

RTI E-newsletter V-1 Issue-7

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Editorial

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We are aware that a number of organizations are arranging discussions and events on RTI. They are also facilitating submission of information request by beneficiaries using RTI Act as well. But these initiatives remain event based and difficult to track since RTI is not integrated nor an integral part of their organization. Emphasis should be given on mainstreaming RTI by integrating RTI in the existing programs of the respective organization. Mainstreaming of RTI is the adoption of a mechanism so that this (RTI) can be a part of the core programs of the organizations. Transparency within the organization is important in this regard. An organization has to be in terms of their program plan, policy, budget, legislation, decision making etc at all levels. Organizations run on public or foreign fund have been made responsible for giving information under RTI Act. Such

organizations should appoint Designated Officer for providing information. Appointing designated officer is one of the vital action required for Implementation of RTI Act. Designated officers are the main focal person to provide information when requested. Unfortunately, many non governmental organizations receiving foreign funding have yet to appoint designated officers. Information should be kept in a database in such an organized and updated manner that designated officers can avail of the requested information easily and respond to information seekers quickly. At the same time, adoption of Information Disclosure Policy is the reflection of organization's interest towards the promotion of RTI. It has been observed that if the senior management of an organization is keen to promote RTI, the

organization as a whole is committed to its implementation. It is expected that organizations which are considered as "Authority" according to the RTI Act should by now appoint designated officers, take necessary initiatives to organize database for free flow of information and keep most information open in the public domain in line with the clause of Proactive Disclosure. Developing a disclosure policy will help organizations to categorize information for voluntary disclosure. These issues will help all organizations to act in transparent way and hence become accountable to every citizen, which is the main objective of the RTI Act. Unless we make ourselves transparent and accountable, we cannot ask other organizations and authority to do so. For that it is necessary to have a time bound work plan. I hope all among us will pay heed to this.

Shaheen Anam

EDITOR

SHAHEEN ANAM

EDITORIAL TEAM

SANJIDA SOBHAN

MD. IFTEKHER HUSSAIN

মানুষের জন্য
manusher jonno

promoting human rights and good governance

HOUSE # 47, ROAD # 35/A

GULSHAN - 2, DHAKA-1212

WWW.MANUSHER.ORG

Sharing meeting held on 15.01.2013 on Proactive Disclosure

Information Commission and Manusher Jonno Foundation jointly undertook an initiative on proactive disclosure with three ministries and the respective departments. The review and experience sharing meeting on that initiatives was held in the auditorium of the Department of Archaeology on 15.01.2013. The meeting was presided over by the Chief Information Commissioner, Mr. Mohammed Farooq. Hon'ble Minister for Information Mr. Hasanul Haque Inu, MP was kind enough to remain present in the meeting as Chief Guest. Information Commissioner Mr. Mohammad Abu Taher, Information Commissioner Dr. Sadeka Halim and Executive Director, Manusher Jonno Foundation, Shaheen Anam were present as guests of honour. Mr. Hasanul Haque Inu, MP in his speech said that the govt. has adopted some new tasks for making the govt. more transparent and employees more accountable and RTI is one of the tools used in it. He stressed on how effectively RTI can help citizens to get their other rights implemented and people can be empowered. In implementing RTI there are some challenges which are to be overcome. However, 25 authorities (including three Ministries and their departments) have upgraded their websites and 23 annual reports have been published compliance with the RTI Act from the concerned authorities.



Sharing Meeting on the Findings of 40-day Employment Generation Program Held in Faridpur

RACINE arranged a sharing meeting on January 15 at the conference room Faridpur DC Office. The findings of a study on 40-day Employment Generation Program for the Extreme Poor were shared in the meeting. RTI Act, 2009 was used in this study where the requesters sought information from the respective authority. The policy paper of the program as well as the list of beneficiaries of 2 unions were sought as per RTI Act. Selected households from the beneficiaries' list were visited in the survey. The objectives of arranging the sharing meeting was to share the findings as well as giving some suggestions for the improvement of the program. The meeting started with the welcome speech by Asma Aktar Mukta, Executive Director, RACINE. Mainuddin Ahmed, the District Commissioner, Faridpur attended the meeting as Chief Guest. In his speech the DC thanked the organizers for arranging the meeting. He in-

structed the UNO to visit the intervention area for multiple times. He ordered to develop a database of the enlisted workers which also include the waiting list. The UP Chairmen

the expecting mothers – all this were suggested from the beneficiaries as well as the audiences presented in the meeting. Government officials, members of local government, me-



from different Union Parishad shared their experience regarding the implementation of the program. The grant is not vast enough to give work to all who deserve the work. Several suggestions came out from the meeting which address the need to make the program pro-poor, specially for the women. The installation of toilet, the increased wages, privileges for

dia persons, NGO representatives and beneficiaries of the program attended the meeting. This is worth mentioning that the meeting was arranged by RACINE with the support of Manusher Jonno Foundation.



Right to Information at Grass Roots Level

Democracy watch has been working experimentally on ensuring peoples' Right to Information and enhancing information providers' capacity since last eight months in six unions of Nilphamary and Dinajpur district under MJF funded PAILG project. As its continuation, Democracywatch organized a sharing meeting titled **Right to Information at grass Roots Level** on 5th January 2013, at 10am at CIR-DAP Auditorium. This program was chaired by Prof. Latifa Akhand. Information Commissioner M. Abu Taher was present as Chief Guest. Wahida Banu, ED, Aporajeyo Bangladesh, Ranjan Karmakar, ED, Steps Towards Development and Sanjida Sobhan, coordinator, Manusher Jonno Foundation were also present in the meeting as Special Guests.

Information Commissioner M. Abu Taher in his speech said though the government and non-government organization were previously reluctant to give information to commoners. The practice of information dissemination from these organizations is increasing gradually in the country. Executive Director of Aporajeyo Bangladesh Wahida Banu said to promote peoples' access to information at grass roots level. 'We have to articulate information and spread it to common people by creating a bridge among union parishad, members of parliamentary members, NGOs and community people', she added.

Mr. Ranjan Karmakar emphasized on the need for



making the people aware about the Act. Terming RTI as peoples' strength he said, gender sensitivity is needed everywhere specially in local government to ensure peoples' participation regarding "Right to Information". Ms. Sanjida Sobhan emphasized on implementation of RTI Act. She said it is the high time to eradicate the fear in accessing information. RTI Act has to be made user friendly. The views-exchange meeting was welcomed by Executive Director of Democracywatch. Keynote paper was presented by Fahima Sultana and the meeting was moderated by Development Activist Wazed Feroj.



Braille method has been introduced for the use of RTI Act targeting the visually impaired

Braille is a system of writing and printing for blind or visually impaired people. Information Commission Bangladesh has recently published the Braille version of RTI Act so that the visually impaired people can read it and go for use. Information Commission arranged a lunching program on January 24, 2013. Honorable Minister for Information Mr. Hasanul Haque Inu, MP attended the meeting as Chief Guest. The meeting was presided over by the Chief Information Commissioner, Mr. Mohammed Farooq. The meeting started with the welcome speech delivered Information Commissioner Dr. Sadeka Halim. The disabled meet problem in getting information related to their livelihood which results in becoming deprived of availing the entitlements like allowance for disabled, she added. Honorable Minister for Information Mr. Hasanul Haque Inu said inclusion and availability of information are vital for democracy. The initiation of Braille method is relevant in this regard. The disabled are not burden for the society, rather, they are resource. A.H.M Noman Khan, Executive Director, CDD said the visually impaired people will be benefited by reading RTI Act thorough Braille method. Other government documents should have Braille version considering the need of the visually impaired people. Dr. Ranjit Kumar Biswas, Secretary, Ministry of Social Welfare attended the meeting as special guest. He said despite having good intention his Ministry cannot render due services to the disables for the lack of budget. A number of visually impaired people joined the meeting. They hoped to be benefited by using the Braille version of RTI Act. Few sample copies of RTI Act (Braille version) were distributed among the visually impaired people and other stakeholder at the end of the meeting.

