

# **Report on Visit to Bangkok**

**Period: 2 to 5 October 2017**

**Summary:**

Hasibur Rahman, Executive Director, MRDI recently attended a two days workshop “Right to Information” at Bangkok Thailand as a panelist. The World Bank hosted the workshop with the aim to bring together leading practitioners working on transparency and Right to information from Information Commissions, Governments and Civil Society in South Asia and South-East Asia, as well as distinguished international figures.

Chief Information Commissioner, Prof. Dr. Golam Rahman, Zeaul Alam, Secretary, Coordination and Reforms, Cabinet Division, Bangladesh, Shamsul Bari, Chairperson, Research Initiatives Bangladesh also attended the workshop as panelists.

The workshop provided an excellent opportunity to dozens of leading practitioners who are working on promoting and implementing RTI across the region in countries to share their knowledge on this important topic.

Under the different themes the panels discussed on assessing the progress made towards implementing RTI across the region in countries where laws already exist , assisting countries that are in the process of launching RTI legislation , understanding the workings of information commissions across the region, and taking RTI in new directions through a discussion of issues relating to the systemic impact of RTI on governance more broadly; the commercial re-use of information for stronger open data systems, and the interpretation of privacy clauses in existing RTI legislation.

In the workshop Chief Information Commissioner, India, Chief Information Commissioner, Nepal, Chief Information Commissioner, Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa Province, Pakistan, Information Commissioner, Sri Lanka, Information Commissioner, Canada, Former Central Information Commissioner, India, former Information Commissioner, Thailand, Editor, the Bhutanese, representative of cabinet division Bangladesh, senior officials of The World Bank and CSO representatives from India, Bhutan, Myanmar, Vietnam and Sri Lanka were also present.  
Lesson learnt

**Travel Date**

Left Dhaka- Monday, 2 October via Thai Airways

Returned to Dhaka Thursday 5 October via Thai Airways

**Enclosed**

1. Program schedule
2. List of participants
3. Presentation of Hasibur Rahman

**Workshop on Right to Information**  
Hotel Anantara, Siam, Bangkok

3-4 September 2017

**Schedule**

DAY 1	
Tuesday, October 3	Venue: RANATAKOSIN ROOM
8:30-9:00am	Registration
9:00 - 9:15am	<b>Welcome and Introduction to the Workshop</b> Vikram K. Chand, Lead Public Sector Specialist, World Bank
9.15 - 10.15am	<b>RTI as a Global Phenomenon</b> <b>Chair:</b> Asmeen Khan, Practice Manager, World Bank  Address by David Kaye, UN Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression
10.15 - 11.30am	<b>Country Focus on RTI: Opportunities and Challenges I</b> <b>Chair:</b> R.K. Mathur, Chief Information Commissioner, India  Juree Vichit-Vadakan, former Information Commissioner, Thailand Anjali Bhardwaj, Satark Nagrik Sangathan, India Zeaul Alam, Secretary, Coordination and Reforms, Cabinet Division, Bangladesh SangayKhandu, Member, National Council, Parliament of Bhutan
11:30-11.45am	<b>Break</b>
11.45am-1.15pm	<b>Country Focus on RTI: Opportunities and Challenges II</b> <b>Chair:</b> David Kaye  Ranga Kalansooriya, DG, Department of Government Information, Sri Lanka Duong Thi Ngoc Chien, Senior Expert, Ministry of Justice with Ngo Thu Ha, Lead - CSO Working Group on RTI, Vietnam Aung Hla Tun, Vice-Chair, Myanmar Press Council, Myanmar
1.15 - 2.15pm	<b>Lunch</b>
2.15 - 3.45pm	<b>Assessing the Working of Information Commissions, I</b> <b>Chair:</b> Toby Mendel, Center for Law and Democracy  Krishna Hari Baskota, Chief Information Commissioner of Nepal Kishali Pinto-Jayawardena, Information Commissioner of Sri Lanka, Azmat Orakzai, Chief Information Commissioner, Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa Province, Pakistan
3.45 - 5.15pm	<b>Assessing the Working of Information Commissions II</b> <b>Chair:</b> Shekhar Singh, Research Assessment and Analysis Group (RaaG). R.K. Mathur, Chief Information Commissioner of India Suzanne Legault, Information Commissioner of Canada Golam Rahman, Chief Information Commissioner of Bangladesh
7:30pm onwards	<b>Team Dinner</b> HEAVEN BANGKOK, Level 17 ZEN World, Central World

## Workshop on Right to Information

Hotel Anantara, Siam, Bangkok

3-4 September 2017

### Schedule

DAY 2	
Wednesday, October 4	Venue: RANATAKOSIN ROOM
9:00 - 10:30am	<p><b><u>Theme One: Proactive Disclosure</u></b>  <b>Chair:</b> Huong Thi Lan Tran, The World Bank.</p> <p>Hasibur Rahman, Executive Director, MRDI, Bangladesh            Fabian Seiderer, Lead Public Sector Specialist, World Bank            Venkatesh Nayak, Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative</p>
10:30 - 10:45am	<b>Break</b>
10:45am - 12:45pm	<p><b><u>Theme Two: Citizen Engagement and RTI</u></b>  <b>Chair:</b> Asmeen Khan, The World Bank</p> <p>Shamsul Bari, Research Initiatives Bangladesh            Taranath Dahal, Executive Chief, Freedom Forum, Nepal            Amrita Johri, Director, Society for Citizens' Vigilance Initiative            Nwezin Win, Executive Director, PyiGhiKhin, Myanmar            Tenzing Lamsang, Editor, the Bhutanese.</p>
12:45 - 1:45pm	<b>Lunch</b>
1:45 - 3.15 pm	<p><b><u>Theme Three: Privacy and Data Protection</u></b>  <b>Chair:</b> Kishali Pinto-Jayawardena, Information Commissioner, Sri Lanka</p> <p>Suzanne Legault, Information Commissioner of Canada            Apar Gupta, Privacy and Data Protection Advocate, India            Shailesh Gandhi, former Central Information Commissioner, India</p>
3:15 - 3:30pm	<b>Break</b>
3.30 - 5.00pm	<p><b><u>New Directions in RTI</u></b>  <b>Chair:</b> Vikram K. Chand, Lead Public Sector Specialist, World Bank</p> <p>Shekhar Singh, Convener, RAAG, India            Shamsul Bari, Chairperson, RIB, Bangladesh</p>
7:30pm onwards	<p><b>Team Dinner</b>            Anantara Siam, Bangkok</p>

### Other Participants s name

SL.No.	Name	Designation
1.	Golam Rahman	Chief Information Commissioner of Bangladesh
2.	Zeaul Alam	Secretary, Coordination and Reforms, Cabinet Division, Bangladesh
3.	Shamsul Bari	Chairperson, Research Initiatives Bangladesh
4.	Hasibur Rahman	Executive Director, MRDI
5.	R.K. Mathur	Chief Information Commissioner, India
6.	Krishna Hari Baskota	Chief Information Commissioner of Nepal
7.	Azmat Orakzai	Chief Information Commissioner, Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa Province, Pakistan
8.	Kishali Pinto-Jayawardena	Information Commissioner of Sri Lanka,
9.	Suzanne Legault	Information Commissioner of Canada
10.	Shailesh Gandhi	Former Central Information Commissioner, India
11.	Tenzing Lamsang	Editor, the Bhutanese
12.	David Kaye	UN Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression
13.	Vikram K. Chand	Lead Public Sector Specialist, World Bank
14.	Asmeen Khan	Practice Manager, World Bank
15.	Juree Vichit-Vadakan	former Information Commissioner, Thailand
16.	Anjali Bhardwaj	Satark Nagrik Sangathan, India
17.	SangayKhandu	Member, National Council, Parliament of Bhutan
18.	Ranga Kalansooriya	DG, Department of Government Information, Sri Lanka
19.	Duong Thi Ngoc Chien	Senior Expert, Ministry of Justice with Ngo Thu Ha, Lead - CSO Working Group on RTI, Vietnam
20.	Aung Hla Tun	Vice-Chair, Myanmar Press Council, Myanmar
21.	Toby Mendel	Center for Law and Democracy
22.	Shekhar Singh	Research Assessment and Analysis Group (RaaG).
23.	Huong Thi Lan Tran	The World Bank

24.	Fabian Seiderer	Lead Public Sector Specialist, World Bank
25.	Venkatesh Nayak	Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative
26.	Taranath Dahal	Executive Chief, Freedom Forum, Nepal
27.	Amrita Johri, Director	Society for Citizens' Vigilance Initiative
28.	Nwezin Win	Executive Director, PyiGhiKhin, Myanmar
29.	Apar Gupta	Privacy and Data Protection Advocate, India
30.	Vikram K. Chand	Lead Public Sector Specialist, World Bank
31.	Shekhar Singh	Convener, RAAG, India

Annex-3

Presentation of Hasibur Rahman

# STATE OF PROACTIVE DISCLOSURE IN BANGLADESH

Hasibur Rahman  
Executive Director



The Right to  
Information Act in  
Bangladesh

**ensures free  
flow of  
information  
and people's  
right to know  
in  
Bangladesh**

The Act asks  
authorities to disclose  
information in two  
ways

on demand  
&  
proactively

It is mandatory to  
proactively disclose  
certain information

Annual reports  
Policies and decisions  
Issues of public interest  
Citizen Charter  
Roles and responsibilities  
Budget and expenditure  
Tender or contracts  
Others as per Regulations, 2010

**to have a disclosure guideline**  
**to have a website**  
**to upload information**  
**to update information**  
**to ensure accuracy**  
**to communicate with users**

**For disclosure,  
it is mandatory  
for authorities**

**All ministries have a disclosure  
guideline**  
**Two have proactive disclosure  
guideline**  
**Others are in the process**  
**Authorities know what to disclose  
and how**

**The change in  
mindset**

Government has a web portal

It has 25000 websites

Information are accessible

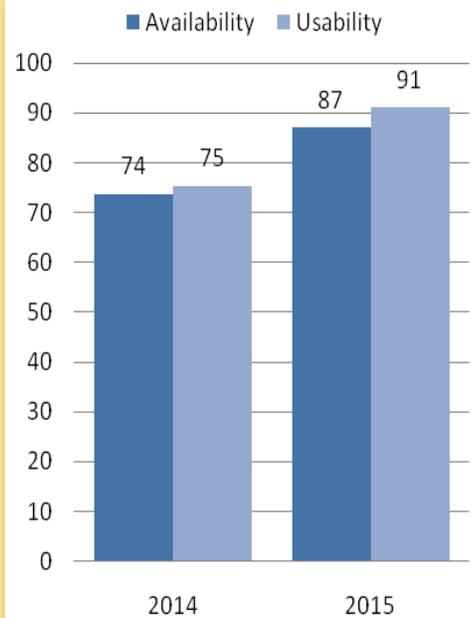
Information are easier to get

Communication are more open

The impact  
is quite visible  
now

### MRDI assessment findings

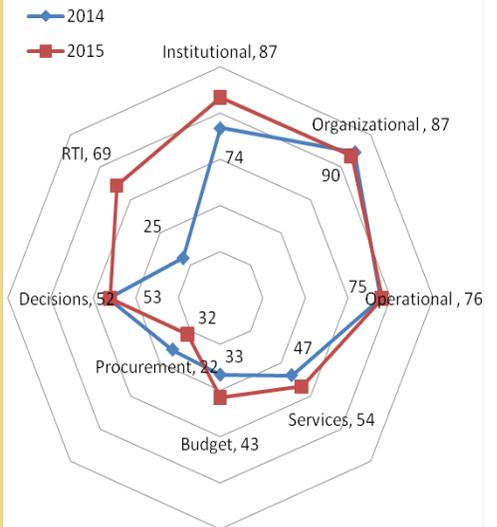
Overall trend of **availability** of the information at the government website is positive. Overall **usability** is also better than previous year.



## Bright side

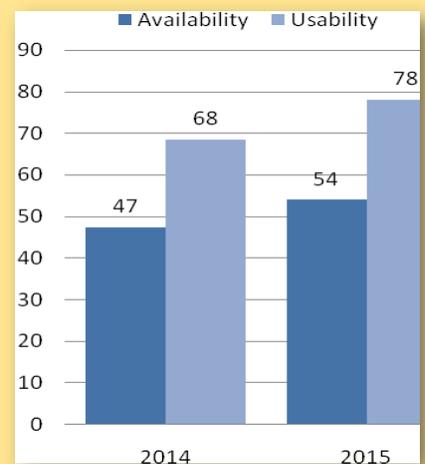
The disclosure ratios of mandated information in institutional, organizational and operational levels are relatively higher.

## Comparisons in years: Availability of Information



## Not so bright side

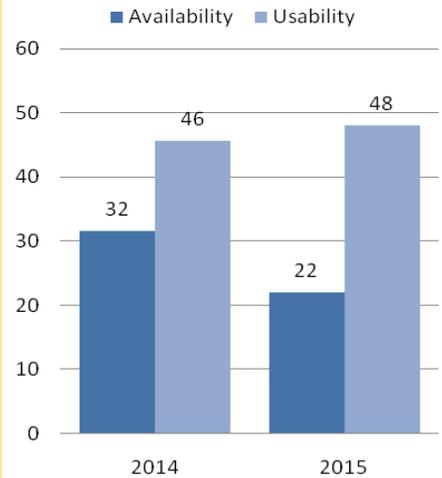
Progress in availability of variable information in areas like service and decision making are very marginal.



Availability of information on  
Services, Subsidies and Concession

## The other side

The overall disclosure situation has gone down under the category of procurement related information in a year.



Procurement Information

## PROACTIVE DISCLOSURE

“PROGRESS IN AVAILABILITY IS  
BETTER WHEN INFORMATION IS  
GENERAL”

# PROACTIVE DISCLOSURE

“PROGRESS IN AVAILABILITY IS  
SLOW WHEN INFORMATION IS  
ABOUT  
GOVERNMENTAL TRANSPARENCY  
AND ACCOUNTABILITY”

## Limitations

- Proactive disclosure is mandatory, but the oversight mechanism is not so visible
- Low penetration of internet for wide access to websites
- Information not updated frequently
- Responsibility for proactive disclosure not specified
- No open data policy yet
- Poor data management system

## Recommendations

- Monitor progress of proactive disclosure continuously
- Develop a mechanism of oversight
- Develop a system for information updates
- Ensure all authorities develop a proactive disclosure guideline
- Advocacy to change the mindset of secrecy
- Lobby for a open data policy that encourage transparency

## Expected impact

- Significant increase in accessing public information by citizens
- Savings of cost, time and efforts of officials in providing info
- Reduction of administrative burden on public bodies of having to respond to lots of similar requests
- Allow comparison of performances of different ministries, thereby help identify priorities

## See how it change things



Singhajhuli Union Parishad in Jessore discloses its budget in the wall of their office building so the people know, where the tax money go!

## See how it change things



They have also disclosed the beneficiary list in social safety programs, that helped to reduce corruption.

PROACTIVE DISCLOSURE  
HELPS TO GET  
INFORMATION



- that we know, we know
- that we know, we don't know
- that we don't know, we don't know

THANK  
YOU