the mean time (hours) spent used by women and men
- To observe the gap of time use on various activities between women and men
- To track the variation of mean time on key differentials
- To underscore the attitude of UCW
- To see the changing pattern of time use over the time between women and men
- To see the changing pattern of time use between intervention over control group

Beyond this objective, the purpose of this tool is also to enable people including women and community members themselves to start thinking about care differently – as a valuable part of their life.

Methodology: trends and FGDs

Methodology included review of existing literature and documents, and both quantitative and qualitative tools were used for data collection. Analyses were done through triangulation. There were some technical problems related to computer systems that delayed quantitative data delivery and management. For the report, datasets of 2019 provided by AAB were taken into account.

The sample:

The sample was randomly selected from 6151 members of intervention women groups from three districts – Gaibandha, Lalmonirhat, and Diranjpur. 722 respondents were targeted for time use data collection. The sample is estimated at 95% confidence level and with 5% margin of error. Initial target for the sample was 75% women group members, and 25% men of the selected women's families. However, while collecting data, the sample size varied due to unavailability of women and men and migration of families. The sample covered-

- Women in three locations – Fulchari Upazila under Gaibandha district and Lalmonirhat Sadar Upazila, and Ghoraghat Upazila under Dinajpur district.
- Men in the same locations (Men to be of same family as selected women)
- In addition some members of control groups participated in the qualitative data collection process (FGDs). .

Quantitative method:

As of Final Data of 2020, 722 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 Fulchhari Upazilla under Gaibandha district, and five Unions (Harati, Khuniagach, Kulaghat, Mogolhat, and Rajpur) from Lalmonirhat Sadar Upazilla, and from AAB's direct intervention areas of Ghoraghat, Dinajpur. For analysis, average work hours are calculated from datasets of September and October 2020.

Table 1: Sample by area

Area	Gender		Total
	Female	Male	
Gaibandha	258 (83.23%)	52 (16.77%)	310 (100%)
Lalmonirhat	249 (83.56%)	49 (16.44%)	298 (100%)
Ghoraghat	76 (66.67%)	38 (33.33)	114 (100%)
Total	583	139	722

	(80.75%)	(19.25%)	(100%)

Qualitative Method:
During October 2020, nine FGDs were targeted, three each at at Gaibandh, Lalmonirhat, and Ghoraghat. The research period did not coincidee with rice harvesting season, and so it was not difficult this time for the farmers and community people to appear in the group sessions. Community mobilizers of the project helped reach people and request for their time. Usually, around 10-15 participants were intended, but due to COVID-19 sensitivity this time, the number in each group discussion was reduced to around 8. Three FGDs were conducted with all woman group participants of the program, three were held with the male family members of the woman group members, and three with with control groups that fell outside the program beneficiaries. They were a mixed group and consisted of approximately 50% women and men. The continuity with previous project was evident in the location of the project area which was the same as before. However in the current phase, new groups of beneficiaries were added and our FGDs were mostly with them. Therefore though some allusions may be made to compare earlier results with the current one, a rigorous pattern of trends can only be computed once we gather more data in the current phase. Nine cases – three each from three areas to record the changes project is making among woman groups. During targeting of cases, range of intervention objectives, such as, enterprise development, woman leadership development, women's engagement in socio-cultural activities, climate resilient and sustainable agricultural practices etc. were taken into consideration.

The ecological context
The areas covered by our FGDs were located mostly in riparian areas with a mix of high and low land. There were two specific areas located in the Gazaria Union inside an embankment of the Jamuna which could be called a disaster prone area and hence called for urgent attention. Floods and river erosions were regular phenomena. Crops were washed away every year. There is no health facility the nearest being three kilometers away and a bumpy muddy road being the only link.

In other areas at least two rice crops were grown in a year, the Aman and IRRI rice during the Boro season as well as one Rabi crop usually potatoes or cauliflowers. Most of the land cultivated was through sharecropping or contract and the production was generally at subsistence level, being enough for six plus month's consumption for each households. The tenurial system was such that the farmer had to bear all cost of production and the share was half and half. Many among our FGD participants were laborers. Though the predominant sign was traditional subsistence agricultural practice, there were evidence of small businesses and trade flourishing in villages, but also wage earners going away to cities such as Dhaka to learn a trade like iron mongering *(rod mistry*) and returning to the village to earn a living by it.

Women were found to be largely engaged in household work both productive (minding poultry and cattle) and care work, but many women were so destitute that they had to work in the fields especially tasks such as weeding and collecting chilies. In most localities, women went to crop fields for work. Women especially those without husbands also went to the market for buying things. Given existing realities, the taboo against women's work in the public space was comparatively less in these areas.

Families at Kothiyabari were found mostly landless with homestead for small scale cultivation. Women were mainly agricultural labors. However, dispersed land in the area provides space for cattle grazing. So, livestock was common in this area than in others. A good number of men work in towns and other districts for livelihood.

Case – 1: Shilpi Begum, Village: Kotiabari, Union: Katabari, Ghoraghat



Shilpi Begum identifies herself as a housewife and an entrepreneur. She is a mother of four girls – one married off, second is of grade VIII age, and third of grade II, and fourth is an infant of two years. Her husband is a seasonal day labor, sometimes pulling man-hauler (van or rickshaw), and giving labor in agriculture.

In 2013 she joined ActionAid program with an expectation of spending good time, becoming independent, saving money and being able to purchase own things, and meeting expenses for medical treatment. She especially expected to save money that would help during bad time when people hardly extend hand, start rearing domestic animals, and initiate a small business with savings.

Beyond her household work, she has been rearing domestic animals, and has started a petty business in fabrics. As a choice for the petty business, she thought everyone needs this, she does not have to travel much, and she can manage this right from home.

In order to start the business eight months back, she applied for and withdrew a loan of Tk. 12000 from POWER project, and added another Tk. 2000 from home. She has already started paying credit installment. However, she has not gained much profit so far, but is preparing for a good business in the coming winter.

For purchase of fabrics, she travels on van rickshaw to nearly Gobindaganj town herself. Sometimes, husband travels with her. At home, her daughter helps her in managing clothes and keeping accounts.

As she has just started her business, still there are people outside, who speak ill of her and complains to her husband about her movement. Husband sometimes shares these with her back home. However, her daughter encourages her. She explains some people are envious of others doing good.

Even though her business is not big enough as yet, she finds it a way out to help her daughters continue their education, and meet expenses like food. She dreams of starting a fabrics shop, which requires, as

she estimates, around Tk. 50000/60000. She doubts her husband would be able to support with money, but she gave an impression that she would manage herself bit by bit to save money and expand business.

She shares her story of abuse and torture by her husband for a certain period of time. Around six months back her husband turned to be different, started quarrelling with her over anything, paying no attention to family matters, and even abusing her mentally and physically from time to time. It was a matter of shame for her in front of her daughters.

She suspected a relationship of her husband with another woman. One night her husband left the house, and she followed him to her mother-in-law house with another woman. Husband was angry with her and pronounced 'divorce' to her. That night, she called the village elders to settle the matter. Next day, a solicitation meeting discussed the matter, and convinced the other woman of Shilpi's rights to her home and dignity in front of her daughters, and also of her faults. She was convinced.

The woman group members took her side and mediated between herself, her husband and other family members. She got *fatwa* (religious leader's decision) disproving any divorce from her husband verbally.

After mediations, her husband has turned to his normal self, behaving well with her and others in the family.

As regards impact of COVID-19 effect, she says, "It was difficult for us to buy food items and other daily necessaries. Outside work were stopped. My husband could not earn. My business dropped. People in the nearby houses were put in quarantine, as some of them came from cities. Some families quarreled over small things. However, we were safe, washed hands 5/6 times a day, cleaned clothes frequently, cleaned houses, and kept distance from one another."

Case – 2: Latifa Akter, Vasarpara, Kanchipara UP, Fulchachari, Gaibandha



Latifa Akter is a housewife, and a business entrepreneur. She was group Chairperson, and now is a member. She has one daughter and two sons.

They started their group activities in 2016 with small savings. Now, the group has Tk. Sixty/seventy thousand.

Project benefits
As benefits from the intervention, her interest grew in business, she gained knowledge of sustainable and safe agriculture, access to market, and engaged in social activities and have participation.

Social leadership
Latifa along with other group members has become influential in the society. They work against child marriage and violence. She says in case of child marriage, they started to explain negative effects to parents first, then mediate with them, and eventually, involve law and order enforcing agencies.

Business development
She started rice stock business at the beginning, that gave her some profit. She thought of opening a business and estimated how much money she needed. During the time, her husband was away in Dhaka. In order to make some capital, she consulted with her husband and moved to Dhaka for a job in garments. She used to earn Tk. 14000 a month for a year. She returned to the village with her earning over a year, and deposited half of her earning to rent the shop at Balashi ghat. Her father-in-law ran the shop before. Her husband was still driving auto rickshaw.

Challenges of a woman to run shop
As part of group activities, they learnt about business management, and had interactions with different groups and market actors. She says, as men were critical and contemptuous, sometimes, women felt discouraged to enter into any business. However, she says, “We explained to the society repeatedly that women have to eat and live. We have a family. If we sit idly, nobody brings us food.” Nowadays people are not critical of women’s engagement in business.

Latifa’s business strategy
Over the years Latifa has learnt that capital should be in hand and intact. One should not eat up capital. One can make a capital of Tk. one hundred thousand or more. With the income, she repays her previous loans .

She knows that she needs to reinvest her income, keeping her capital intact. She has purchased cattle and spends for education of her children.

As she finds her shop lucrative, she discussed with her husband and convinced him to leave his job and join the shop. She has calculated that joint efforts put in shop will provide more income than auto driving.

She and her husband has made daily routine of sitting in the shop, shopping, cooking, gardening, resting, and family time.

She has a nephew who helps in her business.

Beyond shop
She has leased in some pieces of land to grow crops for consumption and cash. She says, “We can manage it by turn. Every day we don’t need to visit the crop fields, and don’t have to spend all day there. My husband from time to time visits the crop fields and does what is necessary.”

Capital beyond cash
Latifa insists that children are her capital. She say, “If the children have good education, they don’t have to tread our ways, and face hardship in their life. They would get jobs. People need money, education, good behavior. So, I want them to have these together.”

Violence
She has not faced any violence on herself. Her mother-in-law was negative at the beginning about her movement outside and engagement in business. However, Latifa was strategic enough to engage her mother-in-law in group activities. So, mother-in-law has equally learnt about women’s rights and empowerment, and has since then encouraged and helped her in business.

COVID-19 and flood effects
Due to restrictions she had to close shop for days. Again, flood water rose high. She faced difficulty to save her shop and materials, and at the same time managed to sell goods.

Project 5: Promotion of Social Partnership for Empowerment of marginalized communities in 6 districts and at national level in Bangladesh (PROSPECT)
Duration : January 2020 to December 2022 Development Partner : NETZ Bangladesh, BMZ

The overall objective of the project is to strengthen the Human Rights Defenders(HRDs) and public authorities to protect and promote rights of arginalized communities in working districts and at national level. The activities are performed by around 12,500 Human Rights Defenders (HRDs) of 378 civil Society organizations and 72 schools of 12 upazilas (sub districts) of six districts. The district ae: Rajshahi, Naogaon, DInajpur, THakurgaon, Panchagarh and Rangpur. One national platform of HRDs is also connected with the local and regional HRDs to contribute in protecting and promoting the rights of marginalized communities through national level advocacy and policy influence.

As the project will address 6 identified issues or problems that persists in the selected 6 project districts namely (1) violence and rights violations against women (2) Violence against religious minorities and indigenous groups (3) Limited access to legal claims and poor governance (4) Repressed civic space for HRD and civil society (5) Insufficient competencies and capacities of HRD and CSO (6) No institutional anchoring of non-violent conflict transformation, partner organization through the present project enhance capacity of the CSOs and HRDs who would develop competencies to access claims and services at the same time contribute in institutional strengthening and improve governances system. The

CSOs and HRDs engaged in the project will work collectively towards protection and promotion of human rights of people from selected 6 districts.

Additionally, another key activity of this project is to analyze human rights situation in these 6 districts particularly with focus on what with causes such rights violations, who are the involved actors, what are the mechanism in place to address these rights violations situations and way forwards to formulate advocacy recommendations to influence policies and ensure effective implementation for promotion and protection of human rights situation. The result and recommendation of this situation analysis would be helpful for the Human Rights Defenders to enhance their capacity to address human rights issues for further advocacy work.

We have collected numerous cases of violence against women cases from above mentioned working areas of the partner orgaizations (DASCOH, MKP and Pallisree) but for the purpose of reporting we have considered only 53 of Gender Based Violence (GBV) have been analyzed in four categories which include : physical violence, Sexual violence, Psychological violence, Socio-economic violence.

Results and Findings

Among the victims and survivors around 91% are women and girls, 7% are male and man and man and women together or in a group have become victim in 2% human rights violation cases. The highest number of victims (23%) have been reported from the age group of 31-35 years, followed by 26-30 years (21%); 16-20 years (17%), and 21-25 years (13%), the highest number of violation cases (87%) of all categories (physical violence; Sexual violence; Psychological violence; Socio-economic violence) took place during the lockdown period of the year 2020 (April-July). In most cases the response by NSS and CSO members were ensured within a week (35%), In all six districts 51% perpetrators were the husbands of the victims/survivors while 26% perpetrators were the victims/survivors' family members, 11% perpetrators were the neighbor, 10% perpetrators were the local influential who included (house owner, fish farmer and influential person) and 2% perpetrators were the relatives.

Violence against women and girls

Women have been victim of human rights violation with high percentage (91%) than men in human rights violation cases especially in all types of gender based violation cases (Socio-Economic violence, physical violence, Psychological violence and Sexual violence).

Gender based violence :

In all but Rangpur district women faced Gender Based Violence in their family and the society and the victims were higher in Naogaon (50%) than Rajshahi (25%) Dinajpur (20%),

Thakurgaon (17%) and Panchagarh (10%). Gender Based Violence at union and Upazila level have been reported with, domestic violence, physical torture, poverty in family, suicide, murder and underage marriage. The major causes behind GBV were : poverty, family feud, land grabbing and security concern about girl.

Under the four categories of Gender Based Violence (GBV), findings are as under:

Socio-Economic hardship-based violence:

Economic hardship induced violence were mainly observed in four districts, namely Panchagarh, Rajshahi, Rangpur and Thakurgaon. In all these cases women became victim in 87% cases. At district level women were victims to this violence by 40% of total cases in Panchagarh followed by 25% of total cases in Rajshahi and 506% of total cases in Thakurgaon. This category of violence rose because men being sole bread winner in the family lost jobs and many found it difficult to meet the ends leading to eruption of more violence cases against women. in some cases women who have been working lost their jobs which led to further family feud. Economic hardship forced the family members to get engaged in family feud. During lockdown it turned worst as the family expenditures and repayment of loan installments couldn't have been managed timely and properly. Poverty, loan and financial crisis put a pressure socially and economically which were the main causes of Economic hardship-based violence.

Physical violence : Physical violence has been reported in all six districts with highest number women victims (85%) . At district level in context of women victims Rangpur is ahead with 50% victims of its total number of victims followed by Tahkurgaon (39%), Dinajpur (20%), Naogaon (10%), and Panchagarh. Physical violence took place in the form of domestic violence, murder and the two major reasons behind physical violence were land ownership, power clash, economic deprivation and drug addiction.

Psychological violence : The maximum number of psychological violence victims have been found in Panchagarh (30%) followed by Thakurgaon (22%) and Naogaon (20%). Psychological violence was in most cases marked with domestic violence (78%), divorce (11%) and underage marriage (9%). Women became victim of domestic violence by physical and mental torture by their husbands on family financial matter, extramarital issues and other trivial matters. The causes of psychological violence were mostly structural and deep rooted in the society. The patriarchal mindset for establishing dominance on women led physical violence in many cases. Some of these causes were dowry, drug addiction, not obeying husband's order and poverty. It is mentionable that poverty during lockdown has brought extra pressure to women.

Sexual violence : Sexual violence happened in case of women in Dinajpur (40%), Thakurgaon (17%), Rajshahi (12%) and Panchagarh (10%). The unprincipled proposal and

misconduct by the perpetrators in some cases resulted in physical torture on the victims. Social status of perpetrators and in many cases minority position of the victim was a big hindrance for getting justice in sexual violence cases. The causes of sexual violence were: drug addiction, bad intention of the perpetrator, false promise of marriage and pressure exerted by the local power structures.

Challenges and Follow-up actions :

Around 52% cases have been settled through arbitration and Panchagarh, Thakurgaon are much ahead than other districts in this context. Around 90% cases of Panchagarh and67% cases of Thakurgaon were settled down through arbitration and in case of Rajshahi and Rangpur this rate was 50% respectively. The human rights defenders face multiple challenges during their actions to address the gender based and human rights violation cases. In most cases they got the news in time and initiated their course of actions as such. But in many instances they faced hardship to undertake proper actions mainly for the identity of the perpetrator, lack of proper knowledge about child rights and violence against women in the society and lack of access to government facilities.

Other actors who played key role in addressing Human Rights and Gender based violation cases included representatives of Local Government Institutions (Union Parishad), Local administration, Law enforcing agencies, civil society and media. In arbitration Union Parishad had a major role and in some cases like demanding dowry form the housewife's father's family was successfully resolved by the Union Parishad Chairman. Upazila administration had also good role in stopping underaged marriage incidents among other key initiatives. Local journalists came to the help of ensuring service from govt. hospital for a pregnant women and reporting on human rights violation cases.

Recommendation and Conclusion :

The study has reflected on the structural casuses as well as the COVID-19 situation induced factors for gender based violence. Women and girls have become victims in the form physical violence, sexual violence, psychological and economic violence aslo made them further susceptible to physical torture and abuses.

Here are some key recommendations based on the findings of the study :

To Government and Ministries

- Improve access to services for victims of gender-based violence, including providing survivors legal assistance, support services, counseling, and physical, mental health services.
- implement/strengthen public awareness campaigns in these working districts to ensure that everyone is aware that gender-based violence, including dowry, sexual

assault and child marriage , is illegal and that services are available to victims, and provide specific information on how to access services.

- Develop and implement strategies to recruit and retain more female police officers, prosecutors, and judges. Provide sufficient training to police, prosecutors, and judges on handling gender-based violence cases.
- Consult with women's rights activists and legal experts to draft and enact a law to protect victims and witnesses.
- Promote access to education for women and girls beyond secondary school.
- More media work and liaison with local and national press is required to report gender based violence and human rights violation cases because it strengthens the ground for seeking justice for the victims.

Case Study -1

Justice delayed justice denied

A victim of domestic violence lodged complaint with the Union Parishad accusing her husband for not taking care of her. The incident took place at Khongaon Union in Pirganj to Thakurgaon district. The victim's husband has another family with whom the victim doesn't have good relation and it led to family conflict resulting in physical torture. At one stage the victim left the house and resorted begging for her survival. She wants justice and informed her complaint to local Union Parishad. But the concerned authorities seemingly don't give importance to her case. She also talked to NSS member about this issue. The victim was denied maintaince and dower money by her husband. In her complaint she demanded her dower money which will be a big support her survival.

Case Study -2

Services denied to a pregnant woman

A pregnant woman of Doulatpur Union of Fulbari in Dinajpur district was brought to a non-government health care center for her smooth birth delivery. During registration, she was identified as a neighbor of a CORONA positive patient and medical hospital refused to provide here with the services. Later a NSS member helped here to get admitted to a Upazila health complex where she gave birth to her child. But the delivery was supervised by the nurse and no duty doctor was present there. Her family member decided to take her to another hospital but she was not released on the ground that she might have infected with CORONA virus. The family members with the help of NSS members and local journalists made a complaint to Upazila administration for a fair justice.

Case Study 3

Wife killed by husband at her parents' home

This incident took place in Porail Union of Niyamotpur Upazila of Naogaon district. Victim married perpetrator through family arrangement 105 years back. Both were local muslims. After marriage they were always engaged in family feud. On 29.06.20 perpetrator physically tortured victim following which she went to live with her parents. On 30.06.20 perpetrator went to his in laws house, victim's parent thought that may be they have resolve their issues so after dinner victim and perpetrator went to sleep at victim's parent house. At one point in the early morning hours victim's parents rushed to her room hearing her cry. When they broke open the door they saw that perpetrator was attachking victim with scissor. Victim's parents took her to hospital where doctors declared her bought dead. A case is field against the husband and he is in jail.

Events of RIB

Stakeholder Dialogue on Building an Interdisciplinary, Stakeholder based Research Network for Displacement Studies in South Asia

SANDD as a network was established in the year 2018 with Individuals and Institutions concerned with Development and Displacement work together. The focus of SANDD was enabling displacement affected communities to identify and address the challenges they face. The key principle is that SANDD exists to support community driven, designed and implemented development, that reduces the negative, and supports the positive, impact of that development. The Network is comprised of members from countries like UK, Srilanka, Afganistan, Nepal, India, Pakistan and Bangladesh who represent the Academia as well as organizations with knowledge and expertise on (1) funding sources (2) disciplines such as anthropology, arts, cultural studies, demographic research, development studies, economics, gender studies, international politics, Law, medicinal sciences, Political Science, and Sociology as well organization like (3) the London International Development Centre (LIDC) Migration Leadership Team (4) Civil Society Organisations in member countries working on issues of climate change and climate induced displacements, human rights, social development (5) Experts on participatory action research and (6) Government officials - National, Provincial and Local levels.

The objective on which SANDD established are:

1. To work on development and displacement as a combined component.
2. To recognize and build on a distinct South Asian tradition in migration/refugee studies;
3. Spread knowledge and skills on a regional basis via South-South capacity building;

4. Develop a South Asian agenda for research on migration and displacement via a consultative process that includes academics, NGOs, civil society organizations, public sector bodies and most importantly, the communities themselves that experience displacement or are vulnerable to it;
5. Conduct participatory and solution-oriented research that empowers communities and raises their awareness of their legal and human rights.

Stakeholder dialogue in Dhaka 02 January 2020

Participants: There were altogether 55 persons who took part in the dialogue meeting and categories of participants included 11 representatives from various organizations working in north, east, west and south zone of Bangladesh. These organizations are working directly with communities who are subjected to various discrimination, deprivation and displacements. Additionally there was participation of 8 individual experts who have enormous experience on above-mentioned issues as well as on development agenda. We also brought 15 members from respective communities who face the issues of discrimination and displacement. There were participation of few community based researcher, representative of one media house and one visitor from Miami University, Florida, USA.

Methodology/Process

- A mixed balance of experts, academicians, organizational representatives and community activists were invited so that both meta-narratives and micro-narratives of displacement could be thrashed out.

- Five cross-cutting themes were chalked out by the organizers on the basis of existing and ongoing knowledge base of relevant work being done in Bangladesh on displacements. These five themes were (1) Gender; (2) Minorities; (3) Economic Conditions (inclusive of income, land and property); (4) Climate Change and Environment; (5) Citizenship and Access to Justice. Each of these themes acted as entry points into the discussion on displacement.

- The first session was a plenary discussion where individuals representing organizations and/or communities gave an overview of displacement issues in Bangladesh from their respective perspectives. This was followed by a discussion from the floor ending with a panel discussion from academics and rights activists.

- The second session was a group discussion based on the World Café system. Participants were asked to choose one of the five thematic groups at the time of registration. A facilitator and rapporteur was chosen by the participants of each thematic group. A one hour discussion took place in each group on the respective theme to identify main challenges and development implications. After one hour, all members of each group, with the exception of the facilitator and rapporteur travelled to another group to learn from the facilitator and rapporteur of that group the lessons drawn there and also to suggest additional points or query the conclusions made in that group. The process

continued for 15 min for each visit, amounting to four visits in total, till all the groups have been visited by all participants. The purpose of this procedure was to encourage peer learning method and promote community engagement as many participants especially from the communities felt easier to communicate with each other in a small group than in a large plenary. It also facilitated identification and deeper analysis of cross cutting themes.

- After the World Café, a concluding plenary was held where each group chose a representative to highlight particular issues discussed in a way that they felt comfortable with. This was followed by a wrapping up by the Chair where the learnings of the day was brought together and reflected on in relation to working out a way forward for SANDD activities.

Session 1: Plenary

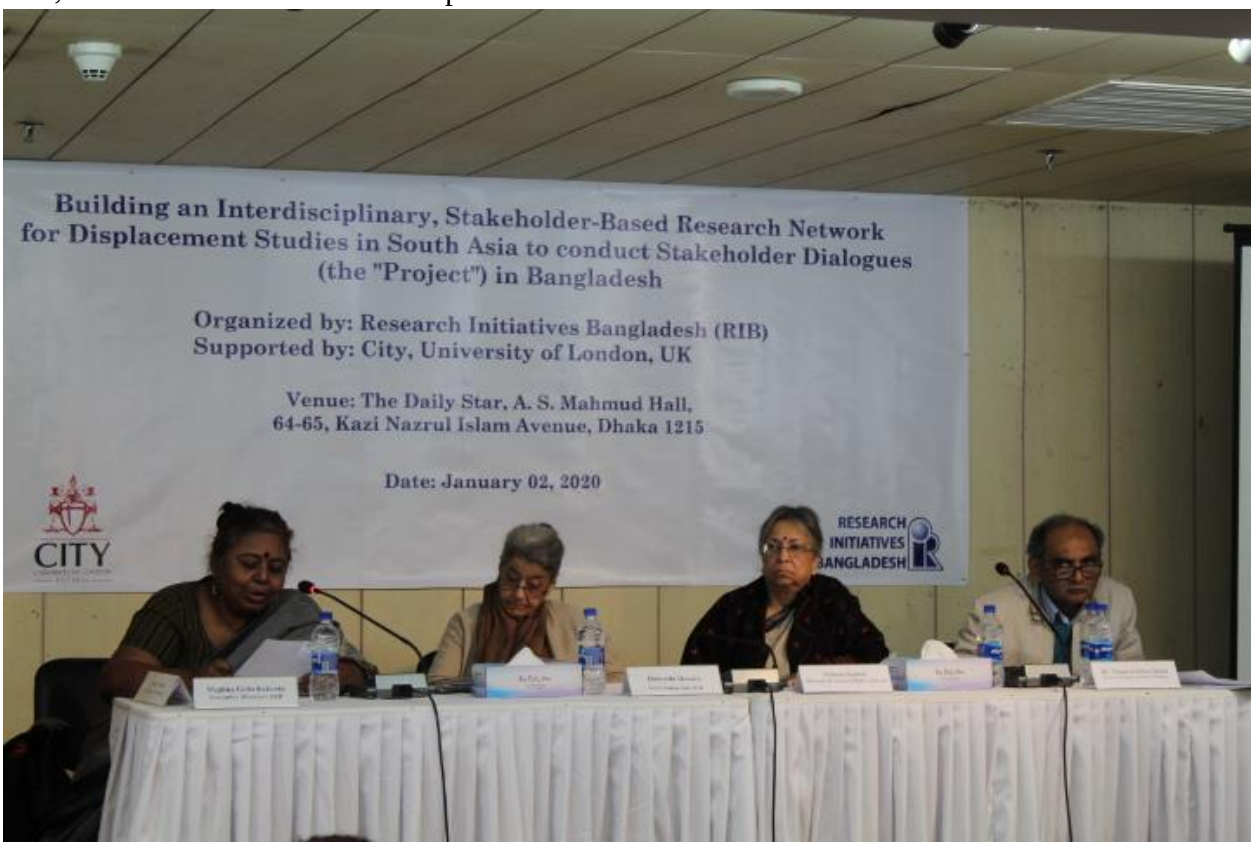
Panelists: Ms. Sultana Kamal, Advocate and Human Rights activist, Dr. Monirul Islam Khan, Department of Sociology, Dhaka University, Dr. Hameeda Hossain, Human Rights activist and academic.

Speakers on respective themes: Gender theme- Ms. Kamrun Nahar, representative from Naripokho (a woman's rights organization), Subha Sarkar, Transgender representative, Bandhu Social Welfare Society; Minority theme- Ms. Ilira Dewan, representative from CHT Commission, Mr. Khalid Hossain, Urdu speaking community, Executive Director, Minority Council; Economic condition theme- Mr Rafiq Ahmed Shiraji ALRD, land rights organization; Citizenship and access to justice theme- Advocate Tajul Islam, BLAST, legal rights organization; Climate, & environment- Ms. Suraiya Begum, RIB.

The session began with a short welcome address by Dr Meghna Guhathakurta, Executive Director, RIB.

In her address Dr. Meghna Guhathakurta welcomed everyone who were present at the dialogue meeting. She further discussed the background for formation of SANDD platform and objective of the stakeholder dialogue which was to identify affected communities in the country vulnerable to forced displacement. The purpose of the dialogue was to create an environment in which communities work out what they want, what they can do for themselves, and what they need from outside the community (government, international institutions). The objective of this dialogue was to encourage participating members from communities, organizations and experts to think organically about challenges/problems e.g. how they are connected; why have previous solutions not worked out; what is really at the root of a particular problem and so on. She further emphasized that this dialogue has been arranged between different stakeholders in order to encourage them to identify the short, medium, and long-term challenges the community they work with face or they themselves face which leads to displacement.

Following inaugural speech by Dr. Meghna Guhathakurta a short presentation was made by Ruhi Naz, RIB based on the concept note circulated beforehand on the SANDD Network.



Panel discussants

Dr. Monirul Islam Khan- Professor of Sociology Department, Dhaka University said that through this dialogue we can develop research guideline or possibility of intervening research areas. We do not have much scope to explore in a situation where already discrimination/displacement took place. For every displacement we have to look deeper into structural factors. It is necessary to explore the perspective of those structural factors e.g. the notion of minority can be a big structural factor. We must look into questions on how the culture of minority started in Bangladesh. State formation also plays a big role in creating culture of minority. He said that displacement areas should be narrowed down to territorial/geographical parameters. We could go for descriptive research where we do mapping on incidences of displacement, incidence of discrimination and deprivation. We can also undertake theoretical research where we look into structural and causal factors for displacement to identify how over the years it took place.

Sultana Kamal- Human Rights Activist, said that the kind discussion that took place in the dialogue meeting are truly an eye opener as there are so many diverse communities brought under the common banner of displacement. This gives food for thought. From this very meeting there are so many incidences of systematic discrimination, deprivation and displacement that communities have brought forth that it will help in constituting a research agenda to collectively

work on. She focused on the actual situation prevailing in the country where there is systematic deprivation and discrimination taking place on a daily basis. In the name of development we are only focusing on structural development which is normal and usual but very little are we realizing that most of the communities are being discriminated just because they belong to certain ethnicity, religion, culture. Every time we are creating divisions among ourselves in spite of being educated or non-educated. Women particularly live in fear and apprehension of being harassed at any moment. Their right to live and survive in dignity can be taken away. Unfortunately state mechanism in one way or other support this violations. Their needs to be a kind of autonomous thinking rather than depending on the state.

The Chair Dr. Hameeda Hossain, founder director of Ain O Salish Kendra (ASK) and vice-chairperson of RIB, mentioned about violation of rights, harassment of women and discrimination taking place within the country. She mentioned that policy makers in our country do not usually tend to connect themselves with community; rather they are more used to holding meetings in uptown hotels. It is very necessary that there should be proper engagement of policy makers and community people. She focused on the discrimination of women who are displaced due to climate induced crisis. There is a decision from High Court that without providing means of relocation slum dwellers cannot be evicted or displaced from their slum for any development works by the government. She strongly voiced against displacement taking place in the name of development by the government, powerful individuals representing the private sector. She suggested that through this network there must be an attempt by each community to prepare their history or origin so that the same can be presented to the policy makers which then can also be taken to the international community.



SESSION 2: Group discussions following world café method.

Group 1: Gender - Challenges

1. Rohingya women's mobility being restricted in the camps in the name of religion and security.
2. Trafficking
3. Violation of fundamental rights of Hijras/transgenders and other sexual minority groups including housing problems
4. The mobility of Hijra women are constrained socially and by law enforcing agencies.
5. Changing names in the National Identity Card is a real problem for Hijras and Enclave residents.
6. Women are being deprived from their legally allocated rights to property in the name of marriage.
7. Bedays (river gypsies) especially women have not been included in education policy. They have to enroll in educational institutes through hiding their identity.
8. As a result they are also deprived of health and legal services.
9. Indigenous women are being displaced in the name of development. It is affecting their cultural and daily living.
10. Communal violence results from land grabbing tendencies.
11. Slum evictions have particularly negative impact on women.
12. Empowerment of Rohingya women are particularly affected by the lack of education.

13. Early marriage is a problem
14. Seasonal / traditional migratory patterns of Bedays are being constrained.
15. No privacy for women in disaster shelters; hence prone to rape and sexual harassment.
16. Privacy is also a problem for Harijon(dalit) women as they face housing crisis and congestion of living space.

Developmental implications:

1. In-depth research on each marginalized communities through networking with progressive men in each community as their cooperation would be needed.
2. Existing policies that favour marginalized communities must be implemented.
3. Sensitization in gender (inclusive of transgenders) must take place.
4. Advocacies and dialogue between civil society and government must take place on issue of transgenders
5. Any policy which concerns marginalized communities must be finalized with the consultation of relevant stakeholders of the communities.
6. Women's conscientization process must be conducted at various levels through, rallies, seminars, workshops and training.
7. Lawmakers and legal policy makers should be informed on gender issues.
8. Census of women in all minority groups must be made so that appropriate development policies may ensue from it.

Group 2. Minorities - Challenges

Representation of plainland indigenous people such as Santals, Mundas, Bedey, Urdu speakers residing in camps

1. Deprived from allowance for the elderly
2. Land grabbing and eviction (particularly in Saidpur)
3. Intimidation of the communities (prior to eviction/grabbing of property)
4. Right to mother tongue and culture affected by practices of cultural assimilation.
5. Occupation of recorded property
6. Refusal to take cases in office/courts
7. Inequality in Government allocation of resources
8. Crisis in occupation and livelihood
9. Occupation of land entitlements
10. Barriers to practicing social and cultural activities
11. Deprivation from accessing traditional justice systems.

Dalits:

1. Social barriers to attending educational institutions
2. Deprivation of educational rights
3. Occupational discrimination
4. Deprived from proper housing
5. Deprivation from health services
6. Displaced from land
7. Infliction of inferiority complex

8. Religious discrimination
9. Untouchability/access to justice
10. Dalit women doubly discriminated as women and as Dalits
11. Occupation of land entitlements
12. Early marriage of Dalit women
13. Targeted victims of rape
14. Susceptible to domestic violence due to their disempowerment

Chittagong Hill Tracts

1. Crisis of identity
2. Eviction from land
3. Barriers to cultural activities in a sublime way
4. Deprived from access to justice
5. Destructive practice of tourism
6. Militarization affecting citizenship rights
7. Deprivation from rehabilitation
8. Insecurity
9. Unplanned Rohingya rehabilitation
10. Deprivation of political rights
11. Women prone to violence in *jum* cultivation

Development implications:

1. Pro-people, pro minority laws should be advocated.
2. Constitutional guarantee for national minorities to be ensured
3. Indigenous people and minorities should have a say in developmental programmes
4. Stop militarization of the Chittagong Hill Tracts
5. Ensure protection of life and property of all minorities (inclusive of women, Dalits, indigenous peoples and hill peoples)
6. All minorities should be ensured of justice/land rights/cultural rights as full citezens of Bangladesh
7. Minorities should be equally implicated in all social protection policies
8. Livelihood and occupational rights should be ensured
9. Steps should be taken to stop all kinds of violence and discrimination against women.

Group 3 Economic condition – Challenges

(income, land and property)

1. Women of marginalized communities are deprived inherited property (inheritance law)
2. Loss of livelihood due to environmental degradation and climate change
3. Loss of livelihood due to religious beliefs (pig grazing for Kawras)
4. Marginalized communities deprived of allocation of khas land
5. Those who lost livelihood does not have guarantee of minimum 100 days of work as in India

6. Victims of intimidation and land grabbing by pirates, bureaucrats, local politicians due to vulnerabilities and disempowerment
7. Economic problems due to displacement
8. Loss of primary livelihoods due to modernization e.g. Bedeys
9. Loss of land causes children to drop out from schools or remain uneducated
10. Lack of permanent settlement/habitation
11. Lack of innovative technology causes the marginalized to remain uder the poverty line
12. Social stigma and taboos results in discrimination in social, culturalpolitical spheres
13. Lack of employment opportunities creates strata of educated unemployed
14. Lack of just wages
15. Camp (Urdu speaking residents) residents are deprived of health, legal and other official services

Development implications

1. Opportunities for permanent settlement
2. Opportunities for official services
3. Separate accounting by BBS in the census
4. To be considered a priority issue in the next 5 year plan
5. Create social awareness towards the marginalizaed besides taking legal action
6. Social platform for the marginalized needed
7. Promote Participatory action research for better understanding of correct information and cultures of the marginalized

SESSION 2: Plenary Wrapping Up Group Discussions

Chair: Dr. Meghna Guhathakurta, ED, RIB
Plenary Session speakers to share group works findings: Utpal Khisa on Minority, Ms. Salma on Gender, Advocate Tajul Islam on Citizenship and access to justice, Suraiya Begum on climate and environment, Ujjal Das on Economic condition.

Closing Remarks and Wrapping up

Dr. Meghna Guhathakurta observed that today's meeting was constructive. Though there were separate themes at the start, in the end it was revealed that all these themes were cross-cutting and that each on was a different entry point to the common subject of displacement. She said that the development agenda as part of new liberal framework that was market orientated and profit driven were causing harm to many especially the vulnerable communities and the ecological context they lived in. She said that systemic feeling of discrimination/insecurity has become a potential ground for displacement. We could therefore focus on the theme of **displacement through discrimination and development** and include both rural and urban societies. In that way the various communities and the challenges they face could come under a single study area.

Events of RTI for year 2020

Participation at Webinar and fair organized by Information Commission

In the year 2020 on 28th September RIB participated in the Annual event organized by the Information Commission to celebrate RTI Day. The event was organized in person and through online participation.

RTI Resource Centre

Three RTI Resource Centre in the fields of North zone has been established by RIB's beneficiaries voluntarily. These resource centers have been established to answer queries on process of drafting and filling RTI, development initiatives, social service as provided by government and any other information which needs to be give including assisting in filling RTI application. At resource centre activists make people aware about RTI law and helping them in filling up RTI form, appeal and complaint ad keeping records of it. That resource centre has been prepared in a way to display some good number of information on service related matters from government to the general public.

Webinar on importance of RTI and last 1 year experience of RTI especially during pandemic in Bangladesh

RIB organized multiple stakeholders' webinar on 1 year experience of RTI with representation from organizations and Dos from Representation from Information Commission, CSOs from Thakurgaon, Panchagarh, Rajshahi, Naogaon, Rangpur, Dinajpur. RTI Activists and Human Rights defender from Rangpur, Nilphamari, Rajshahi, Naogaon, Dianajpur such meeting were turned out to be very effective and fruit bearing because through these meetings a good relationship emerged between service recipients and providers. These meetings created and atmosphere where citizen felt empowered to initiate a discussion concerning their rights, entitlements.

The RIB Secretariat

Program Department	
Name	**Designation**
Meghna Guhathakurta	Executive Director
Suraiya Begum	Deputy Director
Ruhi Naz	Assistant Director
Rashida Akter	Program officer
Md. Matiur Rahman	Program Officer
Iftekhar Ali	Associate Program Officer
Babul Chandra Sutradhar	Associate Program Officer
Md. Adnan Mashruzzaman	Associate Program Officer
Admin Department	
Nasima Pervin	Assistant Director
Umme Kulsum	Finance Officer
Mehrun Nesda Mary	Assistant Admin Officer