

# Project Completion Report

(15 June 2023 - 15 February 2024)

## More Information More Accountability (MIMA) Phase II

Prepared by



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## Context

RTI Act was enacted in Bangladesh in 2009 to ensure right of accessing information by people. The World Bank RTI National Survey 2019 reflects that the awareness of the RTI Act among the general citizens is only 7.7%, out of which rural population is lagging behind the urban -- 6.5% and 11.3% respectively. It also found male respondents were more aware (10.5%) compared to females (4.9%). This low level of awareness hinders major segments of the country's population from seeking information related to their life and livelihood and deprives them of access to public services and their rights.

Furthermore, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) play a crucial role in both seeking and disseminating information under the RTI Act. However, they are falling short when it comes to complying with the proactive disclosure provisions. An assessment by the Transparency International Bangladesh (TIB) reveals that a staggering 94.9% of NGOs have failed to meet the criteria for proactive disclosure of information.

In response to these challenges, the project "*More Accountability More Information Phase II*," in partnership with The Asia Foundation, has been initiated. The project aims to raise public awareness about the right to information at the grassroots level, with the goal of increasing the demand for information. Additionally, it seeks to assist NGOs in adhering to the proactive disclosure requirements, recognizing that these efforts are essential for addressing the issues mentioned above.

The overall aim is to contribute to Bangladesh's development consistent with the government's Vision 2041, the Eighth Five-year Plan, and the UN Sustainable Development Goals.

## Project Objective

1. Create awareness on RTI and enhance demand for information in the community
2. Facilitate NGOs to comply with the provisions of RTI Act and regulations of proactive disclosure

**Reporting period:** 15 June 2023 - 15 February 2024

## Activities performed

### Activity 1- Orientation for NGO on RTI and Proactive Disclosure

MRDI arranged a workshop on 20 July 2023 in collaboration with Jashore district administration on the importance of proactive disclosure of information by NGOs to address the spirit of the RTI Act- maximum disclosure and minimum exemption.



Chief Information Commissioner Abdul Malek and Director General of NGO Affairs Bureau SK. Md. Moniruzzaman were present as chief guest and special guest respectively. Deputy Commissioner Jashore Md. Tamijul Islam Khan preside over the programme.



MRDI Executive Director Hasibur Rahman made a presentation focused on the main aspect of RTI act, classification of information, directive of proactive disclosure of information and disclosure of information according to FD-6. After his presentation an open discussion float. Participants raise questions to make their understanding clear.

Deputy Director (Local Government) Jashore Md. Rafiqul Hasan; ADC General Jashore Tushar Kumar Paul; Upazila Nirbahi Officer Abhaynagar Mezbah Uddin and Upazila Nirbahi Officer Keshabpur M. M. Arafat Hossain were present in the programme. Bahadur Raichur Rahman, Administrative Officer, NGOAB was also present in the programme.

Chief Executives and senior officials of 76 NGOs from 8 upazilas of Jashore participated in the orientation.

## Activity 2- Reprint of Communication and Awareness Materials

As planned under this project 3000 copies of leaflets and 10,000 copies of RTI Easy Learning Book "Ekhn Tothyo Paoya Sohoj" were reprinted. These communication materials were distributed among the participants of different awareness activities to be organized under the project.

### Activity 3- Planning Meeting with JANAK Member & Youth Group

Eight planning meetings were organized with JANAK (Jagrata Nagorik Committee) Member & Youth Group in eight upazilas of Jashore during 8-13 August 2023. JANAK and youth group are working to increase awareness on right of access to information among the mass people of their localities.

The objective of these meetings was to formulate specific action plans aimed at enhancing public understanding of the Right to Information (RTI) Act at the grassroots level. Additionally, meetings discussed the celebration of upcoming Right to Know (RTK) Day on 28 September 2023.



In all, 67 JANAK members, 38 men & 29 women, attended these meetings.

Simultaneously, a youth group comprising five men and four women, from the district attended a meeting regarding RTI activities as there will be a follow-up boot camp with the youth group on RTI under the project.

### Activity 4- School Awareness Campaign

As proper perception of the RTI can facilitate school students to grow as responsible citizens, **School Awareness Campaign** regarding *Right to Information* for school students of classes IX & X in the eight upazilas was conducted during 8-13 August 2023.

MRDI's Executive Director Hasibur Rahman, conducted the RTI sessions in eight schools and introduced the project's upcoming activity an online RTI course competition, a collaborative effort between MRDI, the Jashore District Administration, and the District Education Office.



As part of the campaign, educational resources MRDI's RTI Easy Learning Book and leaflet with RTI message were distributed among participating students. The initiative garnered engagement from approximately 900 students who actively took part in the school awareness campaign events.

## Activity 5- RTI Online course competition at 8 upazilas

To enhance awareness and knowledge of the school students on RTI, MRDI launched an online RTI course competition on Facebook, in partnership with Jashore District Administration, and the District Education Office. This competition targeted ninth and tenth-grade students from eight upazilas in the district that started on 20 August 2023, marking the International Right to Know Day and continued till 26 September 2023.



The 1st, 2nd and 3rd winners were selected from each upazila through algorithmic method from among the highest marks in the shortest time from the participants of the competition. The first prize for each upazila is prize bonds of Tk 4,000.00, the second prize is Tk 3,000.00 and the third prize is Tk 2,000.00.

During this period, 59 students completed the course while 132 registered for the course. Twenty-four students who achieved the highest marks in the shortest time were

selected as winners on 27 September 2023 after a comprehensive review of their score sheets.

The names of the winners were announced on Facebook on 28 September 2023.

A prize giving ceremony for the winners of the RTI online course competition was organized on 30 September 2023 at the Jashore Collectorate in collaboration with the District Administration on the occasion of International Right to Know Day-2023. Information Commissioner Shahidul Alam Jhinuk graced the occasion as chief guest. The event was presided over by Jashore Additional Deputy Commissioner Tushar Kumar Paul.

The Information Commissioner and other dignitaries distributed prizes to the top three winners from each upazila, totaling 24 students.

## Activity 6- Community Mobilization Meeting

To inform the definition of information and its importance in the life and livelihood of the mass people, community mobilization meetings were organized in eight upazilas of Jashore during 8-12 September 2023.

The discussion also informed the audience about the process of requesting information using right to information act.



The MRDI ED conducted courtyard meetings on RTI for different communities including fisher folk, farmers, dalit as well as youths, cultural activists, mothers and teachers in eight different upazilas.

### Activity 7- Right to Know Day observance

September 28 is celebrated as Right to Know Day all over the world. Information Commission Bangladesh celebrates the day every year by organizing various programmes at the division, district and upazila levels to enhance people's awareness on their right of access to information and increase accountability of the authorities.

Marking the day, MRDI organized a discussion meeting at the Jashore Collectorate in collaboration with the District Administration and prize giving ceremony for the winners of the Right to Information Act online course competition on 30 September 2023. Students of classes IX & X of the district took part in the competition.

Information Commissioner Shahidul Alam Jhinuk graced the occasion as chief guest. The event was presided over by Jashore Additional Deputy Commissioner Tushar Kumar Paul.



Md. Yusuf Meah, Assistant Commissioner & Executive Magistrate of Jashore, Additional Superintendent of Police Saiful Islam, Upazila Parishad Female Vice Chairman Josna Ara Mili, Sadar Upazila Nirbahi Officer (Acting) Mahmudul Hasan, The Daily Gramerkagoj Editor Mobinul Islam Mobin, representatives of NGOs, JANAK (Jagrata Nagorik Committee) members and youths were also present on the occasion. About 135 people attended the meeting. Among the participants, 40 were women.

Prior to the discussion session, a lively rally took place at the Jashore Collectorate premises, with approximately 250 people carrying banners and festoons to promote awareness of the Right to Information.



At the end of the programme, Information Commissioner and other dignitaries distributed prizes to the top three winners from each upazila, totaling 24 students. The winners were selected based on an algorithmic method that considered the highest marks achieved in the shortest time among the competition participants. It is noteworthy that half of the winners were female students.

### RTK Day observed in other 7 upazilas of Jashore

The JANAK members of seven upazilas of Jashore along with respective upazila administrations organized rally, discussion meeting, cultural program, art competition and leaflet campaign on the occasion of International Right to Know Day. Noted that Sadar uazila JANAK members observed the day with the District Administration.



### Activity 8- Follow-up boot camp for youth

MRDI organized a Follow-up bootcamp for youth on right to information at RRF Training & Resource Centre (RRF TARC) in Jashore during 1-3 February 2024 with an objective to increase the capacity of the youth and determine their future course of action to raise awareness about the act.



Thirty-two youths from Barishal, Jashore and Rangpur districts participated in this bootcamp who participated in our RTI boot camp earlier and have started their professional career by now.



During the three-day camp, participants recap how information can change their & their community's life and learnings from RTI application process from their memories through different participatory learning methods like lecture, discussion, interaction, games, drama, group work and sharing success stories. They also developed a strategy for carrying on their activities regarding RTI campaigning in future through creative presentations.



a session plan.

Mobinul Islam Mobin, Editor of The Gramerkagoj & Divisional Coordinator of MRDI, inaugurated the boot camp where Md. Taherul Islam, Programme Manager of The Asia Foundation, was also present. Hamidul Islam Hillol, RTI specialist & activist, conducted the sessions as a resource person after developing

### Activity 9- JANAK meeting at upazila level

The project planned to organize a total of 64 monthly meetings for JANAK members. JANAK members engaged in organizing all activities at Jashore but no formal meeting was organized in view of the national election as the district administration discouraged human gathering during this period. MRDI informed The Asia Foundation about this deviation, and this activity was dropped later.