

Editorial

Greetings from MJF

In Bangladesh many registered non-government organizations are working on different issues such as human rights, good governance, violence against women, health, education, migration, poverty reduction etc. One of the major challenges these organizations face is non-accessibility to required information or data. The RTI Act 2009 can be a useful tool and mechanism to get access to these information which will result in more efficiency within their organization and impact for their work. The beneficiaries under different programs can also be motivated for seeking information from different authorities. Many partners of MJF have already started using RTI to seek information from authorities as a response irregularities that occur in government-led social safety

net programs as well as other services. The beneficiaries of those organizations are seeking information related to their livelihoods. We have instances where a cheated person was able to get the required documents to seek redress or a villager could question about the quality of a construction work.

Recently RACINE, a partner organization of MJF, used RTI Act in assessing the government-led 40-day Employment Generation Program for the extreme poor. In this context it is also felt that issue of right to information has to be integrated in the core programs.

Many organizations work beyond a particular theme. Rather, they work in multiple areas. Working exclusively on RTI might be challenging for an organization due to shortage of fund

or manpower. RTI as a crosscutting theme can be effective in such context. For integrating RTI in different programs it is important to first orient organization staff. RTI related workshops or orientation meetings could be arranged. Staff representing different themes will thus be able to apply RTI in their respective fields. The coverage would be the maximum if such initiatives are undertaken. However, RTI should not only be used for seeking information related to livelihood issues. RTI can be used effectively to ensure good governance and to challenge authorities where instances of bad governance occurs. It is a mechanism for ordinary citizens to establish their citizen's rights and monitor public expenditure. We hope with time the use of RTI in Bangladesh will reach that stage.

Shaheen Anam

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Discussion meeting held at Press Club

A discussion meeting titling 'The use of RTI Act in the effective application of Consumers' Right Protection Act' was held in the VIP Lounge of Press Club on November 15, 2012. Justice (Rtd) Mr. Momtaz Uddin Ahmed attended the program as Chief Guest. Dr. Mostafizur Rahman, Executive Director, Center for Policy Dialogue, Md. Abdul Baten Mia, Director, Directorate of National Consumer Rights Protection, Zakir Hossain, Executive Director, Nagorik Uddog and Md. Farhad Hossain, Secretary, Information Commission attended the meeting as special guests. In his speech the Chief Guest said both Consumer Rights Protection Act and Right To Information Act, 2009 are milestone in the context of Bangladesh. The mass should be made aware about the Acts. Both Acts were enacted to preserve the basic rights of citizens of Bangladesh, he added. He requested the government to implement the verdict of High Court to establish Food Court across districts. Dr. Mostafizur Rahman, Executive Director, Center for Policy Dialogue, said Consumer Rights Protection Act and Right To Information Act, 2009 are complementary to each other. Institutional structure has to be made well-built for the implementation of both Acts and technology should be utilized, he stated.

Preparatory meeting prior to TAG meeting held at RIB Office

Transparency Advisory Group (TAG) was formed in 2010. This is a regional loose forum and its members are activists who work on RTI in their respective countries. The Transparency Advisory Group (TAG) members will join a meeting in Mid January 2013. A team from Bangladesh will

of the meeting was to discuss, plan and develop a work plan as to how Bangladesh RTI Representatives would showcase some of our best practices and existing challenges towards a transparency regime.

The meeting started with the welcome speech from Shamsul

have a number of instances (RTI cases) in our country which can be presented. She urged on the compilation of the RTI related cases which would be sent to regional body. She requested the meeting participants to send cases of behalf of their organizations. Sanjida Sobhan, coordinator, MJF, gave a PowerPoint presentation in the meeting briefing the audience the types of cases, issues, sources, users, unusual users etc in her presentation.

However, the meeting became an interactive session and different suggestions came from the participants. The meeting ended with settling a deadline (by January 10, 2013) for sending the case studies for compilation work. Mr. Iftekhairuzaman, Executive Director, TIB, Hasibur Rahman, Executive Director, MRDI and representatives from BNLWA, MMC, D.Net, SDS and BNNRC joined the meeting.



join the meeting. An urgent preparatory meeting was called for that. The preparatory meeting took place at RIB Office, Banani on December 19. The meeting was facilitated by Shamsul Bari, Chairman, Research Initiatives Bangladesh and Shaheen Anam, Executive Director, MJF. The objectives

Bari, Chairman, Research Initiatives Bangladesh. In his speech he emphasized on its use by the mass. Different organizations should be assigned to carry out the particular tasks based on their expertise, he added. Shaheen Anam, Executive Director, MJF, said we

D.Net Arranged Training of Trainers on Right To Information Act

A “Training of Trainers on Right To Information Act” had been conducted by D.Net at the Alok, Manusher Jonno Foundation (MJF) on 17-19 December 2012. A total of 20 sessions had been arranged, which were facilitated by Mohammad Ifteker Hossain, Deputy Manager (RTI) of MJF, Afrina Tanjin, Sr. Asst. Director(IID), Mosharrof Hossain, Deputy Director(D.Net) and Sr. Asst. Director of D.Net Tarifur Rahman Khan, Ariful Islam and Rahmatul Alam Ranju. Various sections of Right to Information Act 2009 had been discussed. Publicity of RTI Act 2009 through Infolady network was an important topic of discussion. Moreover practicing various application forms of RTI Act 2009 and their uses were discussed. Few sessions were



conducted on documentation and reporting related to RTI Act. Beside these, roles of D.Net and MJF in implementing RTI Act 2009 had also been discussed.

The use of RTI Act, 2009 ensures the entitlements of the poor

Adivasi people across the country are struggling for their rights. They are getting united in different regions of the country and Mymensingh is not an exception in this regard. The Adivasi people of Bhaluka upazila, Mymensingh have formed Union Based Adivasi Land Mortgage Forums (UBALMF) across 6 unions. All among the 203 Forum members suffer from land related problems. There has been a committee in the upazila named Advocacy Networking and Lobby Committee (ANLC) which works on advocacy, networking and linkage with government and non-government organizations. However, the Forum members are attached to the ANLC. ANLC shared RTI ACT, 2009 with the Forum members and thus they (the Forum members) explored existing scopes in it for availing their entitlements.



Toronikonto is the Chairman of Mollikbari-I Forum submitted 6 applications under RTI Act to the Union Parishad of Mollikbari Union on 08.06.2011. He got support from ANLC and LRD in filling-up and submission process. All his information requests were made on the allocations of Union Parishad. The Chairman was changed and he failed to get the information. Toronikonto shared this in ANLC meeting. It was decided in the meeting to go for information requests again on the same issues. Toronikonto applied for information on 12.09.2011. The Forum members communicated with the UP regarding the submitted requests and demanded the information. Sarwar Jahan Emran, the newly elected UP Chairman discussed with the Forum members. Finally Toronikonto received the sought information. The consequence of using RTI was not ended only in having information. Rather, the UP Chairman asked the Forum members to prepare a short list of potential beneficiaries for the upcoming safety net programs. The members of Mollikbari-I Union Based Adivasi Land Mortgage Forum prepared the short list accordingly and submitted that to the UP Chairman. Thus 6 families were selected for VGF cards, 3 women for Widow Allowances and 2 persons for Disable Allowances.

This seems to be a great achievement of the Forum when they are struggling for the entitlements. They believe RTI Act, 2009 is Act which can serve the poorest of the poor. Now they are more eager to use this Act in different areas related to their lives.