# Research, Participation and Action for Inclusive Change

# ANNUAL REPORT 2025

# RESEARCH INITIATIVES BANGLADESH (RIB)



**Annual Report 2025**

**Research Initiatives Bangladesh**

Research Initiatives, Bangladesh (RIB) is a Not-for-Profit Organization registered under Companies Act, 1994 of Bangladesh and NGO Affairs Bureau of Prime Minister's Office under Foreign Donations Regulation Ordinance, 1978. RIB was founded in 2002 by some prominent educators, social scientists and human rights activists. Our goal is to promote knowledge on poverty alleviation that is relevant, useful, innovative, participatory and action-oriented with a special focus on marginalized and socially excluded communities.

The key areas of intervention of RIB are- Human Rights, Right to information, Gender, Early Childhood Learning Program, Agriculture and Climate Change, Advocacy. We work with the purpose of supporting marginalized and minority groups who are unable to access basic services due to social discrimination and conducting people's research (*gonogobeshona*) on the development schemes that affect them most, in order to develop ownership and generate community mobilization.

**List of Ongoing and Completed Projects of RIB in 2025:**

| **Sl No.** | **Project Name** | **Period** | **Budget** | **Partnership /Donor** |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 01 | Building capacities of local communities to mitigate problems created by their discrimination in mainstream societies: ethnic communities, dalits and marginalized women in West-Bangladesh | March 2023 to June 2026 | 1,71,50,000/- | MISEREOR , Germany |
| 02 | Strengthening the human rights and social participation of marginalized groups in Bangladesh with specific focus on women and girls (HOPE) | 01, January 2024 to 30 Juny 2027 | 43,539,508/- | NETZ Partnership for Development and Justice |
| 03 | Advancing Accountability and Transparency through Right to Information | October 2024 September 2026 | $120,000<br>5th Phase | National Endowment for Democracy (NED) |
| 04 | Our Voice Our Future" (OVOF), | January to June 2025 | Research Completed | Partnership with BLAST |
| 05 | Advancing Transitional Justice in Bangladesh (2025) | January to December 2025 | EUR 40,000 Completed | Rosa Luxemburg Stiftung (RLS ) |
| 06 | Hazardous Sanitation Labour: Connecting the Past, Present and Future of Manual Scavenging in Bangladesh | 1st June 2025 to May 2026 | £ 35,000 | LANCASTER UNIVERSITY |

## A. Project Summary of RIB

### 1.Project Title: Advancing Transitional Justice in Bangladesh (2025)

**Funded by Rosa Luxemburg Stiftung (RLS)**

**Project Background and objectives:**

Climate justice and gender justice are closely interconnected because climate change disproportionately affects women, indigenous peoples, and other marginalized groups by exacerbating existing social, economic, and gender inequalities. Women often have limited access to natural resources, decision-making, and adaptive capacities despite their critical role in sustaining livelihoods and communities. Achieving equitable and sustainable development therefore requires integrating gender perspectives into climate action. In Bangladesh's evolving political context, where institutions responsible for protecting rights may be weakened or ineffective, transitional justice provides an important complementary framework for addressing the systemic harms caused by both climate change and patriarchal structures. By promoting accountability, recognizing victims' rights, and supporting redress and prevention, transitional justice can help communities respond to challenges such as climate-induced displacement, loss of livelihoods, increased gender-based violence, and the erosion of social protection, thereby contributing to more inclusive, resilient, and just societies.

Purpose of the project: The purpose of the project is to advance transitional Justice through the lens of gender Justice and climate Justice in Bangladesh.

Target Groups: Women's organisations, farmers, youth and students, policymakers, GO/NGOs, media and left actors, agricultural and environmental workers.

Geographical Area: Rajshahi, Satkhira, Cox's Bazar and Dhaka District in Bangladesh.

### 2. Project Title: Building Capacities of Local Communities to Mitigate Problems Created by Their Discrimination in Mainstream Societies: Ethnic Communities, Dalits and Marginalized Women in West Bangladesh

**Funded by MISEREOR, Germany**

### 1. Project Background

Marginalized communities in Bangladesh, including ethnic minorities, Dalits, and marginalized women, continue to face discrimination, social exclusion, and limited access to land, education, healthcare, social protection, and justice. Women experience additional barriers due to discriminatory personal laws, early marriage, dowry, unequal wages, domestic violence, and limited participation in decision-making. Traditional and patriarchal practices, including male-dominated Shalish, often result in gender-biased outcomes and restrict women's rights. Indigenous peoples and religious minorities face land dispossession, exploitation, violence, and inadequate protection of their rights. Dalit communities experience caste-based discrimination, social stigma, and exclusion because of their traditional occupations and social status. Many community members have limited knowledge of their legal rights and available public services, while their engagement with government institutions remains weak. These challenges are further reinforced by poverty, corruption, unequal power relations, and weak institutional accountability. The project therefore aims to strengthen the capacities of marginalized communities, increase awareness of rights and public services, improve access to information, and promote collective action. It also seeks to facilitate constructive dialogue and engagement between communities, local authorities, and other stakeholders to advance inclusion, dignity, equality, and human rights.

**2. Objectives**

An evidence-based multipronged strategy to address and help access justice for the discriminated communities as well as to mitigate the multi-layered problems faced by the discriminated communities.
Objective 1: Enable target groups to access justice, public services, and address community problems through collective action and informed engagement.
Objective 2 : Strengthen the capacity of target groups to undertake advocacy, lobbying, and rights-based action to address the multidimensional problems of marginalised populations which has been strengthened.
Objective 3: Strengthen collaboration between target groups and multi-stakeholder actors to address multidimensional forms of marginalization and discrimination.

**3. Methodology**

The project adopted Participatory Action Research (PAR) as its central methodology.
PAR enabled participants to:

a. Identify local problems, b. Prioritize community concerns, c. Conduct collective analysis, d. Generate evidence .e. Develop advocacy strategies. f. Engage decision-makers. g. Monitor progress and outcomes.

The approach emphasized community ownership, learning-by-doing, collective reflection, and empowerment. Community members became researchers of their own realities rather than passive beneficiaries.

**Geographic Coverage and stakeholder engagement**

Rajshahi and Jashore District: Ethnic communities, Dalit communities & Marginalized women groups. The project fostered collaboration among multiple actors.

**Key Stakeholders engaged**

a. Community Groups: PAR Groups, Dalit Communities, Ethnic Minority Communities, Marginalized Women

b. Civil Society: Local NGOs, Community-Based Organizations, Human Rights Activists, Lawyers, Social workers

c. Educational Institutions: Student Groups, Teachers, Researchers

d. Government Institutions: Union Parishads, Upazila Administration, District Administration, Social Welfare Offices, Land Offices

e. Media: Local Journalists, Community Media Representatives

f. Results of Stakeholder Engagement: Increased mutual understanding, Improved communication channels, better responsiveness of local institutions, Expanded support networks for marginalized groups

## 3. Project Title: Advancing Accountability and Transparency through the Right to information Project

**Funded by NED**

**Project background**

The project was designed to strengthen access to government safety-net services through strategic use of the Right to Information (RTI) Act. RTI was promoted as a tool for securing rightful entitlements and addressing exclusion and discrimination. Special attention was given to marginalized and socially excluded communities under the SDG principle of “Leaving No One Behind.” Access to government safety-net allocations and services was facilitated through evidence-based RTI interventions. Regular interaction

between citizens and government institutions was encouraged through RTI processes. Government performance and the delivery of public services were monitored through citizen engagement and information requests. The project was aligned with SDGs 1, 3, 4, 5, and 16, with emphasis on inclusion, participation, transparency, and accountability. An evidence-based multipronged strategy was piloted to address the layered challenges faced by discriminated communities.

Project achievements, lessons learned, best practices, and challenges were documented during the reporting period from February to April 2025. The results and experiences were intended to be widely disseminated to inform national discourse, policy development, and replication in other districts.

**Objectives**

***General objectives:***

- To build a culture of requesting information from the government about services and expenditures to encourage good governance.

- To advance accountability and transparency through the application and implementation of right to information (RTI) mechanisms.

***Specific objectives:***

- To promote and enhance citizens watchdog role in monitoring the work of public institutions/authorities.
- To strengthen the community understanding on inclusive development, gender justice, civic democracy and good life.
- To establish and strengthen Citizens RTI Platform for advancement of RTI law in the country.
- To ensure effective implementation of proactive disclosure policy by the government agencies

***The Project Participants***

The project has targeted 265 (RTI Moderators 75 + 150 RTI Defenders + 40 existing activists) direct stakeholders who evolved as RTI activists during the project period and contribute in improving governance, engage in civic engagement and so on. It needs mentioning that during several events demands arose from the people to increase number of groups to have wider coverage, hence from 265 target population mentioned in the submitted proposal, number of direct stakeholders joined the group and target stakeholders stand as 340 which during the present reporting period, further increased by 25 more addition, so now the total stakeholders stand as 365 (RTI Moderator 105, 220 RTI Defender + 40 existing activists). These direct stakeholders will act as a multiplier to spread the knowledge on RTI and will help to ensure that there is an increase in the number of RTI users. We aim to reach up to 37000 people from 3 working districts with the help of above direct stakeholders. The project has developed selection criteria during the design phase and has selected the project participants accordingly. These are:

a. Those who are living in remote areas and are deprived form accessing public services;
b. In the RTI defenders' group from villages, priority on women and other disadvantaged groups;
c. Socially aware citizens, social mobilisers and professionals; and
d. Representatives of diverse groups from different religions and social backgrounds including Rakhine, Chakma, Marma, Buddhist, Hindu, Muslims, transgenders.

***Project area***

The project is being implemented in the 3 districts namely Nilphamari, Panchagarh and Cox's bazar. The districts were selected based on two criteria i.e., extent of mal-governance or conflict that exists amid diverse group of citizens who live in these areas.

## 4. Project title: Strengthening the human rights and social participation of marginalised groups in Bangladesh with specific focus on women and girls (short: HOPE), Funded by NETZ Partnership for Development and Justice

**Summary/Background of the project**

Through the programme, 10,090 strengthened human rights defenders (HRDs) and 1,490 representatives of public authorities work effectively together to strengthen the rights, resources and representation of women, girls and minority groups in the programme districts and at the national level. Comprehensive capacity building of HRDs from local to national level and partner NGOs, their networking and advocacy work as well as the creation of sustainable, institutionalised cooperation mechanisms between civil society and state agencies contribute to strengthening the human rights and social participation of marginalised groups. The HRDs from the programme districts systematically share their experiences with state and civil society representatives at national and international level via a national HRD platform. Strengthening HRDs' capacity in methods of conflict sensitive democratic dialogue with public authorities and their context-specific use contributes directly to strengthening civil society's scope for action.

**Direct/ indirect target group**

Direct target group – their competencies are directly strengthened, and they use the capacities built up:

- 4,680 young volunteer HRDs in 72 high schools (one per union) in the 6 programme districts.
- 5,370 adult volunteer HRDs from village to district level in the programme districts, including socially engaged citizens from the programme regions as well as teachers, school management committee mem-bers and parents of students in the supported high schools.
- 40 full-time civil society actors (programme staff).

**Institutional direct target group – their capacity building is an integral part of the project:**

- 216 human rights groups in the 72 high schools (72 student forums, 72 self-defence groups and 72 theater groups) in which young volunteer HRDs are organised.
- 234 human rights groups in which adult volunteer HRDs are organised: -144 village level civil society organisations (CSOs) -72 CSOs at union level -12 sub-district level CSOs -6 district level CSOs
- 72 elected union councils, 12 elected sub-district councils and 18 sub-district and district authorities.

**PROJECT LOCATION**

| District | Sub-District | | Union | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Jashore | Monirampur | Khanpur | | Horidaskati |
| | | Chaluahati | | Vojgati |
| | | Dhakuria | | Samkur |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | Keshabpur | Sadar Union | Mongolkot |
| | | Majidpur | Bidyanondoka |
| | | Sagordari | Satbaria |
| Satkhira | Satkhira Sadar | Dhulihar | Fingri |
| | | Brohmorajpur | Municipal |
| | | Alipur | Labsa |
| | Tala | Tala Sadar | Nagorghata |
| | | Sorulia | Dhandia |
| | | Kumira | Islamkat |

## 5. Project Title: Hazardous Sanitation Labour: Connecting the Past, Present and Future of Manual Scavenging in Bangladesh

**Funding Agency:** Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC), United Kingdom
**Lead Institution:** Lancaster University
**Collaborating Organization:** Research Initiatives Bangladesh (RIB)

**Background**

Manual scavenging and hazardous sanitation labour remain among the most marginalized and least addressed labour issues in Bangladesh. Predominantly carried out by historically excluded Harijan communities, this form of labour is deeply rooted in social stigma, caste-based occupational segregation, and systemic inequality. Despite gradual urban development and policy attention to sanitation systems, the human dimension of sanitation labour, particularly occupational safety, dignity, and social inclusion continue to receive insufficient attention.

Sanitation workers particularly from harijan community are routinely exposed to life-threatening conditions, including toxic gases, lack of protective equipment, and unsafe entry into septic tanks and sewer systems. These risks are compounded by limited access to healthcare, social protection, and alternative livelihood opportunities. Moreover, entrenched discrimination perpetuates intergenerational cycles of exclusion, restricting upward mobility for affected communities.

**Research objectives and focus area**

a. **Historical Origins & migration pathways**- How manual scavenging [and wider nongra kaj] began in Bangladesh, particularly under British colonial rule, and how these histories shape present livelihoods. How individuals historically involved in hazardous sanitation work (e.g. manual scavenging) perceive themselves and their occupation.
b. **Current working conditions**- Examine today's sanitation work realities those who are involved in nongra kaj, and manual pit and tank emptying in particular - challenges, perceptions of dignity, and workers' own views on solutions and change.
c. **Intergenerational aspirations & mobility**- Understand how younger and older generations are improving or moving away from hazardous sanitation work, and what barriers or opportunities they face. Young people, who are seeking further education and alternative employment to that of their parents and grandparents, but at the same time, respect and seek to understand why some may wish to remain in this occupation.
d. **Identity, representation & social perception** - How sanitation workers are defined by others and by themselves, how these identities have evolved, and what tensions or positive changes exist within and beyond the community.
e. **A collaborative and less extractive form of research**-To provide skill development opportunities and build confidence of community members.

**Geographical location and coverage**

Locations covering 4 districts and communities

- District 1: Satkhira, (Sadar and Tala upazila),
- District 2: Khulna

- District 3: Nilphamari, (Saidpur, domor, sadar)
- District 4: Rangpur

**Methodology and Approaches**

The study adopted a qualitative and participatory research approach, using Participatory Action Research (PAR) to explore the histories, identities, livelihoods, and aspirations of sanitation worker communities. Data were collected through oral history interviews, life-history interviews, Focus Group Discussions (FGDs), and participatory problem–solution mapping. Creative methods, including photography and storytelling, were also used to encourage community members to express their experiences and perspectives. An action-oriented component enabled Community Research Assistants (CRAs) to implement and document community-led initiatives based on the research findings, promoting both knowledge generation and local action.

## 6. Project title: "Our Voice Our Future" (OVOF) : Social and Legal Empowerment of Different Marginalized communities in Bangladesh.

**Funded by BLAST**

**Background**

BLAST and RIB agree to work in partnership in order to continue to work together on a number of intersecting areas of interest regarding the empowerment of marginalized communities especially focused on the women of Bangladesh. This partnership will extend across all areas where BLAST and RIB engage with these communities and relevant stakeholders involved in advancing and legitimizing rights, protections and inclusion.

**Project Objectives**

1. To empower marginalized communities, particularly women and girls in Bangladesh, and strengthen their meaningful participation in social, economic and decision-making processes.

2. To promote and protect the rights, dignity, safety and social inclusion of marginalized communities by addressing intersecting forms of discrimination, exclusion and vulnerability.

3. To strengthen the capacity of marginalized communities and relevant stakeholders through awareness-raising, knowledge generation, advocacy and engagement to advance and institutionalize rights, protection and inclusion.

# Activity of the Projects

### 1. Advancing Transitional Justice in Bangladesh by RLS

## Activity and Output of the Projects

### Activity 1: Focus Group Discussions

**Activity 1**: Focus group Discussion
Facilitating participatory research, especially focus group discussion (FGDs) with youth and women groups, and representatives of civil society organisations, to gather insights on disproportionate effects of climate change as well as to co-create gender-sensitive and youth-inclusive strategies to address climate Justice.

Through 15 Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) conducted in Rajshahi, Satkhira, and Cox's Bazar, informative and complex insights emerged, shedding light on the lived experiences of women, youth, and marginalised groups confronting climate challenges. These conversations went beyond surface-level assessments to reveal deeply rooted structural problems, open discussions on systemic barriers, and uncover hidden narratives that traditional research often fails to capture. Region-specific issues further deepened the complexity.



*Figure 1 FGD-SHED, Cox's Bazar*

In Satkhira, participants from Dalit communities described long-standing social exclusion, compounded by environmental vulnerability such as salinity intrusion and water scarcity which made their living conditions increasingly precarious. In Rajshahi, the intensifying drought and lack of sustainable water management have devastated agricultural livelihoods, disproportionately affecting smallholder women farmers. Meanwhile, in Cox's Bazar, participants pointed to the large-scale deforestation caused by the expansion of Rohingya refugee camps, which has severely disrupted the local ecosystem and further marginalised host communities particularly women and youth by reducing access to forest resources and increasing environmental risks.

Output of the activity: The FGDs in Rajshahi, Satkhira, and Cox's Bazar generated localized insights into the interconnected impacts of climate change, gender inequality, and social exclusion, particularly affecting women, youth, and Dalit communities. Key concerns included salinity and water scarcity, drought and water management challenges, deforestation, resource pressures, unequal access to resources, and limited participation in local governance. The discussions strengthened knowledge sharing and provided a foundation for context-specific strategies on climate resilience, gender justice, and advocacy.

**Activity 2**: **Community Schools**
Conducted 6 community schools for youth and women to raise their awareness on the intersection of gender and climate Justice, to empower them and to foster leadership and collaboration to advocate for gender-sensitive climate policies and promote sustainable practices.

**Community School at Rajshahi**

First Round : On 15 July 2025, RIB, in collaboration with Rosa Luxemburg Stiftung South Asia, organised a day-long Community School in Godagari, Rajshahi, on the interconnection between gender justice and climate justice. The discussion was held at the Upazila Rural Development Office in Godagari with representatives from BARCIK, LOFS, KABIUS, RSDP, and YCN. The organisations shared their experiences of working on climate justice, gender justice, and the concerns of women, youth, farmers, and marginalised communities.

The session brought together local women, youth, journalists, environmental activists, and development actors to discuss drought, water scarcity, agricultural challenges, women's workload, health risks, and women's participation in local decision-making. The discussions introduced climate justice, gender justice, transitional justice, and feminist political ecology. Participants shared local experiences and discussed how climate-related challenges affect women and other groups differently. The activity increased understanding of the links between climate and gender issues and identified the need for more inclusive, locally appropriate responses.

**Second Round:** The second round was held at the Upazila Rural Development Office in Godagari with representatives from previous five organization . Key discussions included women's increased workload during climate-related events, the importance of women's participation in climate planning, and women's role in seed preservation and exchange as a locally relevant adaptation practice. The session also highlighted the need to recognize the experiences and knowledge of marginalised communities in climate responses. The activity strengthened information sharing and coordination among participating CSOs and local government representatives and reinforced the importance of community-based, gender-sensitive approaches to climate resilience.

Output of the activity: The activity strengthened collaboration and knowledge sharing among CSOs working with women, youth, farmers, and marginalised communities. It highlighted key climate challenges and recognised women's knowledge and roles, particularly in seed preservation and climate-resilient practices. The session also strengthened coordination among CSOs, local stakeholders, and government representatives to promote inclusive, community-based climate action.

**Community School at Cox's Bazar**



*Figure 2 Community School-2 Intersection of Gender Justice and Climate Justice*

First round: On 20 July 2025, RIB, organized a Community School in Ukhia, Cox's Bazar, bringing together civil society representatives, women, youth, and local stakeholders to explore the links between gender justice, climate justice, and social inclusion. Discussions highlighted climate change, deforestation,

displacement, pressure on natural resources, and the impacts of the Rohingya refugee situation, with particular attention to women and youth. The event strengthened knowledge sharing and networking and emphasized the importance of inclusive, rights-based, locally grounded approaches and Transitional Justice in addressing climate-related inequalities.

Second round: The final Community School of 2025 was held on 18 December 2025 at the Pulse Bangladesh Society Training and Resource Center in Ukhiya, Cox's Bazar, with participation from NGO representatives and youth activists. The session focused on the intersectionality of climate justice and gender justice, highlighting how climate change disproportionately affects women, gender-diverse people, host communities, and Rohingya refugees through unequal access to resources, limited participation in decision-making, increased care responsibilities, livelihood insecurity, and heightened disaster vulnerability. Through group discussions and case-based presentations, participants developed practical recommendations and a collective "Way Forward" emphasizing women's meaningful participation, safe and inclusive community environments, integrated climate and gender interventions, capacity building for resource management and livelihoods, and long-term community-driven strategies for sustainable and equitable climate resilience in Cox's Bazar.

Outputs of the activity: Overall, the activity significantly strengthened networking and collaboration among local communities, youth, and NGOs. By engaging in group discussions, case studies, and the "Way Forward" planning, participants were able to identify shared challenges and solutions, build relationships, and establish communication channels for future climate resilience and gender equity initiatives.

**Community School at Satkhira**

On 11 August 2025, RIB organized a Community School at IDRT, Tala, Satkhira, focusing on the intersection of gender justice and climate justice. Representatives from five partner organizations participated actively in the session and shared their community-based experiences. Participants explored how climate change and environmental vulnerabilities affect women and marginalized communities differently. Experiential sharing highlighted women's increased workloads, mobility constraints, safety concerns, and livelihood challenges in climate-affected areas. Participants also discussed the importance of recognizing women's knowledge and contributions to ecological and climate-resilient practices. An interactive game-based activity using storytelling and art helped participants deepen their understanding of gender and climate justice. Discussions reflected local challenges, including women's adaptive strategies in agriculture, environmental risks, and barriers to women's participation in decision-making. Participants developed recommendations for integrating gender and climate perspectives into livelihood, awareness, and advocacy initiatives. The activity encouraged creative thinking, knowledge exchange, and community-based approaches to addressing interconnected challenges. Overall, the Community School strengthened understanding of inclusive, rights-based, and locally grounded approaches to gender and climate justice.
Outputs: The event fostered a deep understanding among participants that climate justice is inseparable from social and gender justice, emphasising the need for inclusive, rights-based approaches rooted in Transitional Justice

**Second round:** The Second Community School was held on 26 November 2025 at IDRT, Tala, Satkhira, bringing together local CSOs and PAR farmers from Shyamnagar. The session aimed to strengthen collaboration between RIB's work with marginalized farmers and the initiatives of local civil society organizations. The Project Coordinator highlighted the importance of integrating gender justice and climate justice into community-level actions and organizational strategies. Participants reflected on how their ongoing interventions incorporate gender-responsive and climate-sensitive approaches despite political and contextual challenges. PAR farmers shared practical experiences of climate-related challenges affecting agricultural production and livelihoods in Shyamnagar. Key concerns included soil and water salinity,

recurring flash floods, and extreme summer heat. Participants emphasized that these climate stresses disproportionately affect women, whose agricultural and household contributions often remain undervalued. The discussions demonstrated how climate-related pressures can deepen existing gender inequalities and threaten food and livelihood security. The session encouraged stronger recognition of women's knowledge, labor, and contributions to climate adaptation. Overall, the Community School strengthened knowledge exchange and highlighted the need for inclusive, gender-just, and climate-resilient agricultural strategies.
Outputs: The activity deepened participants' understanding of the intersection between climate justice and gender justice while strengthening dialogue and knowledge exchange between CSOs and PAR farmers from Shyamnagar, Satkhira. It highlighted the importance of recognizing women's roles, labor, and knowledge in climate-resilient agriculture and enhanced organizations' capacity to integrate gender-responsive and climate-sensitive approaches. The identification of key challenges—including salinity, flash floods, and extreme heat—through a gender lens strengthened collaboration and provided a basis for inclusive adaptation strategies and collective action.

**<u>Activity 3</u>: Facilitated 6 community-based sensitisation activities organised collectively by youth and women groups to foster leadership and collaboration among them.**

**Public Activity at Satkhira**
A village meeting was held on 12 August 2025 in Kashia Danga, Tala, Satkhira, where participants discussed the hardships, they face due to climate change and poverty**.** Many families shared that they struggle daily to survive, as they have no stable livelihood**.** Among them, Shila Rani spoke about her family's experience, saying that pig rearing is their main source of income**.** She added that her husband died after being struck by lightning while working in Norail, leaving the family without any means of support. As a result, her daughter's education had to be stopped. Shilpa said that such lightning incidents were rare in the past, but now they occur frequently, **as** the climate has changed drastically**.** It was discussed and decided to plant 100 palm trees in memory of Mintu Das in that village. The decision was made through a community discussion involving local youth, women, and other villagers.
Second round: The discussion highlighted the severe impact of climate change and environmental degradation on fishermen's livelihoods, particularly the sharp decline in fish populations in the Kopotakkho River due to irregular rainfall, rising temperatures, siltation, salinity, and water pollution. As traditional fishing becomes increasingly unsustainable, the community identified the need for river restoration, environmental conservation, and alternative livelihood opportunities such as poultry rearing, vegetable cultivation, and small entrepreneurship. Local fishermen, women, and youth committed to leading initiatives including riverbank tree plantation, advocacy for silt removal, and awareness on protecting fish breeding seasons, strengthening community resilience and collective action.
Output: climate-related challenges, including frequent lightning incidents, declining fish populations, environmental degradation, and unstable livelihoods. Participants agreed on practical actions such as tree plantation along riverbanks, advocating for silt removal, raising awareness about fish breeding seasons, and promoting alternative livelihoods such as poultry rearing and vegetable cultivation. The activity strengthened community unity, environmental awareness, and climate resilience while encouraging greater leadership and participation of women and youth in decision-making and fostering collective responsibility for building a resilient community.

**Public Activity at Rajshahi**
During the meeting, the Santal community discussed various challenges they face. They highlighted that the excessive use of chemical fertilizers has nearly wiped-out small fish in rivers and wetlands, and old trees that protected the environment have been cut down like Mahua. In terms of agriculture, traditional rice cultivation in the wetlands has ceased, and there is a shortage of preserved seeds. On social and gender issues, women spoke about the negative impacts of child marriage, which limits their opportunities

to earn and sustain livelihoods. Additionally, community members mentioned a lack of employment, delayed wages, and experiences of social discrimination.

**Second round Rajshahi :** On 9 November 2025, RIB organized a community meeting in Ramdaspara, Godagari, Rajshahi, with active participation from local women and youth. Participants discussed climate-related challenges and their disproportionate impacts on marginalized women, particularly water scarcity, increased workloads, and unequal wages despite similar agricultural work. Women highlighted the combined burden of farm labor, household responsibilities, and long-distance collection of drinking water. Youth discussed the barriers created by social norms that limit their participation in decision-making and expressed greater willingness to speak up and engage in community development. The meeting strengthened awareness of gender-responsive climate action and encouraged women and youth to take more active roles in building inclusive and resilient communities.

**Output :** The meeting generated a collective understanding of the environmental, agricultural, and social challenges affecting the Santal community. Participants identified the negative impacts of chemical fertilizers on biodiversity, including the decline of small fish and native tree species such as Mahua, along with the loss of traditional wetland rice cultivation and local seed preservation practices. Women highlighted the adverse effects of child marriage on education, income opportunities, and livelihoods, while broader concerns such as unemployment, delayed wage payments, and social discrimination were also documented. The activity strengthened community awareness and provided a basis for developing locally grounded, inclusive, and sustainable responses to these challenges.

**Public Activity at Cox's Bazar**

On 14 October 2025, a community-based dialogue and experience-sharing meeting was held in Thainkhali, Ukhiya, Cox's Bazar, to amplify local perspectives on climate change, gender inequality, and climate justice. The meeting brought together climate-vulnerable women, women's rights activists, community members, and representatives of Research Initiatives Bangladesh (RIB). Participants shared lived experiences of flash floods, water scarcity, livelihood and income losses, rising debt, and increasing barriers to girls' education, demonstrating how climate impacts disproportionately affect marginalized women. The experience of Razia Khatun, whose home, land, and livelihood were severely affected by hill-torrent-induced flooding, illustrated the social justice dimensions of climate change. Suraiya Begum and Syed Navid Anjum Hasan emphasized the need to recognize climate change as a structural justice issue and to integrate women's lived experiences into gender-responsive policies, advocacy, and community-based programme design.

**Second round:**

Following Cyclone Remal, a community-level interaction and experience-sharing session was held on 16 October 2025 in Fisherman Para, Ukhiya, Cox's Bazar, with the participation of climate-affected community members and representatives of Research Initiatives Bangladesh (RIB). The gendered impacts of the disaster and the disruption of local livelihoods were explored through the experiences shared by fishermen, boatmen, and women from affected households. Significant damage to boats, fishing equipment, homes, and income sources was reported, resulting in increased financial insecurity and greater dependence on temporary shelters. It was highlighted that climate-induced disasters disproportionately affect women by increasing care responsibilities, causing asset losses, and reducing livelihood opportunities. The need for gender-responsive disaster preparedness and response was emphasized, and climate disasters were discussed as a structural justice issue in which marginalized occupational communities are often affected most severely despite contributing least to environmental degradation.

**Output:** The activity documented climate-affected communities' experiences of livelihood and housing losses, debt, displacement, and heightened gender-based vulnerability, while strengthening awareness of unequal climate impacts and gaps in disaster response and social protection. Women and occupationally marginalized groups were recognized as critical voices and sources of evidence for climate justice advocacy.

The dialogue generated actionable, community-driven insights to promote gender-responsive adaptation, inclusive decision-making, policy engagement, and resilience-building initiatives.

**Activity 4**: Conducted 3 local dialogue events to exchange experiences and ideas with local authorities, government and non-government organisations (GO/NGOs), political actors, media persons, students, farmers and left actors to draw their attention towards, spread information and generate broader favourable opinion on gender Justice, equity, climate change, agriculture and systemic alternatives.

**Dialogue at Rajshahi**

A local dialogue on the Intersection of Gender Justice and Climate Justice was held Upazila Parishad Hall Room, Godagari, Rajshahi bringing together government representatives, development partners, civil society members, and other key stakeholders. The discussion highlighted the critical link between gender equality and climate action, emphasizing that sustainable development cannot be achieved without addressing both dimensions simultaneously. Participants shared insights on how women and marginalized genders are disproportionately affected by climate change, yet remain underrepresented in policy and decision-making processes. Speakers called for inclusive policies, capacity-building programs, and grassroots-level engagement to ensure that gender perspectives are integrated into climate adaptation and mitigation strategies. The dialogue concluded with a shared commitment to strengthen collaboration among government agencies, NGOs, and local communities to promote gender-responsive climate action and ensure equitable, sustainable development.



*Figure 3 Community School-2 Intersection of Gender Justice and Climate Justice*

Output: The local dialogue strengthened participants' shared understanding of the interconnection between gender justice and climate justice and emphasized the importance of integrating gender perspectives into climate policies, programmes, and interventions. Government representatives, NGOs, and civil society actors were encouraged to adopt gender-responsive approaches and prioritize women's leadership, climate-resilient livelihoods, and gender considerations in local adaptation and mitigation planning. The dialogue also strengthened stakeholder collaboration, generated key recommendations and action points, and created a foundation for joint advocacy, capacity building, community engagement, and continued efforts toward inclusive, equitable, and sustainable climate action

**Dialogue at Satkhira**

A local dialogue on the intersection of gender justice and climate justice was held at the Upazila Parishad Hall Room, Tala, Satkhira, bringing together government representatives, development partners, civil society, journalists, youth, and other stakeholders. The discussion highlighted how climate change

intensifies existing gender inequalities, particularly through women's difficulties in accessing safe cyclone shelters, water, sanitation, and secure livelihoods. Government initiatives on gender-responsive disaster management, safe water and sanitation, and women's leadership were discussed, while journalists and youth emphasized their roles in advocacy, awareness, and accountability. The dialogue concluded with a shared commitment to coordinated, inclusive, and gender-responsive climate action to promote equitable and sustainable community resilience.

Output: The dialogue increased understanding of the intersection between gender justice and climate justice and identified key local challenges, particularly women's vulnerabilities in cyclone shelters and water scarcity. Government, civil society, journalists, youth, and community actors strengthened collaboration and expressed commitments to gender-responsive disaster management, advocacy, and awareness. These outcomes provided a foundation for developing inclusive, equitable, and sustainable climate resilience initiatives in Tala, Satkhira.

**Dialogue at Cox's Bazar**

A local dialogue in Ukhiya brought together government officials, development partners, civil society, journalists, youth, and community representatives to discuss the intersection of gender and climate justice. Participants highlighted women's vulnerabilities during climate-induced disasters, including inadequate shelters, safety concerns, and limited access to essential services, while the Rohingya refugee crisis was recognized as increasing pressure on local resources, livelihoods, and host communities. Government officials outlined gender-responsive disaster management and climate adaptation initiatives, while other stakeholders emphasized advocacy, accountability, environmental protection, and equitable resource distribution. The dialogue concluded with a shared commitment to coordinated and inclusive action to strengthen climate resilience, gender justice, and social and environmental protection in Ukhiya.

**Output:** The dialogue deepened understanding of the link between gender justice and climate justice, highlighting women's vulnerabilities and the additional pressures faced by host communities due to the Rohingya refugee crisis. Government officials outlined gender-responsive disaster management, community-based climate adaptation, and equitable resource distribution initiatives. Participants emphasized inclusive, coordinated action and recommended targeted support for vulnerable households and stronger measures to address social and environmental vulnerabilities in Ukhiya.

**Activity 5**: Organised two national-level events like a national dialogue and a national seminar to build a platform where academics, scholars, policy-makers, activists and community people can come together to share their perspectives and develop a broader understanding of gender Justice through the lens of climate Justice in Bangladesh.

Title of activity: **National Dialogue on Gender Justice through the Lens of Climate Justice in Bangladesh**

Date, place and duration of event/activity: 17 November 2025, Hotel Bengal Blueberry, Gulshan-2, Dhaka 1212.

Title of activity: **National Seminar on Bridging the Gap between Gender and Climate Justice in Bangladesh**

Date, place and duration of event/activity: 10th December, 2025, Hotel Bengal Blueberry, Gulshan-2, Dhaka 1212.

**Activity 6. A Published and disseminated 8 short videos sharing experiences of the marginalised and climate victims**

This content highlights the profound impact of climate change on the lives, livelihoods, and social security of marginalized communities. Through the real voices, daily struggles, and survival experiences of people from coastal and climate-vulnerable areas, it shows how cyclones, salinity, drought, water scarcity, and loss of livelihood continuously affect their lives. Focusing particularly on women's experiences, this piece presents climate change not only as an environmental challenge but also as a gendered and social justice issue, emphasizing the urgent need for effective policy interventions and targeted support for the most vulnerable.

The video performance was strategically disseminated through multiple platforms to ensure maximum outreach and engagement. It was uploaded to RIB's official YouTube channel, making it accessible to a global audience. The link to the video was also shared on RIB's Facebook page to engage with their social media followers and encourage community interaction

| SL | Title | YouTube Link |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | Intersectionality between Women's Lives & Climate Change | https://youtu.be/w9CYmKxu6Yo?si=urxJcQae3j44wza_ |
| 2 | Climate Change & Gender Crisis: Shila Rani's Story | https://youtu.be/LLkKUSTuaXs?si=rIoI7q8goBNUzqND |
| 3 | Climate Change & River Erosion in Char Ashariadaha | https://youtu.be/E03HPYgtUIQ?si=L_WE5mprzpq4UZW2 |
| 4 | Cyclone Remal- Climate & Gender Justice. | https://youtu.be/z_Rw32m5iG4?si=sUzRUs88MhQHgSfu |
| 5 | Climate Crisis & Gender Inequality: The Story of Sebi Rani | https://youtu.be/Pa8PqA7n3MY?si=h2i58EpAkiCfvCoy |
| 6 | The Battle Against Nature and Society: The Survival Story of Godagari's Peary Kerketa | https://youtu.be/xj6bg4hH3p4?si=205PQch9PrKwv7N8 |
| 7 | The Crisis of the Kopotakkho: Public Life Devastated by Climate Change and Human-Induced Disasters | https://youtu.be/zCkzV1xtkL8?si=rERWPB3Qdh3H4Uvq |
| 8 | Rajia Khatun's Struggle: Climate Change, Gender Inequality, and the Crisis of Justice | https://youtu.be/EakqROsZFRs?si=RAoNgLebLpSE0Xx6 |

**6.B Published 33 Reel videos on Climate Justice, Gender Justice & Transitional Justice for dissemination on social media**

These reels were produced by Research Initiatives Bangladesh (RIB), in collaboration with Rosa-Luxemburg-Stiftung South Asia, to highlight the urgent and interconnected crises of climate justice, gender justice, and transitional justice in Bangladesh. 33 Reel videos are uploaded in the RIB's Facebook Page.

**6.C Published and disseminated 2 podcasts on climate and gender justice.**

**PODCAST-1: Title:** Gender justice & Climate justice the Role of Youth and COP 30

Brief description of the content: This PODCAST analyses how women, youth, and gender-diverse communities in Bangladesh are playing a vital role in advancing climate justice. It highlights their leadership, experiences, and adaptive capacities, as well as their active participation in climate policy formulation and implementation. The Podcast also explores the interconnection between gender justice and climate justice, emphasizing that sustainable solutions are impossible without addressing both together. Additionally, it examines how the voices of Bangladeshi youth and women are represented in global platforms such as the COP (Conference of the Parties) and outlines Bangladesh's key priorities and potential demands for COP30. Overall, it calls for gender-responsive and youth-inclusive climate action as a pathway to equitable and sustainable development.

**PODCAST-2: Title:** Analysis of the Intersectionality Between Climate Justice and Gender Justice

Brief description of the content: The intersection of climate justice and gender justice reveals that climate change disproportionately affects women and marginalized communities, deepening existing social and economic inequalities. Women, particularly in vulnerable regions, face higher risks due to unequal access to resources, decision-making power, and social protection. Addressing climate challenges without a gender lens risks perpetuating injustice. Integrating gender-responsive policies, youth engagement, and inclusive climate action is essential to ensure equitable solutions, build resilience, and advance both social and environmental justice. COP30 and similar platforms provide critical spaces for such policy discourse and action.

**Activity 7**: Conducted 4 online Webinars to discuss strategies and policies promoting climate justice and gender justice. The recordings of these webinars were uploaded to the website and widely disseminated through social media.

**Webinar -1: Intersection of Climate Justice with Gender Justice in Transitional Times: The Bangladesh Context**
**Speaker:** Dr. Meghna Guhathakurta, Researcher
**Discussent: 1.** Philip Gain, Director- Society for Environment and Human Development (SEHD)
**2.** Sharmin Islam, Gender Team Leader - UNDP Bangladesh

A thought-provoking webinar titled "Intersection of Climate Justice with Gender Justice in Transitional Times: The Bangladesh Context" was jointly organised by Research Initiatives Bangladesh (RIB) and Rosa Luxemburg Stiftung South Asia. The event brought together academics, development practitioners, and activists to explore the critical intersections of gender and climate justice within the evolving socio-political landscape of Bangladesh.

The keynote speaker, Dr. Meghna Guhathakurta, a prominent writer and researcher, delivered a powerful presentation highlighting how the crises of climate change and gender inequality are deeply interconnected. She emphasised that in transitional times marked by political, ecological, and social shifts women and marginalised communities face disproportionate impacts, yet their voices and experiences often remain excluded from mainstream policy and discourse.

Two distinguished discussants, Philip Gain (Director, Society for Environment and Human Development - SEHD) and Sharmin Islam (Gender Team Leader, UNDP Bangladesh), contributed valuable insights from their respective fields. Philip Gain underscored the environmental vulnerabilities that are compounded by systemic gender disparities, while Sharmin Islam focused on integrating gender perspectives in development and climate policy. The webinar served as a vital space for dialogue and reflection, reinforcing the need for intersectional approaches to justice that address both environmental sustainability and social equity. It encouraged participants to rethink advocacy and action through a feminist and ecological justice lens, particularly in the context of Bangladesh's ongoing climate challenges.

**Webinar – 2: Neo-Liberal Climate Table: Corporate Profit Versus People's Narratives**
**Speaker:** Pavel Partha, Director- BARCIK
**Discussant:** Suraiya Begum, Director and Project Coordinator, RIB

The second webinar, "Neo-Liberal Climate Table: Corporate Profit Versus People's Narratives", examined the conflict between corporate agendas and climate justice. Pavel Partha, Director BARCIK highlighted how profit-driven policies often undermine environmental sustainability and marginalize vulnerable communities, including indigenous groups, farmers, and coastal populations. Suraiya Begum, Director RIB emphasized integrating people's narratives into climate action, noting that transitional justice frameworks are essential for holding both corporate and state actors accountable. The discussion stressed that marginalized voices are frequently excluded from climate dialogues and called for inclusive decision-

making. Participants gained insights into balancing corporate interests with community needs, underscoring that effective climate action must prioritize equity, accountability, and community participation to achieve both environmental and social justice.

**Webinar- 3: Nature-based Solutions & Livelihood Security: A Gender Analysis of Climate Vulnerabilities**
**Speaker:** Mahbuba Nasreen, Professor, Institute of Disaster Management and Vulnerability Studies, University of Dhaka

**Discussant:** Kazi Robiul Alam, Chairman and Associate Professor, Department of Anthropology, Rajshahi University.

The third webinar, brought together academics and practitioners to examine the gendered dimensions of climate vulnerability and explore nature-based approaches to strengthening livelihood security. The session was anchored by Mahbuba Nasreen, PhD, Professor at the Institute of Disaster Management and Vulnerability Studies, University of Dhaka, who provided an in-depth analysis of how gender and social inequalities shape climate-related vulnerabilities. Kazi Robiul Alam, Chairman and Associate Professor, Department of Anthropology, Rajshahi University, contributed contextual anthropological perspectives, emphasizing the importance of local socio-cultural factors in understanding vulnerability and resilience. Professor Dr. Khondoker Mokaddem Hossain, Pro-Vice Chancellor of Bangladesh University of Professionals, highlighted the need for institutional preparedness, policy coherence, and effective responses to emerging climate risks. Brigadier General Abu Nayeem, former Director General of Fire Service & Civil Defence, addressed climate-related hazards from a disaster management and emergency response perspective, highlighting the increasing risks associated with climate change. Overall, the webinar generated valuable insights into livelihood insecurity, ecological degradation, and social inequality, while emphasizing the importance of locally grounded, gender-responsive, and nature-based solutions to strengthen climate resilience and inform policy and community-level interventions.

**Webinar:4 - No Climate Justice Without Gender Justice**

**Speaker:** Sharmind Neelormi, Professor, Department of Economics, Jahangirnagar University

**Discussant:** Sara Khatun, Programme Manager, Equal Human Rights Programme, NETZ Partnership for Development and Justice



*Figure: 4 Webinar on No Climate Without Gender Justice*

The fourth webinar, "No Climate Justice Without Gender Justice," critically emphasized that climate justice cannot be achieved through technical or environmental solutions alone. The discussion highlighted how climate impacts and economic losses are distributed unevenly across genders, with women and gender-diverse communities experiencing disproportionate vulnerability. When climate policies focus only on general resilience or infrastructure without integrating gender analysis, they fail to address the specific needs, risks, and capacities of marginalized groups. As a result, adaptation and recovery measures often reinforce existing inequalities rather than reduce them. The webinar also stressed that climate justice is not merely an economic issue; it is a political and social process that requires inclusive decision-making and equitable resource distribution. Without meaningful participation of women and marginalized communities in policy-making, climate

strategies remain top-down and disconnected from ground realities. Consequently, the intended outcomes of climate justice such as fair access to resources, protection, and livelihood security remain unattainable. Overall, the session concluded that gender justice is not an optional add-on but a fundamental condition for climate justice. Unless gender equality is integrated into the core of climate governance, policy frameworks will continue to fall short of achieving true justice and resilience for vulnerable communities.

The webinar provided a nuanced understanding of how gender injustice and climate change are not isolated challenges but intersecting crises that reinforce one another especially in transitional socio-political and ecological contexts such as Bangladesh.

**2. Building capacities of local communities to mitigate problems created by their discrimination in mainstream societies: ethnic communities, dalits and marginalized women in West-Bangladesh by MISEREOR**

## Activities and Outputs

**Major activities implemented within this project are :**

**A. Formation and Capacity Building of PAR Groups**

- 56 community PAR groups established.
- Student groups formed.
- Civil society groups engaged.
- Monthly meetings conducted throughout the project period.



*Figure 5: PAR group meeting, Jashore*

**B. Training Programs**

- Training topics included:
- Participatory Action Research
- Human Rights
- Land Rights
- Right to Information (RTI)
- Advocacy and Lobbying
- Leadership Development
- Citizenship and Participation

**C. Right to Information (RTI) Advocacy: Community members learned to-**

- **Submit RTI Applications:** Prepare and submit RTI applications to seek information on public services, budgets, development activities, and decision-making.
- **Engage Government Agencies:** Request relevant information from government departments and local authorities to promote transparency and accountability.
- **Track Responses:** Monitor RTI requests, follow up with authorities, and pursue appeals or complaints when necessary.
- **Use Information for Advocacy:** Analyze RTI information to identify service gaps, address community concerns, and advocate for better governance and public services.

**D. Awareness and Campaign Events:**

**Creative and Cultural Activities:** The project organized cultural festivals, performances, art, storytelling, and exchange events to promote human rights, gender equality, social inclusion, and community cohesion. These activities engaged children, youth, and marginalized groups, raising awareness and fostering confidence, cultural pride, and mutual respect.

**International Women's Day Observance:** International Women's Day was observed through awareness events, discussions, cultural activities, and community dialogues highlighting women's rights, achievements, and contributions. The events addressed gender inequality, discrimination, violence, leadership, and equal opportunities, while promoting the participation and recognition of women, particularly from marginalized communities.



*Figure 6: International Women's Day, Jashore*

**Human Rights Day Events:** Human Rights Day was observed through seminars, awareness campaigns, discussions, and community activities promoting equality, dignity, non-discrimination, justice, and social inclusion. The events increased awareness of the rights of women, children, minorities, and persons with disabilities, while promoting peaceful and inclusive communities.

**Environmental Awareness Activities:** The project organized awareness sessions, clean-up campaigns, tree plantation drives, and youth-led activities to promote environmental protection. Participants learned about climate change, waste management, biodiversity, and sustainable practices**,** encouraging greater community responsibility for a healthier environment.

**Community Cultural Programs:** Cultural programs featuring music, dance, drama, poetry, folk traditions, and exhibitions promoted diversity, social cohesion, peace, gender equality, and human rights while strengthening mutual understanding.

**Advocacy Meetings:** Advocacy meetings with government representatives, community leaders, CSOs, and service providers provided platforms to raise community concerns and promote rights, social inclusion, accountability, and responsive governance**.**




*Figure 7: Advocacy meeting in Rajshahi*

**E. Exchange Visits and Learning Forums**

Exchange visits and learning forums promoted knowledge sharing, peer learning, and networking among communities, youth, women's groups, and local stakeholders. Participants shared experiences on rights advocacy, social inclusion, livelihoods, and peacebuilding**,** strengthening solidarity and encouraging the adoption of successful practices in their own communities.

**F. Baseline and Evaluation Study**

To ensure evidence-based implementation and measure project effectiveness, a comprehensive baseline and evaluation study was conducted under the project. At the beginning of the intervention, a baseline assessment was carried out by independent researchers to establish benchmark information regarding the sociology-economic conditions, rights awareness, access to public services, levels of civic participation, and challenges faced by ethnic minorities, Dalits, and marginalized women in the project areas. The study provided critical insights into existing gaps and informed the design and implementation of project activities. Towards the later stages of the project, an evaluation study was undertaken to assess progress, measure changes against baseline indicators, and evaluate the project's overall outcomes and impact. The findings revealed significant improvements in participants' awareness of rights, access to information and public services, confidence in engaging with local authorities, participation in governance processes, and collective action for community development. The combined use of quantitative and qualitative methods, including surveys, interviews, focus group discussions, case studies, and community reflections, provided valuable evidence of the project's achievements and lessons learned.

**3. Advancing Accountability and Transparency through Right To Information by NED:**

## Activities and Achievement of the Project

During the reporting period, the project made substantial progress in strengthening citizens' access to information, enhancing democratic participation, and promoting accountability through the effective implementation of the Right to Information (RTI) Act. Despite a challenging political environment, temporary suspension of field activities, limited institutional oversight, and reluctance of public authorities

to respond to RTI requests, the project continued to mobilize communities, strengthen local partnerships, and expand citizen engagement across Cox's Bazar, Nilphamari, Panchagarh, and Dinajpur.

The project successfully facilitated community planning meetings, increased RTI application submissions, strengthened multi-stakeholder dialogues, organized advocacy initiatives, conducted capacity-building programmes, and established the RTI Citizen Platform to encourage greater public participation in governance.

## Result 1: Orientation and Strategic Planning through Evidence Collection from Group Discussions

### Monthly Planning Meetings

Monthly planning meetings remained the foundation of community engagement throughout the reporting period. RTI Moderators and PAR Groups regularly met to identify local governance issues, discuss community priorities, monitor previous RTI interventions, and develop collective action plans.

Overall achievements include:

- 128 RTI Moderator meetings
- 248 PAR Group meetings
- Continuous issue identification and evidence collection
- Improved coordination among community members
- Greater youth participation and leadership
- Strengthened communication through both physical meetings and online platforms

To improve participation, additional community members were included in several districts, messenger groups were established for continuous communication, and rotational facilitation methods were introduced to ensure equal participation.

### RTI Application Submission

The project recorded remarkable growth in RTI applications throughout the reporting period.

**Overall Progress**

- **1576 RTI applications submitted**
- **647 responses received**
- **254 appeals filed**
- **20 formal complaints submitted**

RTI requests primarily focused on:

- Access to Health services
- Local government accountability
- Social safety-net programmes
- Youth development
- Land administration
- Municipal services
- Public resource allocation



*Figure 8: PAR Meeting People Showing RTI Filings*

Although public authorities frequently delayed or ignored RTI requests due to the absence of an effective Information Commission and limited oversight mechanisms, the project continued supporting applicants throughout the appeal process.

Youth leaders increasingly assumed responsibility for encouraging citizens to exercise their information rights and follow up on applications.

**Orientation Meetings**

Four orientation meetings were successfully organized across project locations, introducing community members, government representatives, and local stakeholders to project objectives, citizen participation, and the practical use of RTI for improving public service delivery.

One planned orientation meeting could not be organized because local authorities repeatedly failed to provide a suitable date.

**Coordination Meetings**

Several coordination meetings were organized throughout the reporting period, including online and in-person sessions.

These meetings focused on:

- Reviewing project progress
- Budget monitoring
- Planning future activities
- Staff coordination
- Addressing implementation challenges
- Strengthening strategic planning

## Result 2: Functional Structure for Democratic Dialogue and Inclusive Partnership

**Multi-Stakeholder Policy Dialogues**

The project successfully organized 8 multi-stakeholder dialogue meetings involving:

- Deputy Commissioners' Offices
- Upazila Administration
- Civil Surgeon's Offices
- Department of Youth Development
- Social Welfare Department
- Women's Affairs Department
- Journalists
- Civil society organizations
- RTI activists
- Community representatives




*Figure 9: Dialogue at Sadar Hospital Cox's Bazar*

These dialogues strengthened collaboration between citizens and government institutions while creating opportunities to discuss public service delivery, youth development, healthcare, transparency, and accountability. Professional facilitators ensured inclusive participation and encouraged constructive, evidence-based discussions.

**Advocacy Meetings**

A total of 6 advocacy meetings/workshops were organized involving:

- Community-Based Organizations
- Civil society representatives
- Teachers
- Entrepreneurs
- Journalists
- Women's leaders
- Youth representatives
- Social activists

These meetings promoted wider understanding of the Right to Information Act and encouraged active citizen participation in governance. One national advocacy meeting held in Dhaka expanded engagement among broader civil society actors.

**Road Shows**

Three awareness road shows were organized in Cox’s Bazar, Nilphamari and Panchagarh.

The events included:

- Cultural performances
- Community rallies
- Music
- Public campaigns
- Distribution of information materials

These activities successfully reached community members who seldom participated in formal meetings and significantly increased public awareness of RTI.

**RTI Boot Camps**

Three RTI Boot Camps were organized where citizens received practical support to prepare and submit RTI applications. The events attracted large public participation and encouraged immediate use of the RTI Act.

**Courtyard Meetings**

Seventeen community courtyard meetings were organized using traditional village gathering spaces.

These informal meetings proved particularly effective for:

- Women's participation
- Elderly community members

- Marginalized groups
- Local issue identification
- Community problem-solving




*Figure 10: Courtyard Meeting in Nilphamari*

**Day Observations**

Nine commemorative events were organized, incNEtz

uding:

- Labour Day
- World Environment Day
- Human Rights Day

Activities included:

- Community discussions
- Campaigns
- Processions
- Public awareness programmes

These observances linked RTI with labour rights, environmental governance, human rights, and public accountability.

### Result 3: Expansion of Knowledge on RTI

Throughout the reporting period, knowledge regarding the RTI Act expanded considerably through:

- Community awareness programmes
- Advocacy initiatives
- Road shows
- Capacity-building trainings
- Dialogue meetings
- RTI Boot Camps
- Public drama
- Tea stall adda (gatherings)

Increasing numbers of citizens demonstrated confidence in using RTI as a practical governance tool rather than merely a legal provision.

### Result 4: Capacitated multi-stakeholders to Monitor and Influence Policy Dialogue

**Capacity Building Trainings**

A total of **6 two-day training batches** were successfully completed.

Overall achievements include:

- **155 participants trained**
- RTI activists from previous projects engaged as facilitators
- Practical sessions on RTI application preparation
- Appeal procedures
- Community mobilization techniques
- Monitoring government responsiveness

Participants significantly improved their understanding of citizen rights and accountability mechanisms.

**RTI Citizen Platform**

One of the most significant achievements during the reporting period was the establishment of the **RTI Citizen Platform**.

The platform aims to:

- Strengthen democratic participation
- Promote transparency
- Enhance citizen engagement
- Encourage collective monitoring of public institutions
- Facilitate dialogue between citizens and political actors

More than 70 representatives from civil society, media, academia, development organizations, and RTI activists participated in the launch event.

**4. Strengthening the human rights and social participation of marginalized groups in Bangladesh with specific focus on women and girls (HOPE) by NETZ Bangladesh.**

**Activities and Progress**

1. Capacity Building: 10,090 young and adult Human Rights Defenders (HRDs) were capacitated across 12 sub-districts and at the national level. A total of 20,542 participants were reached, including 11,370 women, 9,172 men, and 12,391 minority participants.
2. HRD Organization**:** Young and adult HRDs were organized through 72 high schools and 234 local human rights groups across six districts.
3. Dialogue and Joint Action**:** CSOs and HRDs conducted 24 Union and 4 Upazila dialogues addressing child marriage, service gaps, budget allocation, land disputes, education, infrastructure, women's and minority rights, and SGBV.

4. Community Development: HRDs and authorities supported road repairs and renovation, construction of 2 culverts, installation of 4 deep tube wells, and other local infrastructure improvements.
5. Violence and Rights Protection: HRDs addressed 66 reported incidents involving rape, domestic violence, child marriage, discrimination, kidnapping, land disputes, and other forms of violence through mediation, referral, counselling, legal processes, and other interventions.
6. Local Initiatives**:** Achievements included enrolling out-of-school children, supporting Dalit women's entrepreneurship, improving road safety, assisting persons with disabilities, resolving community conflicts, and strengthening CSO collaboration.
7. RTI Use**:** CSOs submitted 205 RTI applications, all of which received responses—204 concerning social safety-net services and one concerning primary school information.
8. Student Forums**:** Student Forums in 24 schools strengthened leadership, child protection, gender equality, and civic engagement through wall magazines, awareness campaigns, safety mapping, school improvements, and community actions. They also helped prevent one child marriage, return five irregular students to school, reactivate complaint boxes, and establish or restore sanitary napkin corners.




*Figure 11: District level cultural event, Satkhira.*

Violence: Reporting and Outcome

| SL | Types of Violence (addressed by CSO) | Number of Incidents Reported | HRDs initiatives |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Rape | 8 | Under Trial in court referred by CSO) |
| 2 | Violence against Minority/Caste based discrimination | 5 | Press Conference, News publishing, Mediation |
| 3 | Domestic Violence | 37 | Arbitration, Mediation, Counselling |
| 4 | Child Marriage | 8 | Stopped, counseling |
| 5 | Kidnapping | 2 | Rescued by help of Hotline |
| 6. | Suicide | 3 | Observations |
| 7 | Political Violence | 1 | Mediation |
| 8. | Land related Conflict/Dispute | 1 | Voice raised in dialogue, Mediation |
| 9. | Physical assault | 1 | Referred to thana |
| | | | |

* HRDs Reported total 66 number of incidents, 387 number cases are unreported

**5. Hazardous Sanitation Labour: Connecting the Past, Present and Future of Manual Scavenging in Bangladesh by Lancaster University**

**Major Activities Implemented**

The project implemented a range of participatory activities to achieve its objectives, including:

- Recruitment and training of Community Research Assistants (CRAs) from sanitation worker (Harijan and Dalit) communities on Participatory Action Research (PAR), research ethics, and data collection methods.
- Implementation of Participatory Action Research (PAR), engaging community members in identifying and analysing issues affecting their lives.
- Conducting Focus Group Discussions (FGDs), Key Informant Interviews (KIIs), and In-Depth Interviews (IDIs) to gather evidence on the experiences, challenges, and aspirations of sanitation workers.
- Documentation of oral histories and personal narratives to preserve community experiences and the impacts of caste-based discrimination.
- Organising reflection workshops and storytelling sessions to validate findings, encourage collective learning, and strengthen community participation.
- Supporting community-led action planning and advocacy initiatives based on research findings to address priority issues through engagement with relevant stakeholders.
- Systematic documentation, transcription, translation, and qualitative analysis of research data.
- Organising knowledge-sharing activities, including photo exhibitions, stakeholder dialogues, and dissemination workshops, to promote evidence-based advocacy and policy engagement.

**key findings:**

**Understanding historical roots, caste-like structures, and social stigma**

The Harijon community in Bangladesh largely traces its historical roots to migration from regions of India, particularly Bihar, Assam, Rajasthan, and Odisha, during the British colonial period, when many families were recruited for sanitation and manual scavenging work that later became hereditary. Despite internal caste-like and clan divisions, persistent stigma associated with “untouchability” continues to restrict access to land, housing, public services, and social spaces, contributing to long-term social exclusion and a limited sense of belonging within mainstream Bangladeshi society.

**Understanding identity interplay and its crisis**

Harijon identity is highly contextual and strategic, as many members take pride in identifying as Harijon but may conceal their identity in schools, restaurants, and public spaces to avoid discrimination, while also using occupational identities such as “sweeper” to access employment opportunities and, in some cases, reserved services and benefits. Among young people, this creates a strong tension between identity-based pride and the need to avoid stigma, while perceived competition over reserved opportunities can further contribute to frustration and internal tensions within the community.

**Understanding youth engagements, their aspirations and challenges**

Harijon identity is highly contextual and strategic, as many members take pride in identifying as Harijon but may conceal their identity in schools, restaurants, and public spaces to avoid discrimination, while also using occupational identities such as “sweeper” to access employment opportunities and, in some cases, reserved services and benefits. Among young people, this creates a strong tension between identity-based pride and the need to avoid stigma, while perceived competition over reserved opportunities can further contribute to frustration and internal tensions within the community.

**Housing, health risks, education, job risks, family well-being**

- **Housing:** Insecure settlements, eviction threats, demolition, and discrimination limit access to safe housing and urban land.
- **Health:** Unsafe sanitation work, lack of protective equipment, substance dependency, and inadequate reproductive healthcare create serious health risks.
- **Education:** Poverty, social pressure, early marriage, and the perceived practicality of sanitation work contribute to school dropout, especially among girls.
- **Employment:** Irregular salaries, long periods of unpaid work, and exploitation of contract workers create severe job insecurity, although some educated youth have secured better employment.
- **Family Well-being:** Addiction, unstable income, domestic violence, and limited work opportunities undermine household savings and family stability, with women bearing much of the burden.

**Historical migration and occupational inheritance**

PAR findings indicate that sanitation worker communities largely trace their origins to labour migration during the British colonial period, when their ancestors were recruited for municipal, railway, military, and sanitation work. Over generations, sanitation work became an inherited caste-based occupation and social identity, contributing to persistent exclusion and limited mobility. At the same time, many Harijon participants expressed concern that members of other communities, including Muslims, are increasingly taking over sanitation jobs, particularly in urban and semi-urban areas. They perceive this as a threat to their traditional livelihood and believe that the government's institutionalization of sanitation services has further weakened their occupational security.

**Identity, dignity and social recognition**

Participants held diverse views about identity, with some identifying as Harijan while others preferred identities based on religion, locality, or personal choice. However, there was strong agreement that labels such as *"Sweeper"* and *"Methor"* are derogatory and reinforce discrimination. They expressed pride in their community and sanitation work while demanding greater dignity, respect, and social recognition.

**Education and intergenerational mobility**

Education was widely seen as the key pathway to overcoming inherited stigma and improving future opportunities. However, poverty, discrimination, bullying, and limited employment opportunities often lead to school dropout and restrict social mobility. Even educated youth sometimes return to sanitation work because of persistent prejudice in the labour market.

**Youth Aspirations and Future Prospects**

Young people expressed strong aspirations to pursue professional careers and live free from occupational discrimination. However, unemployment, limited vocational training, financial hardship, weak networks, and discriminatory hiring practices often prevent them from achieving these goals. The findings show that education must be complemented by employment opportunities and measures to combat social discrimination.

**Women's Experiences and Gender Inequality**

Women face intersecting discrimination based on gender and social identity, including unequal wages, limited employment, domestic violence, restricted mobility, and inadequate access to healthcare and education. Despite these challenges, women demonstrated strong leadership and advocated for girls' education, vocational training, economic empowerment, legal awareness, and greater participation in decision-making.

**Living Conditions and Access to Basic Services**

Participants reported inadequate housing, poor sanitation and drainage, unsafe drinking water, limited healthcare, unemployment, substance abuse, school dropout, child marriage, and persistent discrimination. These interconnected challenges reinforce poverty, poor health, and social exclusion, particularly in historically neglected sanitation worker settlements.



*Figure 12:: FGD at Nilphamari*

**Community Priorities and Proposed Solutions**

Key priorities include improving housing, water, sanitation and drainage; expanding education, vocational training, and alternative employment; strengthening healthcare and social protection; improving occupational safety and mechanization; and addressing discrimination through legal protection and public awareness. Participants also called for stronger engagement with local government and recognition of sanitation workers as skilled professionals contributing to public health.

**Capacity-Building Achievements**

The project strengthened community researchers' skills in qualitative research, facilitation, communication, and research ethics. It also promoted leadership, critical reflection, collective problem-solving, and greater confidence among young people to document and communicate their experiences.

**Major Project Outputs**

- Participatory Action Research (PAR): A community-led PAR process was successfully implemented, engaging sanitation worker communities in research design, data collection, analysis, validation, and reflection.
- Community Researcher Capacity Building: Community Research Assistants were trained in PAR, research ethics, qualitative methods, oral history, FGD facilitation, documentation, and community engagement.
- Oral History Archive: A valuable collection of oral histories was developed, documenting migration, settlement, occupational experiences, identity, and intergenerational experiences.
- FGD/KII/IDI Reports: Qualitative evidence was collected and documented on health and safety, education, employment, gender, discrimination, youth aspirations, living conditions, and access to public services, contributing to the overall research analysis.

- Workshop and Reflection Proceedings: Orientation, training, reflection, and validation workshops documented community discussions, lessons learned, priorities, and agreed actions.
- Qualitative Research Database: A well-organized repository of transcripts, oral histories, field notes, observations, coded data, and community narratives was developed for future research and advocacy.
- Community Action Plans: Communities and Community Researchers jointly developed action plans addressing education, housing, livelihoods, legal protection, and social inclusion.

**Lessons Learned**

The project demonstrated that **Participatory Action Research (PAR)** can generate rich evidence while simultaneously strengthening community capacity, leadership, ownership, and collective problem-solving. Meaningful participation of marginalized communities is therefore essential for developing locally relevant solutions and supporting longer-term social change.

- Community Researchers Build Trust: CRAs from sanitation worker communities established stronger rapport with participants, enabling open discussions and richer, more authentic data on sensitive issues.
- Oral History Preserves Marginalised Histories: Oral histories captured migration, occupational experiences, discrimination, resilience, and cultural identity that are often missing from official records.
- Youth Are Agents of Change: Young CRAs demonstrated strong potential and enthusiasm, although their limited prior research experience created some challenges. Hands-on training helped them develop practical research and leadership skills.
- Research Can Empower Communities: Participatory research strengthened participants' confidence, communication skills, rights awareness, collective reflection, and ability to identify solutions to shared challenges.
- Long-term Engagement: Meaningful participation requires sustained engagement, regular field visits, mentoring, reflection, and trust-building with historically excluded communities.
- Interdisciplinary Partnerships: Collaboration among RIB, Lancaster University, and community researchers combined academic expertise with lived experience, improving research quality and relevance.
- Evidence for Advocacy and Policy: Community-generated evidence can strengthen advocacy on occupational safety, discrimination, social protection, housing, education, labour rights, and inclusive development.
- Overall, Lesson: Participatory research can generate reliable evidence while strengthening community capacity, leadership, ownership, and long-term social change.

**6. Our Voice Our Future" (OVOF) by BLAST**

**Project Activities**

Six Community Consultation Meetings were held to determine the situation in local contexts for marginalized, minorities communities in Bangladesh" were organized within the duration of project.

| Sl. No. | Date | Place |
|---|---|---|
| 01 | 29th April 2025 | Birgonj, Dinajpur |
| 02 | 30th April 2025 | Pirgonj, Rangpur |
| 03 | 28thMay 2025 | Cox's Bazar |
| 04 | 25th June, 2025 | Satkhira |
| 05 | 26th June 2025 | Khulna |
| 06 | July 9, 2025 | Haluaghat, Mymensingh |

**Activity 1. Area-wise Summary of Community Consultation Meetings**

**1. Cox's Bazar:**
The consultation created a safe and inclusive space for marginalized community members, particularly women, to share their needs, concerns, and lived experiences. Key issues identified included exclusion from social protection, gender-based violence, land rights concerns, limited access to essential services, and underlying structural, cultural, and institutional barriers. The consultation generated valuable qualitative evidence to support future advocacy and more inclusive, responsive, and evidence-based interventions.




*Figure 13: Community Consultation Meeting with the Rakhine community in Cox's Bazar*

**2. Haluaghat, Mymensingh:**
The consultation identified interconnected socio-economic, educational, legal, and human rights challenges faced by Garo and other indigenous communities. Major concerns included poverty, limited access to education and skills training, poor roads and transportation, unemployment, land disputes, exploitation by moneylenders, corruption, gender-based violence, child marriage, substance abuse, limited legal assistance, ethnic discrimination, inadequate disaster relief, and human-elephant conflict. The findings highlight the need for rights-based, inclusive, gender-responsive, and community-led interventions.

**3. Birganj, Dinajpur:**
The consultation strengthened communication between marginalized Santal communities and local authorities. Twenty-five participants, who were not previously involved in NGO programmes, gained confidence to express their needs and rights. Government representatives learned about community challenges and committed to greater engagement, creating opportunities for future advocacy and collaboration. The meeting also helped identify shared priorities and challenged dominant narratives around systemic exclusion and neglect.

**4. Pirganj, Rangpur:**
The consultation facilitated direct dialogue between marginalized community members and representatives of government offices. Participants shared their everyday challenges and identified actions expected from government authorities, helping to strengthen relationships and establish a foundation for future collaboration. The meeting highlighted systemic exclusion and neglect, while community-defined issues and lived experiences provided important lessons for future interventions and advocacy.

**5. Khulna:**
RIB, with support from BLAST, organized a consultation with 35 representatives of the Jolodas community from different areas of Khulna. The discussion focused on the social deprivation and difficulties faced by the community in accessing government services due to their marginalized social position. The consultation provided an important platform for identifying their concerns and strengthening their voice for future advocacy and engagement with relevant stakeholders.

**6. Satkhira:**
The consultation assessed progress on previously identified problems and explored emerging challenges for future advocacy. Key issues included water scarcity, prolonged waterlogging, environmental degradation, social discrimination, restricted access to social protection and public services, gender-based vulnerabilities, human trafficking, child marriage, unemployment, health-service concerns, drug addiction, and land insecurity. The findings indicate the need for stronger accountability, improved public services, legal protection, gender-responsive interventions, and sustained engagement with marginalized communities.

**Overall Summary:**
Across all six areas, the consultations revealed that poverty, social and ethnic discrimination, limited access to public services, gender inequality, land insecurity, weak governance, inadequate legal protection, and environmental challenges are deeply interconnected. The meetings also strengthened community–government dialogue, generated qualitative evidence, and created a foundation for future advocacy, accountability, collaboration, and community-led solutions.

**Recommendations – Consolidated Summary**

1. Transparent and Accountable Services: Ensure fair access to public health, social protection, welfare, and medicines through transparent procedures, effective grievance mechanisms, and community monitoring.
2. Inclusive and Non-Discriminatory Education: Ensure marginalized and minority children have equal access to quality education, including mother-tongue and flexible learning opportunities, with special attention to girls and working children.
3. Protection of Women, Girls and Children: Strengthen prevention and response mechanisms against human trafficking, child marriage, gender-based violence, and child exploitation through awareness, legal enforcement, and community support networks.
4. Land, Housing and Legal Rights: Increase legal literacy on land and property rights, ensure proper land registration, prevent unlawful occupation and forced eviction, and provide adequate legal support and alternative housing where required.
5. Livelihood and Decent Employment: Expand skills training, livelihood diversification, financial support, market linkages, and fair employment opportunities for marginalized communities, particularly women, youth, and female-headed households.
6. Accessible and Quality Health Services: Improve health services in remote areas through mobile clinics, trained community health workers, stronger community clinics, and accountable medicine distribution.
7. Youth Empowerment and Awareness: Engage young people in awareness, leadership, skills development, education, and livelihood initiatives addressing child marriage, trafficking, substance abuse, and social challenges.
8. Disaster Preparedness and Climate Resilience: Strengthen community-based early warning systems, evacuation plans, resilient infrastructure, climate-adaptive livelihoods, and equitable disaster relief mechanisms.

9. Social Inclusion and Representation: Increase the participation and representation of indigenous and marginalized groups, including women, in local decision-making and ensure equal recognition in official documents and entitlement programmes.
10. Sustained Advocacy and Institutional Collaboration**:** Strengthen continuous dialogue, advocacy, accountability, and collaboration among communities, government authorities, NGOs, and other stakeholders to achieve long-term, inclusive, and rights-based solutions.

**Activity 2. One Public hearing was organized in Cox's Bazar**

## 1. Introduction

A public hearing on health and social security of marginal women was held on 11 September 2025 in Cox's Bazar. The event brought together marginalized women from different localities, representatives from local government departments, youth development officers, educators, legal experts, activists, and members of civil society. The objective was to identify key barriers women face in accessing health and social protection services, document their lived experiences, and engage with government officials for accountability and policy action.

## 2. Objectives

To hear directly from marginalized women about their experiences with the health and social security system.
To identify institutional gaps, discrimination, and challenges in service delivery.
To encourage dialogue between communities and government officials.
To recommend actionable steps to improve access to equitable healthcare and social protection.

**Summary of Key Issues, Responses and Jury Statements**

- Health Services: Shortages of medicines, inadequate healthcare facilities, limited specialists, long waiting times, and poor accountability were major concerns.
- Climate and Environment: Flooding, salinity, water scarcity, and land loss are worsening health, livelihoods, and access to services, especially for women and coastal communities.
- Social Security and Governance: Lack of transparency in safety nets, insecurity, harassment, discrimination, and exploitation of informal workers were highlighted.
- Education and Women's Empowerment: Teacher shortages, education costs, limited stipend information, and restricted opportunities continue to affect marginalized students, particularly girls.
- Gender-Based Violence: Harassment, domestic violence, early marriage, and barriers to justice require stronger legal awareness, protection, and support services.
- Trafficking and Labour Exploitation: Deceptive overseas employment and trafficking risks call for stronger recruitment regulation and safe migration pathways.
- NGO Response: Agrojatra stressed the need to address poverty, gender discrimination, child marriage, and limited awareness through stronger government–NGO collaboration.

- Jury Statements: Jury members emphasized coordinated government–NGO action, climate and social vulnerability, safe migration, stronger state accountability, and effective implementation of existing laws and public services.




*Figure 14: Public Hearing in Cox's Bazar*

Recommendations

- Ensure uninterrupted medicine supply at public clinics and transparent distribution.
- Strengthen monitoring of service quality and eliminate informal payments practices.
- Recruit adequate doctors and nurses at upazila and union levels, train them on serving citizens as their duties.
- Invest in saline-free water systems and climate-resilient health infrastructure.
- Increase oversight and address digital tracking of allowance distribution.
- Expand subject options in rural schools and increase female teacher recruitment.
- Raise community awareness on early marriage and gender equality.
- Strengthen local legal aid and protection mechanisms.
- Enforce laws against harassment, trafficking, and domestic violence.
- Encourage regular community hearings and citizen monitoring to ensure accountability.

The public hearing in Cox's Bazar highlighted serious challenges faced by marginalized women in healthcare, social security, livelihoods, and protection from violence and discrimination**.** Testimonies revealed corruption, unauthorized payments, medical negligence, shortages of doctors and essential supplies, and poor service delivery. Climate change, particularly salinity, water scarcity, flooding, and livelihood loss**,** further worsens women's health and access to services. Participants also raised concerns about harassment, discrimination against Rakhine women, child marriage, exploitation, kidnapping, and trafficking risks. Government officials acknowledged service gaps and outlined existing support programmes, while experts emphasized weak law enforcement and institutional accountability. The hearing concluded that effective implementation of laws, stronger accountability, and coordinated action among government, NGOs, and communities are essential to ensure health, social security, and justice for marginalized women.

**Activity 3. Fellowships**

With the support of BLAST**,** two individuals from marginalized communities were selected for fellowships to engage in advocacy-related work. On behalf of RIB**,** Dr. Meghna Guhathakurta was appointed as the supervisor for the fellows. Mina Das and Tapsi Das were selected for the fellowships. As a result of this initiative, two research reports were produced.

1. Dalit Children's Education: Problems and Solutions by Mina Das

Research Goal and Objectives: To promote, advance, and protect the educational rights of Dalit children in Bangladesh, with particular focus on the Jashore region.
Methodology: The study was conducted using a qualitative research approach, with data collected through participatory discussions and interviews. A total of 10 Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) were conducted with Dalit parents and students. A total of 9 In-Depth Interviews (IDIs) were conducted to obtain the views of parents, local government representatives, and NGO representatives.
Research Area: Jashore District.
Number of Participants**:** A total of 118 participants took part in the study, including 94 children, 20 parents, 1 teacher, 1 local government representative (Member), and 2 NGO workers.

This study was conducted to analyse the educational status, access, participation, and challenges of children from different Dalit communities, including Rishi, Kayputra, Jele, Dom, Hela, and Harijan communities, living in Sadar, Manirampur, and Keshabpur upazilas of Jashore District, Bangladesh. Despite the recognised importance of education as a fundamental means of social and economic development, Dalit children remain inadequately integrated into the mainstream education system due to historical discrimination, social exclusion, poverty, and institutional neglect. Field-level findings indicate that many Dalit children depend on NGO-run schools, while their access to quality and mainstream educational institutions remains limited. The remote and marginalised locations of many Dalit settlements create additional barriers, including long distances to schools, transportation costs, poor connectivity, and safety concerns. These challenges particularly affect girls, who are more vulnerable to dropping out because of safety concerns, household responsibilities, and prevailing social norms. Economic hardship also forces many children to engage in paid or unpaid labour at an early age, while girls may be withdrawn from education and married at an early age. The study further reveals that discriminatory and humiliating behaviour by teachers or fellow students can create psychological distress, reduce children's interest in education, and contribute to school dropout. Local-level findings suggest that around 60 percent of Dalit children leave education before completing primary schooling. This situation highlights the urgent need for an equitable, inclusive, and discrimination-free education system that specifically addresses the barriers faced by Dalit children. Special educational support programmes, priority in school admission, scholarships, educational materials, tutoring, and community-based study groups should be introduced to improve participation and retention. At the same time, teachers, school authorities, and parents should receive awareness and anti-discrimination training, while effective monitoring mechanisms should be established to ensure a safe and inclusive school environment. In the long term, the government should allocate dedicated resources for Dalit children within the education budget and develop specific policies and action plans to promote their educational inclusion. Greater attention should also be given to inclusive teacher recruitment, access to secondary and higher education, mentorship and role-model programmes for Dalit youth, and opportunities for digital and technology-based learning. Stronger collaboration among government institutions, NGOs, civil society organisations, and local communities can further strengthen educational initiatives for Dalit children. Ultimately, ensuring education for Dalit children should be recognised not merely as a poverty-reduction intervention but as an essential component of equality, social justice, dignity, and the protection of fundamental human rights.

**Fellowship No.2: Problems and Solutions in Accessing Healthcare Services for Dalit Women by Tapasi Das**

Goal and Objective: To promote, advance, and protect the right to health of Dalit communities in Bangladesh, particularly in the Jashore region.

Methodology: The study was conducted using a qualitative research approach, with data collected based on the experiences, perspectives, and opinions of the participants.

FGD: 10 Focus Group Discussions were conducted with Dalit women, men, and adolescents.

IDI: 7 In-Depth Interviews were conducted with women, men, and adolescent girls/boys.

KII: 8 Key Informant Interviews were conducted with parents, local administration and NGO representatives, as well as doctors, nurses, and health workers.

Study Area: Jashore District.

Number of Participants**:** A total of 99 parents, 20 adolescent girls/boys, 1 doctor, 1 nurse, 2 health workers, 1 Union Parishad member, 1 NGO worker, and 1 police representative participated in the study.

The study analyzed the health status, access to healthcare services, and key challenges faced by Dalit women from the Rishi, Kayputra, fisher, Dom, and Harijan communities in Keshabpur of Sadar and Manirampur Upazilas in Jashore District. The findings indicate that poverty, lack of health awareness, social stigma, cultural practices, family restrictions, and caste-based discrimination are major barriers to accessing healthcare. Women living in remote areas often face difficulties in accessing health facilities due to long distances and inadequate transportation. Long waiting times, irregular availability of doctors, ticket-related complications, and shortages of essential medicines further restrict timely access to healthcare. Harijan women, in particular, reported experiences of neglect, social distancing, and discriminatory treatment while seeking health services. The high costs of treatment, medicines, and transportation also force many poor women to delay or avoid necessary medical care. Adolescent girls and young women often feel uncomfortable discussing menstruation, reproductive health, and sexual health issues and have limited knowledge about available services. The presence of male health workers and prevailing social norms further discourages women from openly discussing sensitive health concerns. The study also identified early marriage and pregnancy among adolescent girls, along with limited knowledge of family planning and antenatal care, as major concerns. Local representatives, doctors, and health workers similarly identified low health awareness and social barriers as significant challenges for women. At the same time, health workers reported that shortages of medicines and resources limit their ability to provide adequate services. The findings highlight the need to ensure  for Dalit women. Targeted awareness programmes on maternal health, reproductive health, family planning, and adolescent health are also essential. Coordinated initiatives by local government, health institutions, and NGOs are needed to improve access to information, strengthen community awareness, and enhance accountability in healthcare delivery. Overall, ensuring the health rights of Dalit women requires eliminating discrimination, improving the quality and accessibility of services, and promoting meaningful community participation in healthcare planning and delivery.

## Seminar & Events of the RIB's Project

### 1. Advancing Transitional Justice in Bangladesh, RLS

**Title of the National Dialogue: Gender Justice through the Lens of Climate Justice in Bangladesh**

The National Dialogue was held on 17 November 2025 at the Bengal Blueberry Hotel, Dhaka, bringing together policymakers, academics, civil society representatives, development practitioners, NGO actors, and youth activists to reflect on the outcomes of the project's regional dialogues. The program was graced by Shireen Huq, Founder Member of Naripokkho and Former Head of the National Women's Affairs Reform Commission of the Government of Bangladesh, as the Chief Guest.

The primary objective of the National Dialogue was to present, synthesize, and critically examine the key findings and learnings emerging from the three regional dialogues conducted in Rajshahi, Satkhira, and Cox's Bazar. These regional dialogues captured diverse local experiences of climate change and highlighted how climate impacts intersect with gender inequality, social marginalization, and economic vulnerability across different ecological and socio-political contexts.

The National Dialogue created an important platform to bring these localized realities into a national-level conversation, enabling cross-regional learning and comparative analysis. Through structured discussions and reflective sessions, the dialogue aimed to connect grassroots experiences with broader policy and theoretical frameworks, particularly through the lens of climate justice, gender justice, and transitional justice. The event emphasized the critical importance of recognizing and amplifying community voices especially those of women and marginalized groups in shaping equitable, inclusive, and rights-based climate responses. RIB Chairman highlighted the overall objectives of the project, emphasized the relevance of transitional justice, and underscored the interlinkages between climate justice and gender justice. During the session, Project Coordinator presented the key findings from the three regional dialogues, highlighting common patterns as well as region-specific challenges. Experts from social science and legal backgrounds, including university professors, contextualized these findings within broader theoretical, legal, and socio-political frameworks.

The National Dialogue sought to inform future advocacy strategies, contribute to evidence-based policy recommendations, and strengthen collaboration among stakeholders working at both local and national levels to advance climate- and gender-responsive justice in Bangladesh.

Through this National Dialogue, the findings, experiences, and research-based evidence generated from the regional dialogues conducted in Rajshahi, Satkhira, and Cox's Bazar will be consolidated into a coherent and evidence-based analysis on the interlinkages between climate justice, gender justice, and transitional justice. By connecting grassroots-level realities with national-level discussions, the dialogue will create a strong foundation for policy-oriented advocacy and informed decision-making, contributing to the development of climate- and gender-responsive policies and programs. The process will enhance the visibility of women's experiences and the voices of marginalized communities at the national level, ensuring that their priorities and lived realities are recognized in policy and practice. In addition, the dialogue will strengthen collaboration and coordination among academics, civil society organizations, development practitioners, NGOs, and youth actors, fostering opportunities for joint action and sustained engagement. Overall, the National Dialogue will demonstrate the relevance and applicability of a transitional justice framework in addressing climate- and gender-related injustices and will provide strategic direction for future research, advocacy initiatives, and programmatic interventions in Bangladesh.




*Figure 15: National Dialogue on Gender Justice through the Lens of Climate Justice in Bangladesh*

**Title of the National Seminar: Bridging the Gap between Gender and Climate Justice in Bangladesh. RLS project**

The National Seminar on Bridging the Gap between Gender and Climate Justice in Bangladesh marked a significant advancement in deepening the understanding of critical policy issues at the intersection of gender inequality and climate change. The seminar provided a platform to reflect on existing policy gaps, examine structural barriers, and emphasize the importance of integrating gender-responsive and climate-just approaches into national policies, programs, and governance frameworks. The program was chaired by MM Akash Board Member, RIB. The Policy Paper, presented by Dr. Meghna Guhathakurta, aims to inform national and international policy-making circles about the intersection of gender justice and climate justice in Bangladesh, particularly within transitional political and social contexts. The paper is based on an evidence-based study conducted in three ecological zones: a drought-prone area, a region affected by waterlogging and salinity, and a coastal hilly area frequently impacted by tropical storms. Drawing on field evidence, the paper introduces two conceptual frameworks. The first highlights the shared structural roots of climate and gender injustice, including patriarchy and ecologically harmful development systems, and situates transitional justice as a key lens when social and institutional structures are disrupted by conflict or climate-related disasters. The second framework places climate and gender justice actions within the broader political economy. The study offers targeted recommendations for the Government of Bangladesh, civil society and academia, and international development partners, focusing on strengthening eco-based local institutions, promoting gender-responsive agro-ecological practices, addressing climate-induced migration, expanding knowledge-sharing mechanisms, and supporting location-specific, justice-oriented research and action. Experts from the gender and climate justice fields emphasized the need for concrete and coordinated actions to address structural inequalities and climate vulnerabilities.

Discussants emphasized the importance of evidence-based research, legal accountability, and rights-based climate action in addressing climate and gender injustices. They highlighted the need to mainstream gender perspectives into climate policies, programmes, adaptation measures, and compensation mechanisms, while strengthening links between climate stress, social conflict, and peacebuilding. The discussion also stressed land rights, agrarian justice, community-led adaptation, and gender-responsive economic and budget planning**,** including equitable allocation of international aid and climate finance. Particular attention was given to the vulnerabilities of fisheries, livestock, coastal, and riverine

communities, especially women and marginalized groups. Finally, the speakers called for Bangladesh to advocate internationally for equitable adaptation finance, climate compensation, gender-responsive livelihoods, and access to resources, safety, and climate-adaptive technologies**.**

The national seminar generated significant outputs by deepening the understanding of how gender inequality and climate change intersect within national policy frameworks. The seminar provided a platform to review existing policy gaps and structural barriers, and it synthesized evidence from three distinct ecological zones into two conceptual frameworks that reveal how climate and gender injustices share common structural roots, including patriarchal power structures and environmentally harmful development models. It also highlighted how transitional justice becomes relevant when social and institutional structures are disrupted by conflict or climate-related disasters, creating a need for fair reconstruction and reparation. The seminar's outcomes include targeted recommendations for integrating gender-responsive approaches into economic policy and budget planning, strengthening sectoral policies in climate-vulnerable areas such as fisheries and livestock, and promoting gender-sensitive adaptation financing and compensation. Additionally, the seminar emphasized the importance of positioning Bangladesh's COP30 agenda around equitable adaptation finance, climate compensation, and gender-responsive livelihood support for vulnerable communities. Overall, the seminar helped bridge local realities with national-level policy discourse and established an evidence-based foundation for future advocacy and policy reforms toward inclusive, just, and gender-responsive climate action in Bangladesh.

**1. Advancing Accountability and Transparency through Right to Information, NED Project**

**Title of the Seminar: Advocacy for Social Cohesion and State Accountability through RTI**

**Introduction:**
The seminar highlighted the importance of the Right to Information (RTI) Act, 2009 in promoting transparency, citizen participation, state accountability, and social cohesion. Bangladesh remains largely at the basic level of RTI use, and greater engagement of youth, civil society, and citizens is needed to use RTI for systemic governance reform.

**Conceptual Framework**

**1. Social Cohesion**

Social cohesion refers to the trust, solidarity, inclusion, and sense of belonging that enable diverse groups within society to live and participate together on an equal basis. It is strengthened when communities respect diversity, support one another, and address conflicts constructively; conversely, discrimination, misinformation, and weak state accountability can deepen exclusion and undermine public trust.

Bangladesh offers positive examples of social cohesion, including community cooperation during floods and cyclones and interfaith initiatives that promote mutual respect and solidarity. At the same time, incidents of communal violence and attacks against minority communities demonstrate how misinformation, hate speech, and inadequate protection can undermine social harmony. Strengthening inclusive participation, institutional accountability, and protection of vulnerable groups is therefore essential for building a peaceful, resilient, and cohesive society.

**2. State Accountability**

State accountability refers to the responsibility of government institutions and public officials to act transparently, uphold citizens' rights, and ensure effective and equitable public services. The 2016 Sahebganj-Bagda Farm eviction and violence against the Santal **community** illustrates how failures in state accountability can undermine social cohesion.

Key concerns included failure to protect land rights, excessive use of force and lack of effective justice, and inadequate recognition of Indigenous customary rights. These failures contributed to insecurity, alienation, and declining trust in state institutions, ultimately weakening social cohesion.

**3. Right to Information (RTI)**

The Right to Information (RTI) Act, 2009 empowers citizens to access information from public authorities, promoting transparency, accountability, and informed participation. It is particularly important for marginalized communities, enabling them to seek information on public services, land rights, social protection, relief distribution, and public spending.

RTI can also **strengthen trust between citizens and the State** by reducing misinformation, exposing irregularities, and enabling citizens to participate more effectively in governance. The experience of the Behali Para community in Nilphamari demonstrates how collective use of RTI contributed to government action against environmental pollution, showing its potential as a tool for community empowerment and social accountability.

**1. Challenging Corruption and Patronage**

Unequal distribution of public resources and services can create conflict, exclusion, and distrust. RTI can help communities identify irregularities in recruitment, procurement, investigations, and public spending, enabling them to demand greater transparency and accountability. It can also support monitoring of justice, relief, and rehabilitation processes, particularly where marginalized communities face discrimination.

**2. Facilitating Dialogue and Civic Engagement**

RTI promotes informed engagement between citizens, civil society, and public officials, creating opportunities for policy dialogue and reform.

**Challenges in Using RTI**

Key challenges include low public awareness, bureaucratic resistance, fear of retaliation, limited advocacy capacity, and weak government record-keeping and digitization.

**Strategic Recommendations**

- Capacity Building: Train youth, activists, and community leaders on RTI and data analysis.
- Community Advocacy: Promote social audits, community scorecards, storytelling, and community-led change-maker groups.
- Policy Engagement: Advocate for stronger RTI implementation and protection for RTI users and whistleblowers.
- Digital Innovation: Promote accessible RTI platforms, open data, and proactive disclosure.

**Conclusion**

Effective use of RTI can strengthen citizen–state relations, empower marginalized communities, promote accountability, and advance social cohesion. Strategic RTI advocacy can contribute to more transparent, inclusive, and responsive governance.

## Case Study Success Stories

**1. Case Studies from RLS supported project**

**D.1 Case Studies**

**1. Piari Kerkata - Climate Crisis, Drought and Her Life**

Piari Kerkata belongs to the Oraon indigenous community and lives in Godagari Upazila, Rajshahi. This area was once covered with dense forests, which were a source of livelihood for the indigenous population. Today, those forests are gone, and survival depends almost entirely on agriculture.

Her household includes a husband with mental disabilities, a son, and a daughter. The burden of running the household and working in the fields rests solely on Piari.

Last year, Piari cultivated rice by herself, hoping it would provide some relief for the family. However, the irregular weather of the Barendra region destroyed her hopes. Excessive rain flooded the field before the rice could be harvested, causing seedlings to sprout on top of the matured crop. Still, she did not give up. She salvaged whatever rice she could and planted alternative crops. She leased one bigha of land to plant tomato seedlings, but severe drought struck the Barendra soil. The tomato plants dried up one by one, and her hopes vanished in the dust.

Piari's struggle is not only against nature but also against society. Because her husband has a mental disability, she frequently faces insults, verbal abuse, and discrimination. People often refuse to hire her for work on other lands or pay her lower wages, saying, "She is the wife of a mentally ill man; giving her work will bring misfortune." Poverty is severe. Her 13-year-old daughter, studying in class six, experienced sexual harassment on the way to school and Piari was forced to marry her off at a young age. Early childbirth caused many health problems for her daughter, and Piari spent significant money on her care.

Despite all this, Piari does not stop. She leaves home at dawn to work in others' fields, returns home to care for her child and mentally ill husband. She knows that even if no one helps, she must continue the struggle. Climate change has damaged not only crops but also her livelihood stability, physical capacity, and mental strength.

**D.2. <u>Rahima Begum's Day — Women's Daily Struggle and Class Inequality in a Climate Crisis</u>**

In Satkhira, Rahima Begum's day begins before sunrise**.** She walks with a water container to collect drinking water—not for work, but just to meet basic needs. Previously, she could use the pond near her house. Now, that water is saline, making her and her children sick if used for cooking. She must walk about two kilometers every day to fetch water; earlier it was only half a kilometer.

The local pond is now used for fish farming by its owner, so she cannot fetch water from there. She also cannot bathe in it anymore. This increased effort prevents Rahima from working or resting. Many coastal women face similar struggles because storm surges from cyclones like Aila have made ponds and tube wells saline, destroying their local water sources.

Even though men and women experience floods or cyclones, the burden is unequal**.** Society assigns water collection as women's work, so women suffer the most. Hours are spent collecting water, their bodies grow tired, yet this labor is unrecognized and unpaid a form of gender inequality**.**

At the same time, Rahima is not responsible for climate change; she does not operate factories or release toxic gases. Yet, she bears the worst impacts this is climate injustice. Climate change is not only a rise in temperature; it threatens food, water, and safety**.** Rahima's story demonstrates that the climate crisis is not only an environmental issue but also a social one, disproportionately burdening women due to unequal opportunities.

**D.3: Sushila - Indigenous Knowledge in Climate Adaptation**

Sushila, 40, lives in a remote village of Godagari, Rajshahi. She was married at fifteen, but tragically her husband died at a young age. Raising two children alone, she began a life of struggle. She worked as a day laborer and on others' fields to support her children. After her children married, their behavior changed; she often faced insults and physical and mental abuse. One day, she decided to live life on her own terms.

She leased one bigha of land and began farming independently. Initially, her rice crops yielded well. But last year, a severe drought destroyed her entire crop. Lack of irrigation, climate uncertainty, and gender-based discrimination caused her deep despair. Climate change affects agroecology, causing unpredictable rainfall or droughts that impact crop production.

Since there was only one deep tube well far from her land, she faced inequities and harassment in water access as an indigenous woman. She was denied adequate water, received inappropriate proposals at night, and faced social scrutiny: *"How can this old woman manage land alone?"* Yet she persisted.

She shifted to drought-tolerant crops that need less irrigation, such as taro, pumpkin, chili, and eggplant, grown on raised land. This year, she succeeded and encouraged other women, saying: *"If we are brave, we can tackle both nature's injustice and human injustice."* Her success is not just personal—it is a real-life example of climate adaptation through an indigenous woman farmer's knowledge.

**2. Case studies from Misereor supported Project**

**a. Accessing Social Safety Net benefits through the Right to Information (RTI) Act**

One of the most significant examples of change under the project involved a Dalit widow from Jashore who had long struggled to access government social protection services. Despite repeatedly applying for a widow allowance, she received no information regarding the status of her application and was unable to understand why she had been excluded from the beneficiary list. Like many women from marginalized communities, she lacked both the information and confidence necessary to engage with public institutions and demand accountability.

After participating in project-supported awareness sessions on citizens' rights and the Right to Information (RTI) Act, she learned about legal mechanisms available for accessing public information. With support from project facilitators, she prepared and submitted an RTI application seeking details about the beneficiary selection process, eligibility criteria, and the status of her application.

The RTI application prompted local authorities to review the matter. Subsequent follow-up discussions between community representatives and local government officials increased attention to her case. Following the review process, she was successfully included in the widow allowance programme and began receiving regular support.

Beyond the immediate benefit received by the individual, the case generated broader awareness within the community regarding the usefulness of RTI as a practical tool for securing rights and accessing public services. Other community members also became interested in using information requests to address issues affecting their lives.

**Outcomes**

- Improved awareness among marginalized citizens regarding government entitlements and services.
- Increased confidence among women to engage with public institutions and seek accountability.
- Greater transparency in local governance and beneficiary selection processes.
- Demonstrated effectiveness of RTI as a tool for social inclusion and citizen empowerment.
- Enhanced trust in legal and institutional mechanisms for resolving grievances.

**b. Women's leadership and increased community participation**

- In Rajshahi and Jashore working area, at the outset of the project, many women from marginalized communities had limited opportunities to participate in public decision-making processes. Cultural norms, lack of confidence, and limited exposure to leadership opportunities often prevented women from expressing their views in community meetings or engaging with local authorities.
- Through regular participation in Participatory Action Research (PAR) groups, leadership development workshops, rights awareness sessions, and stakeholder dialogues, women gradually gained knowledge, confidence, and organizational skills. The project created safe spaces where women could discuss issues affecting their communities, exchange experiences, and practice public speaking and advocacy.
- Over time, women who had initially remained silent during meetings began actively contributing to discussions, identifying community concerns, and participating in planning processes. Several women emerged as informal leaders within their communities and took on the responsibility of representing community priorities during meetings with local government officials and service providers.
- Their growing visibility and active participation challenged traditional perceptions regarding women's roles in public affairs. Community members increasingly recognized women's contributions to local problem-solving and development initiatives.
- The transformation was not limited to individual women; it also influenced broader community attitudes toward women's leadership and participation. The experience demonstrated that when provided with appropriate opportunities and support, women can play a vital role in promoting inclusive governance and community development.

**3. Case Studies from HOPE Project supported by NETZ Bangladesh**

**a. CSO initiated to get proper trial of girl’s survivors**

Anjumanara, the Chairperson of Fingri Union CSO. She is one of the prominent defenders to take action against gender-based violence. She getting more active and capacitated through the Human right and gender development training of RIB HOPE Project. Apart from her social responsibility she kept herself in community to reduce gender-based violence at respected union. In January 2025, Md. Kuddus (alleged person) beaten up to Van Puller Md. Nur Islam and his wife beyond the land grabbing case. Md. Kuddus denied the access in actual owner of 4 katha land just aside of main road satkhira to budhata. While the victims have gone to entry in their legitimate land suddenly Md. Kuddus and his followers attacked to Nur Islam. At that time, Daughter of Mr. Nur Islam gone to see her father and mothers’ conditions. Mr. Kuddus attacked on her head with heavy weapon and she got serious injury. Local Peoples took her in Satkhira

Sadar Hospital and Police has gone to visit but didn't took either complain or FIR. Police were back them in house without taken any legal action. CSO Anjumanara was observed her condition and called police again for log FIR along with strong evidence. Finally, Police has logged FIR and processed the case. Thus, that survivors in way to get proper trial.

**b. Restoring Safety and Hope for Rakhi and Her Infant**

Rakhi Roy, a young mother, lived with her five-month-old infant and her mother, Usha Rani, in a rented house near Pajia Bazar, Keshabpur, where both women worked as domestic workers to support their family. On 20 January 2025, while Usha was away at work, Rakhi was sexually assaulted in her home by a local man who entered without permission. Although there were initial attempts within the community to suppress the incident, local civil society leaders, with the support of community members and the police, ensured that the alleged perpetrator was arrested, Rakhi received immediate medical care, and legal proceedings were initiated. After pursuing justice, Rakhi and her family faced intimidation and pressure to withdraw the case, and they were eventually forced to leave their rented home due to community stigma and fear of retaliation. Recognizing their urgent protection needs, the RIB HOPE Project team coordinated with Dhaka Ahsania Mission to provide safe shelter and essential support services for Rakhi and her infant. Today, they are living in a secure environment, demonstrating how timely referral, coordinated action, and survivor-centred support can protect vulnerable women, uphold their right to justice, and help them rebuild their lives with dignity and hope.

**4. Case studies from NED supported project**

**a. Using Right to Information to Ensure Road Repairs and Accountability in Nilphamari**

Background

Nilphamari, a district in Bangladesh, has been facing significant infrastructure issues, with two major road projects suffering from prolonged delays. One was the road from Tamanna More to Wapda More in Saidpur Upazila, which remained impassable for over a year, causing severe inconvenience to local residents. The other was a road passing through Nilphamari city, where work from the staff quarter to Chowrangi had been left incomplete for an extended period. These stalled projects highlighted a lack of accountability and transparency in public works management.

Problem Statement

The roads in Nilphamari were in poor condition due to unfinished repairs:

- In Saidpur Upazila, the road repair work had started but was left incomplete, with holes filled only with brick dust.
- In Nilphamari city, the road work from the staff quarter to Chowrangi was half-completed, leaving the public to suffer.
- Local residents were frustrated with the lack of progress, and public funds were being misused, including government vehicles being used by officials and their families without proper accountability.

Intervention

RTI (Right to Information) activists from Nilphamari decided to take action:

1. On December 30, 2024, RTI activists Shirin Akhter, Baishakhi, Mr. Alisach, and five others submitted an application to the Saidpur Municipality Secretary's Office. They requested information on the budget estimate and project details for the road repair from Tamanna More to Wapda More.

2. On January 13, 2025, Abdul Momin, another RTI activist, submitted an information request to the Nilphamari Road and Highways Department. He asked:

- When the road work from the staff quarter to Chowrangi would be completed.

- Details of government vehicles under the department, including the number of vehicles and fuel expenses for the last year.

Immediate Impact

The response to these information requests was swift and unexpected:

- In Saidpur, the incomplete road repair was suddenly completed within a day on January 15, 2025, although the requested information was not yet provided.
- In Nilphamari city, the Road and Highways Department experienced significant pressure. Work on the incomplete road resumed within a month and progressed rapidly.
- The department officials became aware that their actions were being scrutinized for the first time.

Outcome

These RTI interventions resulted in several positive outcomes:

1. Long-delayed Road repairs were completed, significantly improving public safety and convenience.
2. Public authorities became more aware of their accountability to citizens.
3. The use of public resources, including government vehicles, came under greater scrutiny, promoting responsible usage.

**Conclusion**

This case demonstrates how the Right to Information Act can be a powerful tool for citizens to ensure accountability and transparency in public services. By leveraging their right to information, the activists in Nilphamari were able to prompt immediate action on long-stalled infrastructure projects, reducing public suffering and promoting better governance.

**b. Case Summary**

This is the tragic story of the death of Md. Arifur Rahman, a 27-year-old youth from Dokropara, Panchagarh Sadar. Arif was the only breadwinner of his family, working as a printing press manager and occasionally assisting a local marriage registrar (Kazi). He was known in his community as a cheerful and socially active young man, always willing to help others through voluntary initiatives.

On 3 March 2023, following unrest related to protests against an Ahmadiyya religious gathering (Salana Jalsa), law enforcement opened fire during clashes in Panchagarh. Arif, who was not affiliated with any political party, was returning home after Friday prayers when he was shot dead by Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB) personnel. His sudden death left his elderly parents devastated and his family destitute, as they lost their sole source of support.

Although many institutions promised help, the family received no meaningful support despite reaching out to different organizations and charitable groups.

**Intervention by RTI Activists Group**

On 26 April 2025, during an advocacy meeting organized by Research Initiatives Bangladesh (RIB) at the Muktijoddha Complex Hall in Panchagarh, Arif's sister Farida Yasmin was introduced by a member, Rabea Parveen. She shared her family's ordeal directly with RIB's Deputy Director who was present at the event.
Following this, under her guidance, RTI (Right to Information) group members including RIB's Panchagarh Field facilitator and RTI group members Liaqat Ali, Aminul Islam, Sumon Islam, and Sohel Rana met with the Deputy Commissioner of Panchagarh to raise the issue formally.

Farida Yasmin later expressed interest in joining the RTI group, and with official approval, she became a member. On 30 June 2025, a dialogue meeting was organized at the Deputy Commissioner's conference

hall in Panchagarh, which was attended by senior officials including the Deputy Commissioner (DC), ADC (General), Deputy Director of Social Services, Deputy Director of Youth Development, Deputy Director of Women's Affairs, and the Officer-in-Charge of Panchagarh Sadar Police Station. The case of Arif's killing was discussed in detail during this dialogue meeting.

**Impact of Intervention**

The RTI group's intervention successfully brought the case to the formal attention of local administration. The Deputy Commissioner and Deputy Director of Social Services assured the family of comprehensive support and emphasized that the matter would be treated with the highest priority. Most importantly, Arif's sister previously isolated in grief was empowered through her involvement with the RTI group. By becoming an RTI member, she not only gained a platform to seek justice and support for her family but also became part of a network advocating for transparency, accountability, and citizens' rights in Panchagarh.

**c. Right to Information promotes accountability culture in Teesta Canal Tree Sale case**

In Ramnagar Union of Nilphamari Sadar, large trees along the Teesta canal were cut and sold under a government decision. Locals had many questions: Who approved the cutting, how were the trees priced, and where was the money being deposited? No office gave a clear answer.
To ensure transparency, local Right to Information (RTI) volunteers decided to file formal information requests.

**What Happened**

At a monthly community meeting, the Bahali Para research group agreed to submit RTI applications. On 30 August 2025, two volunteers filed a request with the Water Development Board. The board replied that the responsibility belonged to the Social Forestry Department.

New applications were then submitted to Social Forestry and the District Council on 29 September 2025. The responses revealed that 342 trees were sold for a total of 2,476,000 taka. Some trees were priced as low as 7,000 taka, which raised concerns about fair valuation.

The volunteers also asked where the money had been deposited. The departments later provided receipts showing the funds had been submitted to the government treasury.

**Key Learnings**

- Getting accurate information still requires persistence. Offices often redirect citizens instead of guiding them.
- RTI volunteers acted responsibly and stayed committed until they received complete answers.
- Their effort helped the community understand the tree-cutting process and ensured proper accountability.
- By confirming that government revenue was deposited correctly, they strengthened transparency in local administration.
- Regular use of the RTI process can help improve governance and public trust.

## Publications

**1. The Interrelationship between Gender Justice and Climate Justice — An Exploration in the Context of Bangladesh) - by Suraiya Begum & Syed Navid Anjum Hasan.**

This guide book focuses on the deep and multidimensional interconnections between climate justice and gender justice. It discusses various key concepts and theoretical understandings related to both climate justice and gender justice. The manual further explores the relationship between climate change and our

everyday lives, highlighting issues of intersectionality and how multiple forms of inequality overlap. It examines the specific vulnerabilities of Bangladesh's climate-risk-prone coastal areas, drought-prone regions, and salinity-affected zones, with particular attention to the hardships faced by women in these contexts.

It also analyzes the link between chemical-based agricultural practices and climate change, and explains how patriarchal and capitalist social structures and value systems intensify the climate crisis and make women's lives more precarious. The manual illustrates how gender inequality intersects with climate inequality, both at national and international levels.

In addition, it discusses possible alternatives and pathways in response to these challenges. To ensure that ordinary people can easily understand the issues and identify them within their own lives, the manual presents the problems through storytelling and practical examples, followed by analytical discussions.

**2. Bridging the Gap: Advancing Gender Justice through the Lens of Climate Justice in Bangladesh – Meghna Guhathakurta**

The policy paper aims to inform national and international policy making circles about how gender and climate justice intersect in Bangladesh especially under transitional political conditions. The policy recommendations that emerge is based on an evidence-based study in three ecological zones of Bangladesh characterized as being (1) a drought prone area, (2) a region affected by water logging and salinity, and (3) coastal hilly region frequented by tropical storms. Two analytical conceptual frameworks have been drawn from the evidences from these areas. The first framework shows how issues relating to climate and gender justice share similar structural roots in systems of inequality like patriarchy or structures causing ecological harm. Transitional justice is implicated when due to conflict, war, or natural disasters, the structures that regulate societies such as local institutions or social norms are dismantled or disrupted and requires reconstitution or repair. The second framework enables the location and ways in which climate and gender justice actions can be placed in the context of the political economy.
The recommendations that have emerged from the study have been made to the Bangladesh policy circles, civil society and academia and international development partners.

**For the Bangladesh Government they are:**

- To build more eco-based local institutions adapted from and modelled on the Barind Multipurpose Development (BMDC) in Rajshahi
- To conduct further research on changing cropping patterns, especially from a gender perspective.
- To develop policies and fill research gaps in climate migration and displacement.

**For civil society and academia (national and international):**

- To encourage, motivate and capacitate farmers in agro-ecological practice in all areas
- Strengthen knowledge regarding agro-ecological practices such as traditional conservation
- of seeds, cultivation of traditional varieties of crops
- Use knowledge management tools such as electronic media. Community based knowledge
- hubs need to be extended nationwide to promote such learnings
- To conduct evidence-based and action research on strengthening linkages in climate and
- gender justice in different ecological zones
- To use the two frameworks of understanding to fill the research and policy gap in linking
- climate and gender justice concern both conceptually as well as practically

**For international development partners**

To support innovative ideas and institutions for research and action that are location specific to ecological zones focusing on the intersectional nature of climate and gender justice through a transitional lens.

## Staff list of RIB 2025

| Sl No. | Name | Designation |
|---|---|---|
| 1. | Suraiya Begum | Director |
| 2. | Nasima Parvin | Deputy Director (Admin & Finance Department) |
| 3. | Ruhi Naz | Deputy Director |
| 4. | Rashida Akter | Senior Program Officer |
| 5. | Matiur Rahman | Senior Program Officer |
| 6. | Babul Chandra Sutradhar | Program Officer |
| 7. | Syed Navid Anjum Hasan | Program Officer – RLS Project |
| 8. | Shahinul Islam | Associate coordinator – NED Project |
| 9. | Kazi Ziauddin | Finance Officer – RLS Project<br>(Nov' 24 to August 2025) |
| 10 | Kapil Dev Barai | Finance Officer- RLS Project (Sep' to Nov' 2025) |
| 11. | Zannatin Tazrimin Rithi | Communication Officer – RLS Project |
| 12. | Abdul Kader | Documentation Officer- Sanitation Project |
| | | |
| | Support Staff | |
| 11. | Md. Zakir Hossain | Driver |
| 12. | Abdul Mannan | Driver |
| 13. | Yasmin Sultana | Cleaner |