Annual Report 2021 to 2022

Research Initiatives, Bangladesh (RIB) is a Not-for-Profit Organization registered under Companies Act (*Act XVIII*), 1994 of Bangladesh and NGO Affairs Bureau of Prime Minister's Office under Foreign Donations (Voluntary Activities) Regulation Ordinance, 1978. RIB was founded in 2002 by some prominent educators, social scientists and human rights activists to promote knowledge on poverty alleviation that is relevant, useful, innovative, participatory and action-oriented with a special focus on marginalised and socially excluded communities. RIB views poverty as a multidimensional process and recognises that the needs of poverty groups go beyond simple income generation, food and shelter, to areas such as equality, dignity, justice, human rights and good governance. RIB supports marginalised and minority groups who are unable to access basic services due to social discrimination and conduct people's research ("Gonogobeshona") on the development schemes that affects them most, in order to develop ownership and generate community mobilisation.

Over the years, RIB has implemented/conducted over 200 action-based research & follow-up development projects among 31 missing communities that include Santal, Rishi, Munda, Kawra, Manipuri, Sannashi, Harijon, Manta, Marma, transsexuals, traditional village musicians, Nagarchi, Kumar, Buno, Beday, Garo, Chakma, Khumi, Bawali, Bom, Khiang, Choudali, Bhogomeney, Shingh, Bormon, Konch, Behara, fishermen, etc. Beside these groups, RIB has also undertaken commendable action-research based development activities among the seasonally food insecure and monga-affected mainstream marginalized farm and wage-labor households of Nilphamari through dissemination of appropriate agricultural technologies. It is reasonable to say that during the last 10 years RIB has reached through its Research Partnership Network (RPN) around 20,000-25,000 socially excluded and marginalized households. During this period, through its Kajoli pre-school program, 5,000 children from 1,200 economically ultra-poor households are entering the primary schools annually with full preparation. It has also trained and developed around 1,100 community-based internal animators/facilitators to undertake/help poverty reduction among the rural marginalized communities on issues that they themselves have prioritized.

As a beneficiary of the Multi-Annual Multi-Disciplinary Research Program (MMRP) of the Dutch Government since 2002, RIB has worked with eight other MMRP countries in Asia, Africa, and Latin America on poverty related activities. It has also collaborated with the Rosa Luxemburg Stiftung of Germany and the Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative in New Delhi, India to promote the use of Right to Information (RTI) law in Bangladesh by marginalized communities. It also worked with United Nations Women's Guild (UNWG) to implement a part of its pre-school project for the children of marginalized families. Recently, RIB has implemented (i) a project to promote the implementation of RTI, supported by Rosa Luxemburg Foundation for the third phase; (ii) dissemination of Kajoli Pre-Schools for the children of marginalized families supported by KWINTET AB of SWEDEN; (iii) conducting pre-school program through community mobilization for the children inside the refugee camps of Cox's Bazar as implementing partners of United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR); and (iv) dissemination of agricultural technologies for improving food security, adaptation against drought and flash floods among the marginalized and landless households in Nilphamari district under CSISA-IRRI-RIB Partnership project. Among its current projects, RIB is implementing or just concluded (1) A Community Legal Services Program among Santals in Dinajpur and Naogaon in collaboration with BLAST and DFID from 2013 to 2016, (2) Fostering Agrarian Strategies for Overcoming Small Farmer's Challenges in Bangladesh in collaboration with Rosa Luxemburg Stiftung, New Delhi from 2013 to 2015; (3) Strengthening Human Rights Institutionalization through Vulnerable Groups Empowerment (STRIVE) in collaboration with NETZ Bangladesh and BMZ from 2013 to 2016; (4) Exploring Alternative Farming Practices to End Hunger in collaboration with Rosa Luxemburg Stiftung, New Delhi from 2015 to 2016; (5) Civil Society Organizations Strengthen Democratic Governance in collaboration with NETZ Bangladesh –EU from 2015 to 2019.

RIB has also connected the beneficiaries of past projects with regional organizations like the South Asia Women's Fund (SAWF) who have funded women related issues of marginalized communities.

Over the last 6 years, RIB has undertaken some large-scale research works involving survey, interviews, focus group discussions, case studies, local level validation workshops, sharing and dissemination workshops at national level, presentation of findings, and publications out of them. Lobbying work at both local and national levels have been taken both on its own as well as with partnering with like-minded groups such as Nijera Kori, MJF and ALRD on land issues, and issues of untouchability and caste which was effective in making difference in national policy-making.

List of projects 2021-2022

Sl	Name of the Project	Duration	Partner /Donor
1	Transformation Towards ecological and gender justice and sustainability (2022)	January to December 2022	Rosa Luxemburg Stiftung (RLS), Germany
2	Advancing Accountability and Transparency through Right to Information	August 2021 to July 2023	National Endowment for Democracy (NED)
3	Promotion of Social Partnership for Empowerment of marginalized communities in 6 Districts and at national level in Bangladesh (PROSPECT)	January 2020 to December 2022	NETZ Bangladesh/BMZ
4	Building capacities of local communities to mitigate problems created by their discrimination in mainstream societies: ethnic communities, dalits and marginalized women in Rajshahi and Jessore	February 2021 to May 2022	MISEREOR
5	Recovery, Extension and Evaluation of a Kajoli ECL centres for and setting up of a Kajoli Foundation	September 2021 to August 2023	Stiftungauzillium/PORTICUS
6	Hate Speech contextualized and countered through transformative process among marginalized youth: a Participatory Action Research [EWER 1st Phase]	December 2021 to March 2022	The University of Queensland, Australia
7	Implementation of a EWER System to counter gendered violence in Rohingya and host communities in the Cox's Bazar region [EWER 2nd Phase]	July to October 2022	The University of Queensland, Australia

RLS: "Transformation towards ecological and gender justice and sustainability (2022)"

Project Period: 01 January 2022 to 31 December 2022
Purpose of the project: To promote social transformation towards ecological and gender justice, equity and sustainability.
Project Area : Nilphamari, Bogura, Satkhira and Dhaka

Activity 1: Facilitating participatory action research activities and community engagement to develop their capacity on environmental literacy, ecological ethic, civic democracy and the production of transformative knowledge:

a. **Conduct at least 81 meetings on regular basis with at least 9 participatory action research (PAR) groups (9 meetings per group);**
b. **Conduct at least 90 school sessions on agroecology (10 sessions per group/centre)**
c. **Conduct at least 54 meeting on gender issues with different groups including men and women farmers (6 meetings per group);**
d. **Conduct at least 54 meetings with youth groups (6 meetings per group);**

Outputs : The old PAR group members disseminated their learning and working experiences on agroecology and gender issues by establishing three groups on agroecology, gender and youth issues and organizing regular meetings. As a result, a counter narrative is being established in the project areas, Besides, the amount of land under agroecology has increased.

e. **Undertake photo and video documentation of at least 20 farmers highlighting their experience on agro-ecology for further dissemination.**

The project team selected some farmers, youth and women to highlight the agroecology, gender and social justice issues from their experiences. Later, the project staffs conducted videography and the footages and script were edited by a Consultant. Finally, twenty videos of successful farmers, labours, youth and women have prepared. The videos will be uploaded on RIB's YouTube under Voice of The Marginalized series. The list of the videos:

Sl.	Title	Area
1	Success of women farmer in agroecology	Nilphamari
2	Story of being a farmer	
3	Ecological farming by an agro-chemical seller	
4	Success in safe food production using multiple cropping methods	
5	Culture & Agriculture	
6	Snail farming at home	
7	Agricultural activities of woman farmer and non-cultivated food	
8	Voice of a Woman agricultural labour and farmer	Satkhira
9	Success of a woman in engaging with environment friendly income generating activities	
10	Tale of ecological pesticides	
11	Voice of a woman agricultural labour	
12	Success story of a farmer in agroecology at Shyamnagar	
13	Youth in transformation towards a just society	

14	Income generating activities of women	Bogura
15	Tree plantation for nesting birds	
16	Aspiration to cultivate local variety of rice	
17	Success in using bio-fertilizer	
18	Success in cultivating local variety of rice	
19	Wage discrimination and brave initiative of a women labour	
20	Youth program	All

Collective outputs or results generated by the activity: Through these videos, on the one hand, the success and experiences of conducting agroecology have been documented. On the other hand, the situation, struggles and demand of women farmer and labour and youths are revealed. These videos will be helpful to disseminate the agroecological principles and to sensitize target group regarding social justice issues.

Activity 2: Engaging with youths and students and other farm and non-farm community on the issues of agro-ecology, climate change and gender:

a. **Organize at least 3 youth days (like discussion sessions, planning workshop, lecture, essay writing or debate events etc.)**

Nature of Activity: Promotional Activity (Workshop on Ecology, Agriculture and Gender)

b. **Conduct at least 1 action research with students on farming in 3 project areas with school and college students/youths to spread agro-ecology and environmental issues**

In continuation of the previous year's efforts, the agro-ecology plot at the school compound is being cultivated by a group of students, according to the supervision of designated farmer and teacher, following the principles of agro-ecology. The objectives, experiences and findings of the action research are being shared with the other students, teachers and guardians. Some of the students from the group also participated in the workshop under promotional activity. The students, guardians and teachers practically observed and learned the methods of agroecological farming. Based on their experiences an audio-visual content was prepared for broader documentation

Activity 3: Produce educational materials to generate and disseminate information on agro-ecology, climate politics, gender and systemic alternatives in Bangla language:

a. Produce at least 10 video productions on agro-ecology and sustainability issues

The project team selected some topics (comparison between industrial and agroecology, soil, water, seed, multiple cropping, food system, edible oil etc.) to prepare video contents as Educational Materials. Later, Md. Iftekhar Ali (Field Coordinator) and Md. Arman Hossain (Documentation & Training Officer) visited Satkhira, Bogura and Nilphamari to conduct video documentation of the farmers' experiences. The respective Research Assistants helped very much in this regard. Besides, they participated in the meetings to facilitate Participatory Action Research process through capacity building and action. These exercises helped them to incorporate different issues in the videos. Finally, the footages were edited by a hired Consultant. Necessary secondary data was added for the final production. The list of the videos is as follows:

1 Where have all the seeds gone?
2 Soil
3 Marketing of safe crops
4 Multiple cropping
5 Edible Oil Politics
6 Agroecology vs industrial agriculture
7 Rice
8 Agroecology in Educational Instituitions
9 Water management in Satkhira
10 Work of peasant women

These videos revealed the benefits and challenges of the farmers and youths for conducting agroecology. The farming and non-farming communities will get sensitized about agriculture and food system and sustainability issues through these videos. These will be uploaded on RIB's YouTube Channel for broader dissemination.

b. Publish and disseminate at least 1 educational booklet on gender and from agricultural and ecological perspective;

Title of the Booklet: Women in Agroecology and Climate Crisis

Brief description of content of this booklet: There are two parts to the book "Women in agroecology and Climate Crisis" by Suraiya Begum; a. Agroecology and women farmers in Bangladesh and b. Women farmers in agriculture and climate crisis. The first part of the book describes who are farmers and whether women's involvement in agriculture in Bangladesh is recognized as farmers as women's recognition as farmers is still lacking. In the context of the relationship of the state with agriculture, it has been observed that the nature of the state is influenced by class, even if the marginal farmers are in the majority, they cannot be decision-makers. The description of the current nature of agriculture in Bangladesh has revealed that Bangladesh is in a good position in various agricultural productions, but due to neo-liberal policies, the condition of small and marginal farmers is not being improved. Agriculture has not yet achieved status as a prestigious profession.

According to the 2022 census in Bangladesh, women outnumber men. And the majority of women are involved in agriculture and this number is increasing. But this work of women is counted as auxiliary work. But women are involved in most agricultural activities. On the other hand, women are also victims of discrimination in terms of agricultural labor wages. Various aspects of women's work, wage inequality, and women's disempowerment are highlighted here. It also mentions how agroecology creates opportunities for women's work.

The second part of the book discusses the impact of the climate crisis on women. Women are more affected by natural disasters caused by climate change. The loss rate is higher in women than in men during and after the crisis. If agroecology can be made sustainable, it will play a vital role in preventing climate crises. Therefore agroecology-based farming systems will help in creating a sensitive nature. The involvement of women in agriculture is high, so it is expected to be women-friendly.

c. Publish and disseminate at least 1 educational booklet on 'development' or systemic alternatives;

Title of the Booklet: Alternative Systems: In search of happiness and welfare economics

Brief description of content of this booklet: In this booklet, the contemporary ecological, social and cultural challenges of capitalism and growth-based economy was highlighted and the alternative narratives (degrowth, buen vivir, de-colonialism etc.) were discussed. There are three chapters in this booklet. The first chapter described the historical and local perspective of colonialism, capitalism and free market economy. Besides, alternatives visions of good life are also discussed. The aspects and importance of the Commons are highlighted in the second chapter. Local, regional and international situation and commitments are described here. Finally, the challenges related to the imposition of cultural globalization and the importance of localization is discussed in the third chapter. Overall, the booklet guided the readers toward just transition and ecological and gender justice.

Activity 4: Organise at least 3 local schools on gender and agriculture;

The local school on gender and agriculture was held at Upazila Farmers' Training Center in Shymnagar, Satkhira to strengthen the understanding of both women and men farmers as well youth on the concepts of gender equality, gender discrimination, women empowerment, gender division of labor and agriculture, as well as providing training and facilitation. Women and men farmers as well as youth were chosen from three project areas: Dhumghat, Patrakhola and Bongshipur. Besides, the Upazila (Sub-district) Agriculture Officer and Upazila Women's Affairs Officer and a journalist were invited to the school in order to provide linkage for the participants with the government offices. Participants from three villages travelled by hired microbus to attend the school. The total number of participants at the school was 25. During the school days, they travelled to the venue and learnt and shared their experiences and knowledge with one another in formal sessions and refreshment breaks. The school sessions began on 8th March, 2022 in the morning after the celebration of the International Women's Day with the Upazila Administration and other NGOs and finished on 9th March, 2022 in the evening. The training sessions were conducted by the project coordinator Suraiya Begum and the DTO Md. Arman Hossain, RIB. The school included discussions, guests' opinions, journalist's notes, Q&A segments and the exchange of ideas.

The local school on gender and agriculture with the goal of strengthening the skills and knowledge of women and men farmers as well as youth in the areas of gender and agriculture so that they can bear the light and be change makers in their communities. The module of the training sessions was prepared by the project coordinator based on a number of literatures on gender and agriculture, and the practical experience of the fields in this area.

Activity 5: Conduct at least 1 Round table dialogue on agriculture and climate crisis with government actors, policy makers, and civil society organisations;

- Title of activity: Dialogue on Agriculture & Climate Crisis
- Date, place and duration of event/activity: 12 December 2022; Azimur Rahman Conference Hall, The Daily Star, Dhaka; Half-day

A national-level Dialogue on Agriculture and Climate Crisis was organized at The Daily Star Auditorium, Dhaka, on 19 December 2022. Eminent Geneticist Professor Dr. Md. Shahidur Rashid Bhuiyan, Vice Chancellor, Sher-e-Bangla Agricultural University, Dhaka was present as special speaker at the event. High-ranking officials and experts of various government and non-government organizations participated in this dialogue. Notable among them are – the Bangladesh Agricultural Research Council (BARC), Bangladesh Agricultural Development Corporation (BADC), Bangladesh Agricultural Research Institute (BARI), Bangladesh Institute of Neuclear Agriculture (BINA), Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies (BIDS), Department of Agricultural Extension (DAE), Department of Fisheries, Bangladesh Khetmajur Samity, Communist Party of Bangladesh (CPB), Association for Land Reform and Development (ALRD), Bangladesh Centre for Advance Studies (BCAS), Bangladesh Legal Aid Services Trust (BLAST), Centre for Participatory Research & Development (CPRD), Prakritik Krishi, Subhash Palekar Natural Farming movement Bangladesh, Prakritik Niramoy Kendra etc. Md. Shamsuddoha, CPRD, Md Iftekhar Ali and Suraiya Begum from RIB, presented papers to highlight the politics and social and ecological issues of sustainable agriculture and climate crisis. The program was presided over by Professor M M Akash, Department of Economics, University of Dhaka.

The government officials of different agencies under the Ministry of Agriculture and academics got sensitized regarding the contemporary agrarian challenges, global climate politics, false solutions and debt trap. They also informed about the activities of different actors engaged in promoting agroecology and climate justice. It will open horizon for the relevant actors to work together.

Activity 6: Conduct at least 1 workshop on class relations and agriculture to deepen the understanding on agrarian situation in the country;

Nature of Activity: Hybrid workshop (in-person in Bangladesh with online participants from India and Bangladesh through Zoom app)

Title of activity: Workshop on Agrarian & Class Relations

Date, place and duration of event/activity: 30-31 July 2022; Alok Hall Room, Manusher Jonno Foundation, Mirpur-2, Dhaka, Bangladesh

This event was supposed to be organized in collaboration with Foundation for Agrarian Studies in 2020. But due to COVID-19 pandemic related restrictions the event was postponed then. In 2022, the preparatory activities to organize this event had resumed. Later, the agenda and schedule of the workshop were developed jointly by RIB and FAS through intensive discussion. The representatives of farmers and agricultural-labour organizations, politicians, academics and researchers were invited by RIB to attend the event in person and FAS selected the Indian participants and experts. A suitable venue with online meeting facility was hired and microbuses were rented to ensure transport arrangement and avoid delay and other mismanagement.

The workshop began with the introductory speech by Suraiya Begum (Project Coordinator). Dr. Shamsul Bari (Chairman, RIB) delivered the Welcome Address while Nadja Dorschner (Resident Representative, RLS South Asia) provided the Inaugural Address. Later, Sandipan Baksi (Director, FAS) introduced the topics of the sessions and the first session, namely The Agrarian Question, got started. From the Indian side, V. K. Ramachandran (Trustee, FAS)

discussed The Agrarian Question in India. Professor Monirul Islam Khan (Department of Sociology, University of Dhaka) chaired the session and shared the Bangladesh situation. After a brief discussion the second session started and The Method of Village Studies and Nature of Classes in the Indian Countryside were presented by Arindam Das and Niladri Shekhar Dhar from FAS. Participants from Bangladesh also shared their working experiences and comments. The session was also chaired by Professor Monirul Islam Khan. The post-lunch session was attended by the participants of Bangladesh only. Suraiya Begum chaired the session and the participants intensively discussed the scope of research on Agrarian Relations in Bangladesh.

On the second day, the FAS staff presented some results from village studies. So far, they have covered more than seventeen thousand households during the last seventeen years. Participants from Bangladesh also provided comments on the results and methodology and shared their working experiences and findings in Bangladesh. The session was chaired by Sandipan Baksi. After that, Professor Madhura Swaminathan (Trustee, FAS & Head, Economic Analysis Unit, Indian Statistical Institute) discussed Women's work in rural India, while Meghna Guhathakurta (Executive Director, RIB) shared comparative discussion on Bangladesh situation. Fifth session was dedicated for climate change and agriculture and Professor Thiagarajan Jayaraman (Tata Institute of Social Sciences) presented a paper to highlight Indian perspectives. The experts and politicians from Bangladesh provided comments on his paper and shared the local situation. Moreover, Professor M M Akash (University of Dhaka) briefly discussed the agrarian relations in Bangladesh and other cross-cutting issues. Later, Vinod Koshti (RLS) provided the concluding remarks and emphasized on future collaboration and sharing. Finally, an open discussion was held on possible collaboration and the workshop came to an end.

The RIB-RLS publications were displayed during the workshop days and the in-person participants collected copies according to their interest. Besides, FAS also showed their website for detailed reports and e-publications for further clarification.

Activity 7: Conduct at least 1 online seminar/meeting on gender and agriculture.

- Title of activity: Agro-ecology and Women Farmers in Bangladesh
- Date & place : 16 November 2022; Through Zoom online Platform;

Research Initiatives Bangladesh (RIB) organized a webinar via Zoom online pltaform on November 16, 2022, under the title "Agroecology and Women Farmers in Bangladesh". Suraiya Begum, Director and project coordinator of RIB, presented the keynote speech on this occasion. The panel discussants were Dr. Mahbuba Nasreen, Vice Chancellor, Open University; Dr. Meghna Guhathakurta Executive Director, RIB; Pavel Partha, BARCIK and Sanzida Sultana, Kormojibi Nari. The total participant 32 people in this event, were researchers, NGO activists, journalists, students and many more. Dr. Geeti Ara Nasreen, Department of Mass Communication and Journalism, University of Dhaka and Board Member, RIB presided over this important event. Earlier, invitation was sent to the relevant actors.

Suraiya Begum discussed in her presentation that since the beginning of agriculture, women were very closely associated with the practices and wisdom related to agro-biodiversity management. In Bangladesh, the share of women in the agricultural workforce is gradually

increasing. Population Census 2022 identified 165,158,696 people and 68.49% of them are living in rural areas. The total number of women is slightly higher than the number of men. 18.7 million Women workers are engaged in agriculture, industry, and service sector, as per Labor Survey 2016-17. This report also marked “agriculture” as a very important sector of the economy, due to the dependency of 40.62% workforce in this sector, while the contribution to GDP reached the lowest at 13.57%. In the agriculture workforce, women contributed 64.8%, hence their role is very crucial.

Since the Green Revolution, industrial chemical inputs dependent on commercial agriculture gradually spread all over the country. Farmers pay the cost of their daily necessities from their earnings from selling agricultural produce. As the living cost is getting high, the farmers started cultivating different high-yielding or hybrid varieties of crops. These seeds are mainly marketed by different transnational or big companies and can be found in the agricultural inputs shop at village markets. However, these types of seeds are not suitable for conservation in farmers’ households and require artificial fertilizers, biocides, and irrigation to grow. Internationally all these inputs are controlled by a group of corporations. In the open market economy, this market and technology-based model of agriculture is creating challenges from gender and ecological point of view. Here, the role of the “rural women” is almost invisible. Besides, the techno-knowledge is beyond their range. It is important to know the position of women in this modern agricultural system. Is this system women-friendly? So, RIB got involved with women farmers to explore the engagements, activities, wages, recognition, and challenges of women farmers.

The paper discusses what kind of role women are playing in the current agricultural work, and the challenges. Why the contribution of women's work not included in GDP and why women’s work is invisible and gender discrimination of wages are existing in the agricultural labor market? It is discussed that agroecology shows potential as an alternative farming system, where women have the opportunity to work; it also helps in food security. Finally, it was discussed how the sustainability of agroecology can be sustained according to sustainable development goals.

After Suraiya Begum's discussion, Chairperson Professor Geeti Ara Nasreen, Department of Journalism and Mass Communication, Dhaka University opened the floor for discussion.

Mahbuba Nasreen, Vice Chancellor, Open University, Dhaka mentioned that the SDGs targets to be achieved by 2030, where food security includes agriculture and forestry. Number two of Sustainable development goals talks about ensuring food security to reduce hunger.

In order to eliminate the undernutrition of women, the relationship between women and agriculture comes into discussion, that is, women are seed savers. They know which seeds will do well in which places, and which seeds to plant where. These techniques are a matter of women's own knowledge. It is also a place of women empowerment. If research can be done, gender inclusion or intersectionality in agriculture is being seen, then the role of women is being recognized.

Executive Director of RIB, Dr. Meghna Guhathakurta raised a question, who will be called women farmers? Those women who have their own land i.e. those who are land owners and those who are daily wage laborers are also included as farmers. Those who are producing crops only as agricultural producers are farmers those who are labouring for the cultivation of agricultural crops are also called farmers. A way forward policy can be adopted if the concept is clear.

The evolution of agriculture in Bangladesh shows that women once had an important place in agriculture, but were not recognized. Currently getting a kind of recognition but the role of women has been removed from the important place.

Women are losing their traditional jobs. The jobs are going to the mechanization of agriculture and going to the new industrial owners in the market. The more they move out of these places into the farming community, they lose recognition as producers.

Wherever technology is coming, spaces must be paved so that women can use those technologies. They need to develop those skills.

Pavel Partha, BARCIK, joined the discussion online while attending Cop-27 in Egypt and said that those currently leading the world as corporate powers are largely male-centric and see the future of agriculture from the perspective of corporate interests. A huge amount of capital investment is contemplated in this arena. Inter-sectionality is not considered in agriculture.
Our subsistence agriculture system has been destroyed and adapted to the neoliberal system of agriculture. Agroecology is threatened by chemical agriculture.

In agriculture, women are working in rural areas as agricultural laborers. These women have no control over the seeds, they cannot decide what seeds to sow in which season. Most women do not have the power to make decisions on soil, land, and agricultural technology.

There are also questions about the accuracy of what is being said about food safety; It differs on the basis of region, caste and race. Recognizing that food has a socio-cultural diversity, a single food system is imposed and its production system cannot be equally good for all. It has been relatively burdensome, and oppressive for women.

Sanzida Sultana, Kormojibi Nari, Dhaka said, we need to work directly with women farmers to save the environment and biodiversity. Because the number of male workers in integrated agriculture is gradually decreasing. Men do not always work full-time in agriculture, they migrate seasonally outside the village. But during rice planting or harvesting they back to the village, and the rest of the time they stay outside the area. So, women are mostly engaged in agricultural work. It is called the feminization of agriculture, although it is not based on equality, there is wage inequality.

Professor Geeti Ara Nasreen said in closing remarks, we know that we must be self-sufficient in the coming emergency. For this, external sources will not be readily available. Therefore, how to make agroecology more developed and sustainable needs to be brought forward.

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PROSPECT

The overall objective of the PROSPECT Project is: Human Rights Defenders and public authorities are strengthened to protect and promote rights of marginalized communities in 6 districts and on the national level

A : Access to Social Safety Net Programs by excluded groups - situation in six districts under the PROSPECT project and policy recommendations

The specific objectives are to:

- To undertake analysis of social exclusion that will inform National Social Security Strategy (NSSS) with the intention to incorporate socially excluded groups to access social transfers.
- To indicate the barriers to access services and make policy recommendations

The methodology followed in this research was:

- Reviewing existing documents and literature
- Conducting a survey based on semi-structured questionnaire to 633 HRDs (CSOs), HRDs (human rights groups) and HRDs(high school groups).
- Conducting Key Informant Interviews (KII) with project managers and field facilitators of 3 organizations: DASCOH, MKP and Pollisree working 6 districts

The sample area covered 6 Districts : Naogaon, Dinajpur, Thakurgaon, Rangpur, Panchagar and Rajshahi

Gender balance of the sample was maintained at 51.2% female; and 48.8% male. According to ethnicity the balance was proportionate to the total population in the area i.e. 78.5% Bangalees, 21.5% Indigenous people.

In terms of the geographic area, 82.5% questionnaires was conducted at the community, 9.8% at the Upazila level and 7.7% at the district level.

The following findings can be highlighted:

- NGOs played greater role in accessing SSNP benefits. Knowledge about SSNPs was mostly gained through NGOs. Accessibility too was made easier by NGO membership.
- Male respondents had direct contact with UP Chairman/Members or local political leaders
- 74.4% and 72.5% of female and male respondents respectively have opinion that women not involved in the NGO groups finds it difficult to access SSNP benefits

- VGF benefits goes mainly to women and indigenous people since they are meant for underprivileged. Comparatively education and old age benefits goes mostly to Bengalis and women.

In terms of enlistment to SSNP and rejections from it, it was found that:

- 30.8% of total respondents got listed in SSNP beneficiary lists
- Female applicants were rejected one to 3 times
- Reasons were not usually given
- 34.% received verbal response to rejections e.g. " next time you will be considered or you are financially strong or limited allocations, few cards

Perceptions of attitudes of officials by community were as follows:

- Majority did not respond, possibly out of fear of repercussion.
- 14%-16% of those who responded admitted to facing misbehavior from officials. Others did not respond.
- 33.6% of respondents thought they did not receive benefits as they refused to pay bribes, 23.7% thought the system was biased against them

Recommendations from respondents were:

- 14% of the respondents recommended for ensuring equal human rights and dignity of the marginal/minority groups, changing mindset of both government authorities and the marginal/minority people towards service providing and asking for services respectively, and thereby establishing transparency.

- About 7% of the respondents indicated having more communications with government authorities including UP chairman and member as well as local influential people for the benefits.

- Around 6% of the respondents point to discussions, meetings, trainings with and for the local community groups about the service provisions, as well as with the local authorities regarding access of the minority/marginal communities to the services.

The suggested ways forward were:

- Bring changes in the mindset of the government officials dealing with SSNP services.

- Increase the allocations of SSNP benefits among the marginal/minority groups.

- Civil society groups including the rights defenders need to stand by the vulnerable groups with information, and assistance in accessing the benefits

B. Gender justice for hardtop reach and marginalized communities in rural areas in Bangladesh

objective and outcome of the Project : Human rights defenders and public authorities are strengthened to protect and promote rights of marginalized communities in 6 districts and on the national level. 12,500 capacitated human rights defenders (HRDs) and 1,200 representatives of public authorities effectively cooperate to protect and promote the economic, social and cultural rights of women, religious minorities and indigenous peoples; they disseminate their experiences in wider civil society networks in South Asia.

Specific Objectives of the study : To have a comprehensive understanding on overall situation of gender justice and structural causes of deprivation of access to justice for members of marginalized communities.

To further look into and undertake an analysis on challenges of gender justice mechanism in rural areas that will inform and pave the way for a policy brief for strengthening institution and existing mechanism with a view to incorporate social inclusion as well as to explore how far socially excluded groups are able to access justice and what are the barriers.

Methodology : Document review: Existing documents (e.g. reports and review materials) related to the selected themes were reviewed at the beginning to understand the project objectives and activities.

For field data collection, a semi-structured questionnaire was developed with consultations, inputs and revisions by RIB and NETZ Bangladesh.

For qualitative data collection, Indepth Interview and KII with indigenous leaders, government bodies, students and project staffs of 3 organisations namely DASCOH, MKP and Pollisree working in 6 districts.

Collect case studies at the field through In-depth interview.

Nature of Sample:

A mix of cluster and stratified random sampling approach is adopted for the survey

6 Districts: Naogaon, Dinajpur, Thakurgaon,Rangpur, Panchagarh, Rajshahi; 12 Upazilas

Total Sample: 600; 77.7% female, 19.5% male and 2.8% trans-gender/Hijra

Ethnicity: % Bangalees with mainstream marginal Muslims, religious Hindus and caste-based minority Dalits; 20% Indigenous

Geographic area: 82.5% Community, 9.8% Upazila; 7.7% District level

Sample by age of the respondents: Age 21-30 44.7%, 31-40 21.5%, 11-20 19.8%, 41-60+ 14%,

Sample by main income source: 41.5% are wage labour, 7.2% are doing small business, 5% are fishermen, 4.5% are Rickshaw/van pullers, 3.2% are drivers, 1.5% are farmers

Nature of gender –based violence : 27.8% respondents spoke about domestic violence, 0.5% women respondents violence against throwing acid and use of other burning materials, 35.5% women reported of trafficking women and children, rape, eve teasing etc. Harassment through social media has been newly found avenue of gender-based violence. Among the respondent's sexual harassments through social media, 10.7% reported on derogatory and negative post on social media, 7.3% suffered due to posting picture without permission), 3% responded about harassment using apps like imo, WhatsApp, Messenger, 8.7% responded harassment through receiving inappropriate video clips, and 0.5% through receiving inappropriate picture, 0.7% respondents claimed to be stigmatized and dishonored due to uploading picture and videos, 0.5% reported facing extortion and demand money against threat of uploading picture and videos. 63.8% women did not faced these type experience, perhaps they do not use the social media.

Challenges of accessing justice in everyday life of marginalized women :

(1) 22.5% of the respondents affirmed they face obstacle in terms of weak economic condition. There has more obstacles to access to justice including stigmatisation, lack of awareness about the laws, without maintaining legally permitted steps during marriage, no appropriate application of laws, long process in getting relief from court.

(2) 96.2% respondents reported they have experience of facing persecution.

(3) Type of persecutions- 28.5% of the respondents reported they have been tortured by their addicted husband. The rest of the respondents reported different type of persecution and torture including economic crisis, eve teasing, harassment on public places, sexual harassment, rape, forced marriage and religion conversion, persecution at workplace, torture by family in-laws, extra marital affairs, family threat and acid use.

(4) Responses on getting justice on persecution of economic, caste and ethnicity based :27.5% admitted of getting justice and 72.5% respondents gave no answer

Case studies : On nature of violence and status of access to justice

(1) A woman from Rishi community of Pirgonj, Thakurgaon leading a miserable life due to her drunkard husband's perverted act, demand of dowry and physical assault.

Field observation: When the woman was talking about her painful experiences to the female data collectors in the field. That time other women present there were bad mouthing about her and exclaimed "Don't you have shame? By telling these secrets to outsiders, you are defaming your husband. Husband's family has to be taken care of. You have to stay with your husband's house"

(2) I am still waiting for justice for my daughter said a mother from Rangpur

My daughter was raped ten years ago and a case was filed by my daughter. Case is still pending, my husband is a wage laborer, he is only one earner of our family. We face difficulty in running the case. We pay two thousand BDT for each hearing and we are unable to bear the cost. Six witnesses called several times by the court. The day when the witnesses are present, the cost increases to five thousand BDT. In the meantime, my daughter got married to another boy, she is staying with her in-law's family. Her husband is not interested to attend the hearing, still my daughter attend the hearing but how long she can continue if this persists.

Violence against marginalized women :

Out of the total respondents 96.8% respondent had no answer. 0.5% women respondents admitted of violence against them which included throwing acid and others burning materials, trafficking rape. Other form of harassment

- Among the respondents, 35.5% reported eve teasing, 11.3% harassment on road, 4.3% false promises in love affairs, 3% lured into marriage , 2.2% force conversion of religion,1.8% harassment in work place, 6.3% force sex work.

Harassment through social media

- KII participant observed many people harassed the girls by sending nude pictures and videos, even many ones harassed me by sending nude pictures and videos. They are used to entice girls into adultery or love and sexual activities.

Deprivation of women

- Among the respondents 47.5% respondents talked about deprivation in wage, 29.5% Deprivation from the father's property and 11.7% Deprivation from the husband's property and 11.3% did not respond.

Seeking remedies against persecution

Never sought remedy - 34.5%
At administrative offices – 2.0%
At Police station – 12.5%
Court cases – .7%
Representative of civil society – 1.8%
At father's home - 13.5%
Through family members – 8.9%
At Union Parishad – 10.5%
Village Shalish -1.8%
No Response – 13.8%

Cause of not taking legal steps :

KII & In-depth interview statement revealed :

Activist – stigmatisation, bad relationship with family and neighbours, lack of economic viability, threats, fear of social boycott etc

Legal Practitioner - It is essential for them to know the information of legal steps. If they know, they will get support wherever they go. Here are two constraint for them i) Unknown or less

education and ii) Lack of money. They can go to NGO or Word Councillor who will refer them to Legal Aid Office where the case can be solved for free. They still cannot afford to go directly to a lawyer.

Respondents- Majority of the respondents (46.3%) preferred no answer in response to giving opinions regarding cause of not taking legal steps. The rest (around 4.8% said court cases make it difficult to get job, 11.2% respondent said do not get sufficient documents, 12% said do not have sufficient evidence, 9.2% said do not get help from the family)

Access to gender justice through information mechanism

Majority of the respondents (76.7%) preferred no answer in response to giving opinions regarding the mediation of village court. Second highest respondents(35.5%) reported men talk loudly over the women on the mediation in dalit mediation process, 26.2% said men conduct the mediation which is the cause of dissatisfaction of mediation process, 16.5% said less opportunity to talk for the women.

Behavior at police station :

On facing obstacles at police station

Majority of the respondents (83.3%) preferred no answer in response to the question.. 12% said Yes, 0.7% said No.

During KII, participant informed that when the marginal woman victim goes to the police station alone, police misbehave especially while writing a statement. If marginal women go to the police station/village court with a local representative, the law and order forces take it very seriously.

The case of a Santal indigenous woman can help understand the situation at a police station. She went to work in a crop field that time a young person of the mainstream community raped her. She told this to her husband and they filed a police report. The woman described how she was treated at the police station filling FIR. She had to tell what happened on her in front of three police officers separately. After giving a statement, one sent to another room to give same statement to other person. In this time, they were talking to themselves through wireless. After taking the statement, she was sent to the hospital for medical test. During this period, the police contacted the accused through the local union council. The woman did not know what was in the medical report. When she asked the police, they said there are a few symptoms of positive result. The verdict will not go in your favor. The police came to his house for investigation and spoke to the neighbours. Then the case was settled for Rs 2 lakh BDT with local mediation. Out of these two lakh BDT, the woman's family received only 80 thousand BDT.

Nature of obstacles at police :

More and more times for interrogation at police station during filling of the case - 2.30%
Different people interrogate at police station during file the case – 7.2%
No women police - .7%

They request to describe the case in front of many people - 2.8%
harassment after arrest - .5%
No Respone - 86.5%
Problems during court hearings

Majority of the respondents (86.5%) preferred no answer in response to the question of Any obstacle at Court. The rest (around 10% yes and 3.5% no) have reported about facing obstacle at court during the hearing of the cases.

The speech of an acid survivor of Dinajpur revealed the frustrations- Survivor narrates after the case was filed, the accused was arrested. Within 10 days of filing the case, they came to know that all the accused have got bail. It is three years I am still waiting for the justice. It has been three years since the incident took place, I am waiting for trial of the case. Even after changing the police administration and several lawyers, I have not received the justice. I am only harassed in everywhere. In these three years, I presented at the court three times. But I could not bring up the case for hearing. She also said, "The shoes have worn off in these three years, but I am still walking the steps of the law for justice.

Majority of the respondents (88%) preferred no answer in response to the question describing the type of problems faced by women during trial of the case. The rest around 5.8% said they are distracted at court by the opposite lawyers and others and 4.2% said they feel helpless for long time trial as well as for harassment to the witness and bribery by the peshkar.

Awareness about the work of CSO in the working area

Out of the total respondents, 55.3% reported yes, they know the work of CSO and 39.3 % did not know the works of prospect project.

Awareness about national help desk number

Out of the total respondents, 33.5% reported yes, they know the national help desk number and 55 % did not know the number.

Among the respondent's knowledge of the National Help Desk number, 33.0% reported of 999, 3.2% reported of 333, 2.2% reported of 109 and 61.7% did not know about the service of National help desk number.

Seeking help from National Help Desk Number

The report says, no one has taken help from the national Help Desk number.

Knowledge about Legal Aid institution

The respondents knowledge of government legal aids has been tested. Among the total, 39.3% respondents kept silent and 34.5% respondents do not know the services. Only 9.3% responded about DLAC, 5.7% about UZLAC, 3% about Upazila Nari O shishu Nirjaton Protirodh Committee and 8.2% about Union Nari o Shishu Nirjaton Protirodh Committee has been reported.

Recommendations:

To Local Authorities

- Need increase awareness of legal support units
- Provide information of legal support especially District Legal Aid(DLAC) office.
- Provide councelling support to the women by women affairs department and by other wings of government
- Provide more training and create opportunity to be self-solvence in economically

To Civil society and community

- Government and NGOs should work together promoting legal aids services
- Need unity among the women and the right activist
- Defend equal rights, dignity by ensuring measures to protect law and order in the society, and by establishing reporting on abuse, violence and torture
- Continue awareness raising, connecting UP, police and legal wings
- Provide legal assitance to the vulnerable groups, especially girls and women and their family.
- Stop dowry, child marriage, and violence practices.
- Raise awareness among the women, and men and society about equal rights, juctice, and dignity.

To Justice and Law enforcement Agencies

- Properly implmenet law and order by further activating legal systems to the benefits of the marginalzied gorups, and making the legal systems user friendly and sympathetic towards the victimes of violence, harassment, and torture.

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PORTICUS

Project Title : Recovery, Extension and Evaluation of Kajoli ECL Centres for and setting up of a Kajoli Foundation

Project Period : 1/9/2021 to 28/02/2023

Followings are the target populations who were reached under the current grant:

Students: 85 centres x 22 students = 1870 students

Guardians: 1870 students x 2 parents = 3740 guardians

Community people: 85 para x 35 families= 2975 families

From the target population number of students stand as 1870, this number is the direct number of students who are enrolled in the kajoli learning centre from 4 working districts namely Nilphamari, Dinajpur, Naogaon and Panchagarh. This estimation has been arrived checking with the register maintain by the teachers. When students are enrolled teachers make entry for each student in their registered.

The calculation on the number of guardians 3740 reached through this grant was easy and part of mathematical calculation because for each student his/her both parents have been counted.

The calculation of number of families reached through this grant was made by deriving information on families and population data from Union Parishad offices in the working districts as well as feedbacks from the teachers. We were informed by the Kajoli teachers and local community members that as the Kajoli centres are situated in para (ward) of a Union and in each para there are approximately 35 families reside so that's how we have estimated the number of families reached.

Summary of the main lessons learned through monitoring and evaluation to date:

1. A large number of Kajoli centres have been revived through teachers' efforts and community initiatives after the Covid outbreak as there was a persistent demand from the parents.
2. Communities are running the centres with their own efforts like paying teacher's salary and arranging day meal. Regarding community participations, mothers play key roles.
3. Teachers are concentrating on teaching with full enthusiasm following Kajoli teaching pedagogy, in this regard teachers' training has added extra values.
4. Kajoli teaching materials are being used in accordance with the techniques and process introduced by RIB.
5. Teachers and students' interaction seems very lively.
6. Attendance of children at centres increases as they find the teaching methodology joyful but it is also true that given the rise of number of schools through government and private initiatives makes it a bit difficult for Kajoli model to sustain in some places because it's a model completely run by community participation, whereas in other initiatives either government or private sector takes responsibility to run the institution.
7. Teaching progress of the centres so far is satisfactory.
8. Visits to the centres and regular communication over phone help centres to make them feel that their endeavours of educating children by themselves are appreciated and acknowledged.
9. Contents of teaching especially English part is being accepted very eagerly by teachers as they consider the addition as an extra value that would strengthen their capacities and will improve reputation of their centres.

10. Centres face some challenges that need to be addressed such as, children find difficulties to study due to not having proper sitting spaces and it becomes more severe during harsh weather like in rainy and winter seasons, sometimes resulting in postponement of classes for a while or few days. Also, lack of separate sanitary system for the children at centres make is a matter to be worried about, in some cases especially those centres existing near populated area having existence of parallel education system in such places centres sustainability remain at stakes as parents do not feel encouraged to provide teachers salary.

11. One of the main findings of monitoring and evaluation is, success of any centre relies on teacher's teaching performance along with community support. Regular teachers' refreshers training enhances teachers' skills.

Activity 1: Recovery of current centres

a. Recovery of centres- During the reporting period we were able to recover 85 centres out of 100 as planned during project planning phase. These 85 centres are basically the ones which were run down or temporarily closed during pandemic crisis following continuation of widespread lockdown in the country. Some of the centres which were considered under recovery are the ones situated in the same working areas like other but did have run for a brief period by the teachers who migrated to other places and closed down but during recovery phase local people proposed to start them again The reason that 15 centres coud not be recovered because in some cases the trained teachers have been married off or taken jobs somewhere and there were no replacements or offcer came from the community, so they were not interested to restart (especially the ons who secured jobs) nor the community people were not interested to continue as covid has financially crippled a particular section of lowest tier of society and they cannot afford to pay teachers anymore. As mitigation measures from RIB we tried to do advocacy with local representatives as well as parents of these 15 centres which couldnot be recovered but unfortunately nothing worked.

b. TOT for Teachers – During the reporting period TOT has been provided to 85 teachers in 4 batches. For these trainings, expert trainers who have years long experiences of running and teaching in Kajoli model centres have been engaged. During these trainings, new learning materials which had been developed by the Consultant were introduced to the teachers who found the new learning materials quite interesting and observed that it has easy adaptability especially english curriculum. There is a delay in completing this activity for the reasons that we couldnot start our activity within prescribed time frame as decided in the time-line due delay in receiving approval from NGOAB much later than expected.

c. Develop and publish Learning Materials- During the reporting period, Consultant under the project reviewed existing Kajoli Learning Materials and as the basic structure of Kajoli Model lie on quality method of joyful learning, hence the focus was more on to revise and develop learning materials in such a way that imparting of knoweldge becomes easy and enjoyable by the

teachers, at the same time students finds the learning process joyous so that in a palyful manner they grasp the basic idea of the subjects they are studying. The learning materials are still in develope > testing > revise process. For teaching mathematics subject, nothing much has been revised as the exisitng content serves the purpose based on which the whole kajoli model has been inititated but there is considerable revision in English and Bangla subjects. We aim to get the materials published in the current quarter.

Activity 2: Prepping for Kajoli Foundation

As community people and local CBOs/NGOs will also be the stakeholder/partner in the Kajoli Foundation, therefore a primary discussion about setting up of a Foundation and how it will contribute towards sustainability of Kajoli Model has been initiated through meetings in the working areas during the field monitoring visits in December 2021 and May 2022. Dialogue meeting with partners and registration process for Kajoli Foundation are yet to take place.

Activity 3: Evaluation study

Digital sharing knowledge (Web consttruction) – Under Activity 3 of the Agreement, other than commissioning an evaluation study by an external consultant, a provision has been made for digital sharing knowledge through web creation. The compliance procedure for procurement of service for web creation have already been commenced and we are now in the process of contents finalisation. We hope to complete this activity of website launching by the end of November. There is a delay in completing this activity for the reasons that we could not start our activity within prescribed time frame as decided due to delay in receiving approval from NGOAB much later than expected.

Activity 4: Implementing Safeguarding Policy

During the reporting period, knowledge building exercise and reviewing of RIB's existing policies on safeguarding has already been started by a Consultant engaged through Porticus. In the current quarter a training on safegurding principle will be organised by RIB, once Consultant finalises the draft template

Grant's main goals are (1) Recovery of existing Kajoli centers affected by the pandemic. (2) To conceive and set up a Kajoli Foundation based on endowments (3) To evaluate the model (as it is now) to generate evidence on what is working and what conditions need to be met for the model to work optimally, areas for improvement etc. (4) Upgrade RIB safeguarding principles.

The inception of the grant took place from September'2021 but after signing of agreement, it took 3 months to secure approval from NGOAB, hence officially we could only start activities under the grant from December 2021, however while waiting for 3 months for the approval, RIB's staff completed ground works of maintaining liaison with previous Kajoli Teachers and

voluntarily conducted field surveys to determine the situation of Kajoli centers, those existed prior to Covid pandemics.

Key achievements:

- It has been possible to recover 85% centers from run down and inoperative ones from working areas which were suspended during covid pandemic crisis in Bangladesh. It needs mentioning that as no baseline was conducted prior to the grant, hence it was agreed in the grant to recover 100 centers based on field surveys and communication with teachers.

- Existing learning materials have been revisited and English as well as Bangla subject have been revised with new and innovative methodology have been introduced in the revised one which will help in joyful learnings for the students and effective teaching tools for the teachers of Kajoli Centers.

- 80% teachers' (those engaged since inception of kajoli model as well as the ones who joined at a later stage) their skill development has been ensured through capacity building and constant follow up mechanism.

- Structural process to formulate safe guarding policy began

- During covid there was estrangement but after rolling out activities under the present grant, community engagements have been strengthened.

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Ewer (Hate Speech), Phase 1

APPAP partner, Research Initiatives Bangladesh, conducted a participatory action research (PAR) project between February and April 2022, called 'Hate Speech Contextualized and Countered through Transformative Processes among Marginalized Youth: a Participatory Action Research'. The project was conducted in Ramu, cox's Bazar, with Rakhine and Borua communities.

The Project involved participatory action research meetings to consult with young people and to identify challenges and strategies to change behavior. An intensive training on PAR was provided to enhance the capacity of the youth group members. Issues identified included a lack of access to vocational studies, hate speech against Buddhists, drug addiction, early marriage, and corruption. Participants decided to priorities the problem of hate speech, and identified ways to take action, such as seeking legal support, raising awareness and promoting education, seeking support from elected representatives, and asking teachers to address this issue in class.

During the next stage of the project, around 15 young people from each community met once a week to discuss their experiences of hate speech, discrimination in society, and social divisions over religion and race. During the five meetings, specific issues discussed included the changes

in young people's lives over the past five years, the impact of the Rohingya community in Bangladesh since 2017 and the legacy of the 2012 violence in ramu, which continues to have a traumatic impact on young people who witnessed the attacks on Buddhist religious buildings and homes homes in the Cox's Bazar District in September 2012.

In relation to hate speech and discrimination, the majority of the Rakhine Buddhist youth have been exposed to hate speech on the street, at school and at shops and markets. A common form was the derogatory term `Moghi', which is used by Bengalis to refer to ethnic groups perceived to come from Burma.

One participant said, " We have a Borua teacher who address me and ask me whether I eat Nappi [a fish dish] in every sort of food. I can understand that he says it only to demean me and everyone laughs at me." others mentioned being teased about their cultural celebrations, such as 'Sangrai', or water splashing festival. Borua Buddhist youth are also targeted with derogatory language, some of which is gendered.

For example, Buddhist girls are referred to as 'Buri' (aged) because they do not tend to marry at a young age.

The issue of hate speech for Borua and Rakhine Buddhist youth was also identified as linked with broader societal discrimination including disproportionately low numbers of high school scholarships and tertiary places and exclusion from business and markets. Young people are concerned they are blamed for violence in Myanmar committed against the Rohingya population.

Participants did reflect that their sitation has improved over the past five years, with greater freedom of expression, lower risk of threats or riots, and broadly less tense relationships between Buddhists, Muslims and Hindus, however the issue of hate speech and discrimination remains a significant concern.

This project built the capacity of youth from marginalized communities in Bangladesh to identify, address and solve problems, high light social, institutional and political discrimination, and use the PAR method for addressing social problems. Feedback from participants indicated they had understood the concept of PAR and could apply it to other issues. In order to address the problem of hate speech, they are planning to hold further meetings involving youth from other communities to work in partnership on building social cohesion and communal harmony. this will help to reduce hate speech and discrimination against Buddhist young people in Bangladesh.

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EWER - Phase 2

Implementation of an Early Warning System to counter gendered violence in Rohingya and host communities in the Cox's Bazar region.

Early Warning System Current Phase – Focus on Mitigating Risk Factor

An increasing amount of data is being collected and published by UN agencies, INGOs and local organisations on the prevalence of GBV.

This cumulative data systematically shows that physical violence by an intimate partner is the most prevalent form of GBV being reported in both the refugee camps and in the host communities.

While some of the analysis to date refers to factors which may contribute to high rates of GBV, such as unemployment, community tensions or the enforcement of strict gender norms, little analysis has been conducted to better understand how these various factors may heighten risks of GBV.

General Objectives of the Project

An Early Warning (EWER) system for SGBV is implemented through an in-field phase of data – collection and analysis. Local stakeholders are enabled in responding to the SGBV crimes through using the EWER system. A monitoring system is put in place through training and dissemination of the report

Objectives of the Current Phase

Research Initiatives Bangladesh (RIB), the Asia-Pacific Centre for the Responsibility to Protect (APCR2P) and the Gender Working Group of the Asia Pacific Partnership for Atrocity Prevention (APPAP) are undertaking research on early warnings and early response to GBV to further understand how the presence of various risk factors contribute to elevated rates of GBV in Cox's Bazar

Methodology

1. A Risk Factor Mapping exercise was undertaken by, Meghna Guhathakurta, RIB, Louise Allen, Gender Consultant and Kirril Shields of University of Queensland through desk research

2. A questionnaire was drafted with the held of APPAP Early Warning System Team and RIB

3. Training was conducted with local enumerators with the help of local partner Shushilan and quantitative data analysed

Research Findings

The data was collected in designated areas from the host communities and Rohingya camps of Ukhiya and Teknaf Upazila from a fixed number of men and women. 100 people from the host communities and 100 people the Rohingya camps. 66% were women and 34% men.

Age: Highest percentage belong to 26-30 age groups (26.0%) followed by 31-40 age group (24.0%) in the host community . In the camp (Rohingya), the highest percentage belong to 41-55 age groups (23.0%) and the lowest belong to both the 56+ years of age group and the below 20 age group (11.0%).

Majority of the respondents were married (93%) The rate of child marriage in the survey area is low now, overall 15.5%, even though it was high in the past. But the tendency of having more than two children is high. A majority of the families of survey areas have 5 or more children and the percentage is 35%. More Rohingyas have more than 6 children in the camps (21%) than in the host community (8%)

Education: males are ahead of females in terms of educational attainment. The illiteracy rate among the male is 41.2% where the rate is 46.2% among the women. 60% are illiterate in the camps while only more than 20% are illiterate in the host community.

22% of the families in the Rohingya camps depend only on relief, but in some cases, some Rohingya refugees work as day laborers in various NGOs.

Increase in gender violence

According to most of the respondents,81.0% from the host communities and 89.0% from the Rohingya Refugees, there were no increase in the Gender Based Violence (GBV) over the last 06 months. 19.0% only from the host communities and 11.0% from the Rohingya camps said that they observed marginal to very frequent increase in GBV.

Increase in the rate of violence/illegal activities

Most of the respondents, 54.0% from the host communities and 61.0% from the Rohingya Refugees said there were no increase in the rate of violence/illegal activities over the past 6 months, even though 23.0% from the Rohingya camps observed marginal increase in the rate of violence/illegal activities in the camp and 25.0% from the host communities observed moderate increased in the rate of violence/illegal activities in the communities.

Policing of women and girls' behaviour outside homes

According to the 92.0% respondents from the host communities and 38.0% respondents from the Rohingya Refugees, there was no increase in the policing of women and girl's behavior outside of their homes over the past 6 months. But the 62.0% respondents from the Rohingya Refugees claimed that they observed increased in the policing of women and girl's behavior outside of their homes whereas 31.0% of the total respondents from the Rohingya Refugees claimed that it was moderate increase.

Policing actors and methods

Majority (92%) did not want to name actors responsible for policing in the host community but in the camps a significant 47% said family and 12% said neighbors. 1% named community and religious leaders

Ways of policing: Family restrictions (46.0% respondents from the Rohingya Refugees) and the social restrictions (11.0% respondents from the Rohingya camps) are the root cause of this incidents of policing. This was far less common in the host community.

Spread of Anti-Female Messaging

95% of host community said there was no increase. In the camps 46% said no increase, but 46% said moderate increase and 9% said frequent increase. 22% reported the message to be "Girls should not be educated "and 18% said "Girls should stay at home". 33% of Rohingyas said neighbors responsible,8% family, 6% community leaders ,4% religious leaders

Increase in spreading anti-female message by religious leaders

97% in host community said no increase while 3% said it increased marginally

47% of Rohingyas said there was no increase and 39% said there was moderate increase , 7% said frequent increase and 2% said very frequent increase.

11% respondents said such messages were spread after prayer discussion, 8% said it was discussed when they came to invite them for prayers

Increase in spreading anti-female message by community leaders

39% of Rohingyas in camps said that there was moderate increase of anti-female messages took place through community leaders

10% of Rohingyas said the community leaders issued restrictions for women and girls to go outside their homes.

Increase in polygamy

66% of host community and 77% of Rohingyas said there were no increase in polygamy

27% of host community and 12% of Rohingyas said there were moderate increase.

5% of host community and 2% of Rohingyas registered frequent increase of polygamy.

Reasons cited for increase were extramarital affairs (10.0% respondents from the Rohingya Refugees and the 11.0% from the host communities) and the dominant nature of men (5.0% respondents from the Rohingya Refugees and the 6.0% from the host communities)

Increase in child marriage

18.0% of the host community members noticed increase in child marriages whereas 13.0% were noticed by the Rohingyas in camps Among them, 13.0% of the host community members claimed moderate increase in the child marriages

Though only 4.0% from the host communities and 2.0% from the Rohingya camps claimed poverty as the cause behind the child marriage, 14.0% from the host communities and 11.0%

from the Rohingya camps claimed other reasons such as uneducated family members, social pressure, pressure from the community and the religious leaders .

Increase in trend of women/girls staying at home

92.0% respondents from the host communities told that they observed no increase whereas 24% of the respondents from the Rohingyas told that they noticed marginal to very frequent increase (32%) over the past 06 months.

Out of those who observed increase 5% in the host community and 58% in camps did it through personal observation. 2% among Rohingyas gained it through family/friend/neighbors/relatives.

Increase in education opportunities for women and girls

40.0% respondents from the host communities stated that the increase was moderate, followed by 34.0% who told the increase is frequent. On the other hand, 35.0% respondents from the Rohingya refugee camps stated that the increase was moderate, followed by 13.0% who told the increase is frequent.

Rate of increase:

Increase in girls' education

94.0% respondents from the host communities and the 61.0% from the camps provided positive answer from their personal observations. They also added specially after the Covid-19 pandemic the girls (mostly below 13 years of age) are going to schools and it had been increased over the past 6 months

Increase in women workers in a legal and legitimate job

According to the 49.0% respondents from the host communities it has increased, but in the camp only the 9.0% provided the positive answer. Among the host communities, 28.0% respondents stated that the increase was moderate followed by the 14.0% who stated the increase was frequent. Reasons stated was lots of NGOs are working there recently.

Women's involvement in any illegal jobs

Though 44.0% respondents from the host communities noticed that the involvement of the women in illegal jobs increased, only the 7.0% respondents from the Rohingya Refugee camps noticed it. 26.0% respondents from the host communities stated that the increase was moderate followed by the 9.0% who stated the increase in marginal.

Increase in sex work in the camps or communities

95.0% of the respondents in both camps and host community noticed that the sex work in the camps or communities has not increased over the past 06 months. However, 3.0% each in camp and host community stated that the increase was moderate.

Learnings

Majority in both camps and host community said no increase of SGBV over last 06 months, moderate to frequent increase were recorded slightly more in host community than camps, the difference being minimal.

Comparatively the rate of general violence/illegal activities were observed to be more on the increase

Camp life showed greater tendency to control behavior of women and girls outside homes mostly through neighbors and family.

Increase in anti-female messaging was prominent in camps rather than in host communities.

However there was perceived to be increasing opportunities for educational opportunities for girls. Since the time period was for the last 06 months, it could be due to reopening of schools during Covid. Opportunities for women's work has increased in host community compared to the camps.

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MISEREOR:

Building Capacities of Local Communities to Mitigate Problems Created by Their Discrimination in Mainstream Societies: Ethnic Communities, Dalits and Marginalized Women in Rajshahi and Jashore.

Project Period : February 2021 to May 2022

The objective of the project was to build the capacity of the two indigenous groups (Santal and Oraon), two religious minority communities (Dalits) and the marginalized women of all groups and communities through Participatory Action Research (PAR) and enable them to exercise their rights using the Right to Information Act (RTI). in order to achieve this objective, RIB had implemented a range of activities that included group formation comprising the members of the above-mention communities, organized regular monthly meetings, held trainings of RTI and PAR, arranged community mobilization activities, regular dialogues and advocacy with the local elites and representatives of administration. RIB has commissioned an evaluation study to understand the effectiveness and credibility of the activities of this project among the target groups and their ability in exercising the techniques of PAR and the procedure of RTI Act to exercise and promote their rights.

The indigenous people and the religious minorities are two vulnerable groups whose human rights are frequently overlooked and infringed in Bangladesh. Perpetrators are often not

prosecuted because they are patronized by the powerful elites who seek to exert their influence and interest at the expense of the rights of these disadvantaged groups. The country's human rights status always remains perilous in respect to the protection of rights of the Indigenous people and the religious minorities. These sections of people are not noly facing multiple forms of discrimination but also experiencing subjugation, repression and stigmatization which has made their social interactions difficult. Rib uses the tools of Participatory Action Research (PAR) and the Right to Information Act (RTI) to build the capacities of these local communities to respond to their problems by taking initiatives from their own community leveraging on their own local connections and available resources. The key takeaway of this evaluation study is that marginalized and underprivileged communities, if empowered with knowledge, network, resources and appropriate tools like PAR and RTI, they can increase the capacity to engage power elites and government offices through consultations, dialogue and discussions to promote their rights.

Objective and goal of the Study

This study aims to address and assess the human rights situation and the associated problems of two ethnic communities (Santals, Oraon) and two Dalit communities (Kawra, Rabidas/Rishi) who are considered minorities within the minority group. It is also intended to measure the potential outputs, and outcomes, of the project, implemented by RIB, on building capacities of local communities to response to their problems and challenges created due to the structural discriminations in mainstream societies.This study is particularly aimed to:

1. To measure the outputs, and the outcomes of the project;
2. To identify the challenges encountered during implementation and how the challenges were addressed or tackled;
3. To generate recommendations for the future sustainability and expansion of this type of project.

The goal of the evaluation study is to gain insights into an implemented project and how its operations contributed to enhance capacity of the above-mentioned communities including marginalized women in Rajshahi and Jashore, Bangladesh.

Target Groups and Stakeholders

The study found that a total of 43 groups had been formed (22 groups in Rajshahi and 21 in Jashore). Each group had 15 members and the project directly reached 645 beneficiaries. In addition, the project had influenced 5805 beneficiaries indirectly through its initiatives that included family members and the community people in the study area. About 50% of members of these groups were female. The stakeholders of this project included local government officials, local politicians, and administrators, members of civil society, community-based organizations, and government institutions.

Credibility of the Organization and its Approach

RIB, a leading Nongovernmental organization in Bangladesh, has been creatively utilizing the methods and means of PAR along with RTI to improve capacity of the marginalized, vulnerable

and religious minorities since last two decades in Bangladesh. Over the period of time, this organization has developed a strong credibility among its target groups, beneficiaries and stakeholders, including the communities with whom the activities of this project had been implemented. Its long-standing presence in the community and contribution to the capacity building and empowerment of these communities enhanced the credibility of the organization. The evaluation had been conducted based on this notion of the credibility of the organization for implementing the project on the ground. RIB's participatory methods engage both research (in generating knowledge of people's needs and strategies through Participatory Action Research or *Gonogobeshona*) and developmental outcomes (in enabling access to services either through self-management skills or through advocacy of their fundamental rights). This time tested approach in RIB's work had been applied with the target groups of this project in the two Upazilas:Godagari of Rajshahi and Jashore SadarUpazilla of Jashore.

Interpretation of Capacity Building Tools

As part of building the capacity of the indigenous community, Dalits, and marginalized women, this project used the approach of Participatory Action Research (PAR) and enabled them to use RTI to exercise their rights. The interpretation of these capacity-building tools are as follows:

PAR

PAR is an approach that involves researchers and ethnic communities, Dalits, and marginal women working together to understand the problems in their society and jointly devise actions for their own betterment. PAR is basically focused on bringing social change that promotes human rights preventing social inequality, and discrimination among these groups. The goal of a participatory action research (PAR) process is to improve a program, process, or practice or to solve real-world problems. RIB supported these marginalized and minority groups who were unable to access basic services due to the existence of various forms of social discrimination. These communitieslearned and applied PAR in the form of people's research or *gonogobeshona* to identifytheproblems, analyze and prioritize actions to address them. The PAR approach has 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-action-reflection is termed praxis and is embedded in the heart of participatory action research.

RTI

Bangladesh adopted the RTI in 2009 as a tool to empower the common citizens to exercise their rights. By dint of this act, citizens are now able to demand bringing transparency and accountability both in the government and non-government institutions to ensure good governance. RIB has been involved mostly in engaging with the demand side of the RTI process as it tallied well with the overall focus of RIB's work with marginalized communities. As a result of using RTI, gonogobeshoks or people researchers of this project have successfully placed pertinent questions to their local authorities in the form of right-to-information protocol and used those responses to ensure accountability and transparency of public institutions responsible for

service delivery to the public. Their access to public safety net schemes bears witness to the efficacy of such a process.

The capacity-building criteria was applied to assess to what extent the project intervention had been able to build the capacity of the ethnic communities, dalits, and marginalized women in Rajshahi and Jashore Districts in terms of using PAR and RTI to promote the rights of their respective communities. It also assessed whether such a capacity-building process, followed under this project, had brought any tangible and intangible impacts to these communities. The five stage capacity building criteria are as follows:

a) **Building Knowledge and Awareness:** The understanding of the target groups and stakeholders on PAR, RTI and Gonogobeshona concepts had been assessed against their ability to address problems, prioritize the problems according to its merit, and define and find an appropriate solution building consensus among the social actors. Conducting FGDs and KIIs, the evaluation team tried to understand if the target groups, particularly the Gonogobeshoks, were able together their own community members, stimulate discussions at the local level and encourage them to identify their own problems and seek solutions together.
b) **Skills development:** As the members of Gonogobeshoks received training on PAR and RTI, the evaluation team assessed their ability to exercise these tools to address various human rights issues and problems in their monthly meetings. It was particularly observed and checked if the PAR members could use the procedure mentioned in the RTI act while submitting their application to the appropriate authorities.
c) **Ability to exercise skills:** The team also assessed the ability of the PAR group's in terms of exercising and expanding their operations to promote the rights of their respective communities. It was very significant to know how far the PAR teams were able to influence the key government and non-government stakeholders in pursuing their RTI applications submitted in government and non-government organizations and departments.
d) **Application in the community:** The evaluation team also assessed the ability of the PAR groups to exercise their skills in decision making, mitigating problems, and advocating for their rights with multi-layered stakeholders using RTI Act. The team also gathered information how many problems they become able to resolve using the RTI Act during the project tenure.
e) **Generate influence among the stakeholders:** Finally, the ability of the PAR members had been assessed whether they had been able to transfer the learned skills among the members of their own community and encourage them to play the same role as they are doing. It was also observed how far the PAR members were able to generate influence among community people, leaders, NGOs, and government stakeholders to listen to their demand.

Group Formation

PAR groups or gonogobeshoks were identified and selected with key community actors, undertaking door to door visits and organizing discussions with community people and community leaders. Each PAR group consisted of 15 members and most of them were led by women. total of 42 groups had been formed (21 groups in Rajshahi and 21 in Jashore). Each

group had 15 members and the project directly reached 645 beneficiaries. In addition, the project had influenced 5805 beneficiaries indirectly through its initiatives that included family members and the community people in the study area. According to the recent study, 30 PAR groups were led by women, and 12 PAR groups were led by male.

Training Workshops

RIB organized trainings for the PAR group members to enhance the capacity of them to exercise their rights at Union, subdistrict/Upazila, and district levels using RTI tools. In this project, it was proposed that six batches of training would be organized to capacitate 90 stakeholders, and six follow-up meetings would be organized to monitor the progress of the project activities in the field. Practically, it was found that eight trainings had been organized on PAR and RTI tools, issues relating to land rights and follow-up monthly meetings with the PAR groups and relevant stakeholders had been carried out. It was also anticipated that the members of PAR groups who received training would organize a series of follow up discussion and trainings to disseminate their learnings with the other members of the groups to build the capacity of the community people, and the marginalized women groups to raise their voices against customary and systematic discrimination and human rights.



Monthly Dialogues and Discussions

Dialogues held with multi-stakeholders which included community leaders, local government officials, public authorities such as government officials, representatives from the local NGOs, representatives of the Union Parishad and members of local administration etc. In this project, it was designed to hold four dialogues and four coordination meetings with multi-stakeholders for an effective advocacy to influence the opinion of the key actors. It had been confirmed assessing the project information that, the project team conducted all the dialogues and coordination meetings (see table 2.1). It appeared from the discussion of the local stakeholders and the community actors that more advocacy meetings might have been required to make the stakeholders aware of the issues of these vulnerable groups and motivate them to support their initiatives at the local level.



Photo : Dialogue Meeting with the Office of Deputy Commissioner, Jessore

Applications submitted using RTI Act

The members of PAR groups had regularly organized monthly meetings, identified the list of problems, prioritized them, prepared application following the procedure of RTI act and submitted these to different government department and institutions to resolve their problems. After submission, these applications were being followed on a regular basis by the project team at the local level. While discussing with them, many tangible benefits/results had been observed in terms of getting social benefits under various safety schemes. It was also found that the status of each application had been preserved following a systematic process in the head office. When it was asked to the local project team if they maintained the status of each application following a procedure, they were not very aware of it. However, all cases were recorded and maintained properly at the head office of RIB. Community people were found comparably less organized in Jashore than in Rajshahi. It was likely to be appeared that the community lives in Jashore were more conflict prone, resource trapped and tensed.

The beneficiaries of the project had submitted 546 application using RTI against a set target 600 to different departments of various government ministries between the period of October 2021 to May 2022 (See table, 2.3, and 2.4). Almost one-third (164) of the applications were submitted to the Department of Social Welfare to get access to various social services followed by the second highest applications (65) asking opportunities to get access to training and job to various departments and the applications linked to the protection of women and children ranked the third highest (64). Assessment on the records of these application revealed the impressive success rate in both the project locations. Out of 258 applications submitted by the Gonogobeshoks in various departments and government offices, 195 had received response, which reached the success rate 76%, whereas the success rate in Rajshahi was 83%, where 240 applications had successfully resolved against 288.

Table 2.3: RTI Application Number in Different Sectors

Field/ Department	Number of application		Total
	Jashore	Rajshahi	
Social welfare	46	118	164
Education	6	9	15
Health	44	1	45
Training/ Employment	40	25	65
Land/ Khas land	30	5	35
Cooperative	16	5	21
Women and Child	37	27	64
Indigenous/ Dalit	12	12	24
Agriculture	-	26	53
Fisheries and livestock	-	20	20
Statistics	-	19	19
Drug control	-	7	7
Ansar	-	11	11
Information application related	-	2	2
Environment	-	1	1
Total	258	288	546

Table 2.4: Level of RTI application

Level	Number of applications		Total
	Jashore	Rajshahi	
Union	92	99	191
Upazila	82	123	205
District	56	64	120
Division	19	2	21
Department/ Ministry	9	-	9
Total	258	288	546

Challenges

a. **Strict Timeline:** The project was funded by an external funding organization for a stipulated one-year timeframe. Due to some challenges posed by the pandemic, the project got delayed to implement the activities on time.
b. **Poor Socio-economic Conditions:** It was felt that, given the poor socio-economic conditions of this locality and the nature of economic conditions of the local communities, the local people, in some places, expected more material support from the RIB. As RIB did not provide any financial or material support to the community, their project staff sometimes faced non-cooperation from few actors of the community.

c. **Outbreak of Covid-19:** The project period ended in December 2020. Due to the Covid-19,lockdown imposed from April-September 2020 which affected the implementation of the project activities seriously.
d. **Negative Attitudes of the Service Providers:** The non-cooperative mindset of the information providers and postal service personnel was a major challenge to submit RTI applications and seek information. Many times, the submission of RTI applications had been delayed by the postal officers at the post office. The postal officers were found reluctant to act promptly in this matter. It was also revealed during the discussion that the PAR group members were not likely to be interested to seek information from their local Union Parishad. In some areas, the applicants were found afraid of the elected persons of their own community.
e. **Regular Transfer of the Government Officials:** The PAR group members faced difficulties when the government officers had transferred from their area. The new officers sometimes did not respond or remain indifferent to the applications submitted using RTI Act.
f. **Negative Social Pressure on the Target Groups:** The members of the PAR groups expressed their concern that, the community people are now much attracted to the financial benefits due to the increasing presence of other NGOs in their locality who are offering material and financial benefits. They observed that many NGOs had been providing money and other services to the marginalized community which they did not get form RIB. Therefore, the community people sometimes showed disinterest to work with RIB without financial benefits.

Lesson Learned :

a. The transfer of knowledge is an important component of development.
84 community participants were trained in Participatory Action Research, RTI Law, Human Rights and Land Rights for the marginalized
2 exchange learning visits took place among the community participants
424 direct beneficiaries consisting of journalists, teachers and other professional groups of the locality as well as government officials were oriented through programs such as public events, rallies, RTI campaigns.
In total direct beneficiaries in the communities were 630 and indirect beneficiaries 1490 families in the selected marginalized communities and 2250 families in the selected villages including mainstream population)..

b. The process of self-inquiry as demonstrated through participatory action research can be an important driver to developing confidence and self esteem of a deprived community and energize them towards achieving goals they have set for themselves.
This led to several advocacies and actions such as:

- 4 Petitions to DC office for allocating land for graveyards
- Communication with youth development office for vocational trainings
- Communication with Deputy Director's office for disability welfare for issuing allowance card
- 7 landless santal families got home from Prime Minister's special project of housing
- 15 Kawra families got ration cards from local Union Parishad Office
- PAR groups formed 2 cooperatives (samitee) in Jashore

- Use of narcotics is diminishing day by day as a result of PAR group's initiatives
- Unity among the PAR groups increasing to raise demands
- A village road repaired as a result of PAR group's continuous communication with local government offices
- PAR groups are now capable of identifying problems in their locality
- They continue to practice RTI During the project period a total of 546 RTI applications were made majority being in the field of social welfare, women and children affairs, health, training for employment and khas land distribution

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RTI Activities

Research Initiatives Bangladesh (RIB's) RTI activities in the year 2022:

(1) RTI status for 2022

Location (District)	Submission of RTI	Nature of Issue in RTI applications
Dhaka Dinajpur Rajshahi Nilphamari Rangpur Bogura Jessore Moulvibazar	3200	Nature of Themes that are covered for RTI applications: (1) Government services and facilities for marginal people (2) Climate change and environment impact (3) Governance and administration (4) Access to health and education (5) Agriculture (6) Government incentives or allowance (7) Rising commodity prices (8) Unlawful use of nitric Acid (9) Employment of Disable Citizens (10) Domestic violence/ abuse (11) Railway ticket crises (12) District council election (13) Improper road condition (14) Employment (15) Landless and land grabbing (16) Implementation of RTI law.

(2) Trainings on Right to Information (RTI)

RIB has received support from National Endowment for Democracy (NED) to take research project on RTI. These international organizations awarded multiyear funds to RIB to promote RTI in Bangladesh in assigned working areas. During the beginning of the project activities, trainings on RTI were directly provided to more than 180 people chosen from above working districts. Such RTI trainings were very interactive and participants learnt on importance of information in their daily lives and how RTI helps citizen performing their duties as well as participants learnt on techniques to frame right kind of RTI questions. The participants were made familiar with pertinent issues which can be looked through RTI lenses and if the same is resolved then this will promote systemic change in governance system.



(3) Regular Monthly Meeting with RTI Moderators and Requesters.



RIB has organized regular monthly meeting with RTI requester's who collaborated with RIB voluntarily to promote RTI in their respective areas, RTI promoters/ RTI Defenders from Rajshshi, Bogura, Rangpur, Nilphamari, Dinajpur, & Moulvibazar, district who consented to work with RIB voluntarily agreeing on principle to motivate people in their locality to make use of RTI law and promote it by framing questions on issues, themes and mandates with which they work on. This monthly meetings were mainly organized to discuss on RTI law and its objectives, effective issue identification and specific RTI question framing, the outcome of RTI application, sharing experience and learning to overcome as well on strategic aspect on the use of RTI law so that use of RTI law may ensure improvement in governance, accountability and transparency in the work of public offices and work in the sectors like environment, legal aid services, land rights case, and in sectors that involve public participation and political accountability may enhance.

(4) RTI Rally, **Information fair and RTI Day observations:**



RIB organized public event like information fairs and RTI rally during year 2022 to disseminate knowledge on RTI at places accessible by large groups of

people. RTI Rally & Information fair were held in 4 districts (Rajshahi, Nilphamari, Dinajpur & Moulvibazar District where more than 2400 people including the general public, local administrations/government officials, people's representatives, social activists, and RTI moderators & requesters participated. Under these events the activities took place were 45 female bikers carrying RTI posters and festoons roamed around the city, rally, discussion meeting, Art & Debate competition on RTI theme at schools & colleges, where large gatherings of people were seen. Through RTI rally & information fair awareness and demand for use of RTI were raised among the general people. Such initiatives would convey messages on the importance of RTI and its links in promoting good governance and inclusive development.

(5) Dialogue Meetings with Government Officers & Civil Society on Local Issues & Use of Right to Information (RTI):

RIB has organized dialogue meeting with government officials and civil society, relevant stakeholders, RTI defenders at regional/local level to discuss local issues & use of Right to Information (RTI) for raising awareness and strategies for resolving issues between demand and supply side of RTI law, sharing experiences, lessons learnt and discussing the best practices of RTI requesters.

These dialogue meetings were organized in collaboration and with participation of RTI moderators from Rajshshi, Jessore, Bogura, Rangpur, Nilphamari & Dinajpur Districts, local administration including government officials like social welfare officers, health officer, information officer, project implementation officer etc and people's representatives, civil society members, activists, and the general public. Dialogue meetings have turned out to be an effective advocacy mechanism to encourage people to make greater use of the RTI Act.



Dialogue Meeting at Moulvibazar Sadar.

(6) RTI Resource Centre:

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

(7) RTI Workshops:



RTI workshops were organized in Nowabganj, Dinagpur and Moulvibazar. Each workshop had participants of 40 people and it provided them with an opportunity to share their RTI journey with others and gather experiences and lessons learnt from other participants. These workshops were held in Dinajpur, Moulvibazar, Jessore districts.

(8) Project Orientation Meeting on Right to Information (RTI) Jointly for Government Officers and RTI Defenders.



RIB organized project orientation meeting at Moulvibazar, Dinagpur, & Fulbari DC office. In the meeting UNO of Fulbari Upazila & Moulvibazar Sadar upazila participated and along with them government officers from local government offices have also participated in the

meeting. During the facilitation, local RTI defenders discussed on the importance of RTI Act to improve transparency and accountability for better governance system in the country.

(9) Monthly publication on use and status of RTI in the Daily Star newspaper.

RTI team at RIB regularly writes a column on RTI which is published in The Daily Star newspaper on 15th of every month. In the year 2022, twelve monthly articles on various important issues encompassing RTI were published. Copies of above articles published in 2022 are available at RIB's website: **www.rib-rtibangladesh.org**

(10) Day Observation:

RIB organized world Human Rights day on 10th December at Rajshshi, Bogura, Rangpur, Nilphamari, Dinagpur & Moulvibazar District, where general people, local administrations, social activists, and RTI moderators & requesters participated. Total number of people took part in these events were more than 1500. During observance of the events, rally & discussion meetings on concept of human rights and how RTI can be an effective tool to ensure human rights took place. Such initiatives would convey messages on the importance of RTI and its links in promoting human rights and inclusive development.

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Rally at Godagari Upazila, Rajshshi District.



Discussion Meeting at Bogura District

(11) Courtyard Meeting:

RIB organized an ongoing awareness building program courtyard meeting during the year 2022 to disseminate knowledge on RTI at places accessible by large groups of people or places having mass particpations. Courtyard Meetings have been held at 6 districts (Rajshahi, Nilphamari, Rangpur, Saidpur Dinajpur & Moulvibazar District with 30-40 local peoples were present in each meeting with the participation of the activists and RTI moderators. Through the Courtyard Meeting demand for RTI was raised among the general people. Such initiatives turned out to be very effective mechanism to raise awareness on RTI and motivate people to become RTI defenders.



(12) Exchange Visit:

RIB organized Exchange Visit for knowledge sharing among RTI requesters among many districts. Under this event Moulvibazar RTI Moderator & RTI requesters visited Dinajpur District. Through the exchange visit Moullvibazar Team participated in group meeting, courtyard meeting at Dinajpur, Fulbari and Nowabganjg upazila RTI group. This exchange visit is the best way to motivated to use RTI & learn from other District's works and best practices.

(13) Documentary:

RIB published a documentary film under its particular MISEREOR project on marginalized people of Rajshshi & Jashore District. RTI was a cross cutting component for the project supported by MISEREOR. The link to the documentary film is: https://youtu.be/sn5Y9gE5uyg

(14) Local Validation Seminar:

RIB organized Local Validation Seminar under MISEREOR project at Jashore & Rajshahi District with local people and administration to discuss the findings and forward recommendations.

(15) National Seminar:

RIB organized a National Seminar under MISEREOR project at Dhaka with relevant stakeholders and government representative from different sectors to discuss about project findings as well as on status of RTI Act implementation in Jessore and Rajshahi districts.



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