

RTI E-newsletter, V1, I1

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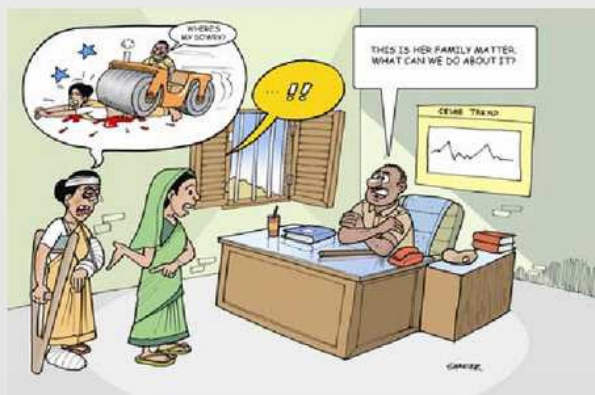
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Editorial

I am pleased that Manusher Jonno Foundation (MJF) has published its very first e-newsletter on Right to Information. We have been involved in raising demand for RTI, worked for its enactment and currently are trying to popularize it for successful implementation of the Act. In this context, our attempts are multiple, ranging from working with Information Commission, the government to the mass people who should be the main beneficiaries of the Act.

This e-newsletter will provide the audiences with updates on current and upcoming events and activities related to RTI, interviews, critical analysis as well as success stories. The e-newsletter will cover



the activities of other organizations as well. Therefore, concerned organizations or individuals are requested to send news, event updates or success stories for this e-newsletter to us.

As this is our first attempt we seek your cooperation to improve its quality in terms of content, design or technical aspects. Any

comment on the newsletter is welcome as we want this to be a collective effort. Your subscription will encourage us further.

Finally I want to commend the MJF RTI Team for this initiative.

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RTI Act helps getting due service from Authority

Boby Begum a marginalized woman of Joypur, Fakirhat contacted the local Upazila Social Welfare Office to issue a disable certificate for her sister, Nasima Begum Chutu (32),

who is mentally disabled. As per instruction JJS (an NGO partner of MJF) they went with 2 copies of passport size photos and a photocopy of the national ID card. A Union Social

Welfare Office staff demanded 200-300 taka as deposit which was beyond their reach. With the help of JJS and another organization they decided to use the RTI Act. JJS

helped to process the application and an application was made on behalf of Bobby Begum in which she wanted to know whether fee is required to get disable certificate. The Upazila Social Welfare Officer checked the application and assured her that no fee is required for such service. The Union

Social Welfare staff was called and warned for his misdeed. Bobby Begum went back and filed the respective form to get a disable certificate for her sister.

This incidence shows people can realize their right by using the RTI Act. In this case, Bobby Begum did not have to pay bribe or any extra money to get entitlement for her sister.



Workshop on 'Right to Information Act 2009'



A capacity building workshop titled 'Right to Information Act 2009' was organized on 12-13 of March. Mr. Venkatesh Nayak, Program Coordinator-Access to Information Program of Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative (CHRI) was acted as the chief moderator of this workshop.

This workshop focused the philosophy of RTI, human rights & governance, world-wide situation & experiences and scope of TIB role to implement it. The participants worked in several groups and practiced the techniques of using RTI on some current issues.

Moreover, Dr. Iftekharuzzaman, Executive Director of TIB moderated a session on the Challenges of Implementing RTI in Bangladesh with a comprehensive presentation on the first day.

TIB staff along with the RTI core committee participated in this two day long workshop.

Tools

Designated Officer

The Designated Officer is the key person to provide information to those seeking it. Citizens will first contact him for getting information. Every authority must nominate one Designated Officer and there should be an Information Providing Unit. She/He will be the main person for giving information to the requesters.

USAID-PROGATI Activities on RTI

USAID-PROGATI (Promoting Governance, Accountability, Transparency and Integrity) is working for effective implementation of the RTI Act and facilitating proactive disclosure. As part of the broader effort to raise awareness of RTI and facilitate its implementation throughout government agencies, PROGATI, through its partners Bangladesh Enterprise Institute (BEI), is organizing joint coordination meetings between the Information Commission and a selected

'Model Ministry' to develop an action plan for institutionalizing proactive disclosure. BEI has selected Local Government Division under the Ministry of LGRD&C as the 'Model Ministry' and organized two of three joint collaboration meetings in March and April, 2012. In both the meetings, the Chief Information Commissioner and high officials from the Information Commission, the LGD and its extension departments were present

along with their designated officers. In the first meeting a representative from the Anti Corruption Commission presented its own disclosure policy and in the second meeting an international consultant of PROGATI Dr. Melanie Beth Oliviero presented the concept paper on proactive disclosure and the global best practices.

PROGATI, with its implementing partner Management Resources

Development Initiative (MRDI), is providing training on proactive disclosure to the CSOs to support compliance with RTI and to promote transparency and accountability within their organizations. Intensive training and motivation were provided to the Executive Directors of these CSOs and members of their Executive Committee on importance and usefulness of disclosure policy for their organizations. Through the process, 39 CSOs have

developed their own disclosure policies and 30 of them have been approved by their Executive Committees. At the same time PROGATI, through its partner MRDI, is providing training to CSOs and the field level journalists on better understanding of RTI and on submitting RTI requests. After receiving training 26 RTI requests have been submitted by the journalists and 66 have been submitted by the CSOs.



Second Joint Collaboration Meeting between the Information Commission and the LGD

MJF Initiatives on RTI

- Mainstreaming RTI issues with partner organizations. Partners working with marginalized and vulnerable people have been capacitated on the use of RTI Act. MJF is getting many positive stories from partners who have obtained good results by filing RTI applications.
- Arranging training program on RTI for the partner organizations to orient them on RTI Act. This has helped them to nominate their designated Officers, formulate Information Disclosure Policy and most importantly to identify their roles and responsibilities as “authority” as mentioned in the Act.
- 971 entry level Government officers from different cadres received in depth knowledge on RTI during their Foundation training under the Joint collaboration program between BPATC (Bangladesh Public Administration Training Center) and MJF. Also 59 Designated officers from various government departments also received capacity building training on RTI Act under such initiative. This initiative leads MJF to develop two training materials- one is for the Designated Officers and the other is for the training institutes having interest to incorporate RTI in their programs.



- Demand side mobilization initiative with four local level non-government organizations was done in Manikganj District. We have learnt from this initiative that community if empowered can demand for their rights filing RTI application.
- MJF is working with Information Commission as well. Information Commission and Manusher Jonno Foundation jointly organized series of meetings with three lead ministries (Women and children Affairs, Health and Family Welfare, and Information) to identify the existing scopes of the concerned ministries and departments regarding providing information and to identify mechanism to be adopted for voluntary disclosure.

