Media-CSO Collaboration

Old Allies
New Challenges

Media-CSO Collaboration
Old Allies, New Challenges

THE TEAM

Monjurul Ahsan Bulbul
Editor-in-Chief and CEO, Ekushey Television

Hasibur Rahman
Executive Director, MRDI

Syed Ishtiaque Reza
Editor-in Chief, GTV and Sarabangla.net

Md. Shahid Hossain
Advisor, Planning and Development, MRDI

Ummay Habiba
Senior Programme Officer, MRDI

Internews
Local voices. Global change.

MRDI

Management and Resources Development Initiative

Contents

FOREWORD

Steady growth of media in Bangladesh, in terms of size and depth, has raised the challenge of maintaining quality and the ethical aspects of news reporting. It is becoming difficult to strike the balance between the responsibilities and rights of journalists in carrying out their tasks. Journalists need freedom to report, to be protected from any pressure, influence or threat, in any form. The Bangladeshi media, like in many other countries, faces challenges and adversities in reporting independently. Apart from censorship imposed by the authorities, the media imposes censorship upon itself in revealing facts and truths.

Despite their defined responsibilities, the media and CSO/NGOs have common and overlapping roles. People are their common audience and beneficiaries. Both the sectors play a vital role in developing people's awareness on social issues from their own fields of work. Both stakeholders can convince the government to carry out policy reforms in public interest. When the media and the civil society are playing such vital roles on common issues, their coordinated and synchronized efforts would certainly produce better results and have a sustainable impact in society.

Keeping this scenario in mind, MRDI is implementing a project "Strengthening Independent Media in Bangladesh" with support from Internews, to catalyze understanding of the factors driving self-censorship, increase awareness of protections against threats, and to start laying the foundation for a media-CSO coalition supporting media freedoms.

Three divisional level interaction meetings were organized involving editors, journalists, journalist union leaders and CSO representatives to discuss self-censorship and issues of media freedom. One findings sharing meeting was held in Dhaka where the summary of findings of the three interaction meetings were presented.

This report contains the present scenario of media developed on the basis of findings received from the meetings, the state of current Media-CSO relationship and its potential to establish a free, independent media; and recommendations to develop a sustainable and effective Media-CSO coalition.

We are thankful to the participants who attended the interaction meetings and shared their valuable opinions and recommendations. We acknowledge with gratitude the knowledge input of Mubin Shadman Khan in editing the report and giving it a better look. Syed Ishtiaque Reza, Editor in Chief at GTV and Sarabangla.net reviewed the report and gave his valuable input in improving it. He also moderated all the programmes and his witty approach of moderation helped participants to be specific on the issue and thus many recommendations surfaced.

We are also thankful to Monjurul Ahsan Bulbul, Editor in Chief & CEO, Ekushey Television for presenting the keynote in all the programmes. Colleagues at MRDI compiled the findings, prepared the draft and put it in a structure. The report is a product of team effort.

We hope findings and recommendations of the report will motivate various actors and power-holders to think on how the media can function free from threats, intimidation and censorship and how an effective media-CSO coalition can be developed with the aim to contribute to building a democratic society.

The report is being published under the project "Strengthening Independent Media in Bangladesh" with the support of Internews. We are thankful to Internews for their cooperation in implementing the project. However, the recommendations and comments published in this report does not reflect the opinion of Internews.

INTRODUCTION AND OBJECTIVE

The media industry in Bangladesh faces myriad challenges today. The scope for free expression is shrinking; political forces, in all shapes and forms, have become increasingly intolerant toward dissenting voices and journalists are increasingly falling victim to violent attacks. The ownership of media houses has fallen into the hands of wealthy individuals with vested political and corporate interests. All of this has bred a culture of self-censorship across all forms of media.

Technology and news media, as in every other place on earth, have impacted Bangladeshi media as well. Profits have dwindled for the print media, and to a degree even for electronic media, and journalists are mostly poorly paid and sometimes not even paid at all; the proliferation of online media has become a threat to access to authentic information; and the traditional media houses in the country lack institutional character.

Given this onslaught on media from different directions, it is imperative that the media, as an institution, separate organization, and individual journalist, seek out allies in society with common interests, especially those who face similar challenges. The obvious and old allies in this are the civil society organizations. Throughout the world, the media and civil society organizations often overlap in their areas of work, often have similar goals, and have a long history of cooperation even though their methods are different. Bangladeshi media and civil society organizations have also collaborated in the past, albeit in an ad-hoc manner, and there is still a vast scope for these two important pillars of society to collaborate, not just to protect each other's interest, but for the greater benefit of society.

With this scenario in mind, MRDI, with support from Internews, has been implementing a project: "Strengthening Independent Media in Bangladesh". Two stated objectives of the project are - to increase independent media capacity for unbiased and objective reporting and to conduct effective investigations; and to strengthen linkages and collaboration between individual journalists, media organizations, and NGOs to address self-censorship and lack of media freedoms.

As part of the project, MRDI organized three interaction meetings in Chattogram, Rajshahi and Khulna where journalists, editors, journalist union leaders and executives of civil society organisations participated. The meetings were part of an endeavor to identify the challenges faced by the media, CSOs and Bangladesh, as well as possible areas of collaboration as a solution to those challenges. The interactions were also aimed at trying to get a better understanding of the factors driving self-censorship, to increase awareness of protections against threats to their common areas of work and to start laying the foundation for a media-CSO coalition supporting media freedoms.

The findings and recommendations were later presented in another meeting held in Dhaka. At the Dhaka meeting, the recommendations put forward in the interaction meetings were reviewed, their pros and cons discussed, and some new recommendations were added.

MRDI in total reached out to 100 media editors and owners, newsroom managers, journalist leaders, academics, CSO and NGO officials for the programs held in Dhaka, Chattogram, Rajshahi and Khulna.

Based on the meetings, this report aims to draw a picture of the current state of media and CSO in Bangladesh, the challenges and opportunities for future collaboration, the manner in which the media and CSO can protect each other's interest and how such a relationship may be sustained in the future. This report will hopefully act as a launching pad for a future coalition involving media and CSOs to address media freedoms and self-censorship, by identifying a core group of media and NGO stakeholders who are interested in advancing public outreach and advocacy around these issues.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

When speaking of collaboration between the media and civil society organizations, there appears to be a common misconception on both sides of the aisle. What many of the civil society members and members of the media describe as 'collaboration', can actually best be described as 'public relations'. At the interaction meetings hosted by MRDI, CSO officials complained that the media was reluctant to cover their 'news', while media members said CSOs were reluctant to share information with them.

While coverage of the 'good work' being carried out by CSOs and non-government organizations is an important part of the relationship, it is in many ways the tip of the iceberg. Medias and CSOs in reality have the potential to address many of the structural and institutional ills that plague both these vital sections of society. The media essentially has the power to create impact, to reach out to not just a wide and varied audience, but also to the powers that be. For many CSOs and NGOs toiling at the grassroots for years, the mass media can be a useful weapon to deliver information to the ears of top policymakers. And the process works to perfection in reverse as well. While news stories, especially investigative stories, are one of the most effective weapons to induce a reaction from decision-makers, real change comes about through activism, policy advocacy and incremental steps, something NGOs and CSOs are best suited to carry out.

Traditionally, the media and CSOs have had clearly demarcated roles, even though their larger goals—creating awareness among people and advocating policy reforms—have often overlapped. The function of the media has been to disseminate information and news to the people. The media also analyzes information and events to help people create their own perception on current affairs. People expect neutral, unbiased and objective news and analysis from the media. CSOs and NGOs, on the other hand, act on people's needs and interest. These social organizations work for the betterment of society and the people through voluntary commitment. They create awareness among people about their rights, entitlements and social issues of public interest, help marginalized groups to join mainstream development, and take interventions in remote and underserved areas to complement government's programs. They also play an advocacy role in policy formulation and implementation.

But in this day and age of technological advancement and social media, these demarcations are fast collapsing, especially around the world. Although the relationship between journalists and CSOs/NGOs is not new, the effects of digital disruption, with the explosion of choice, the empowerment (as many would see it) of audiences, as well as their influence on the agenda added to the low levels of trust for journalists, have muddied the waters. In the context of the dominance of the tech giants, the decline in revenue and disappearance of once reliable business models in a mere decade, not to mention the general decline in traditional journalism, the line between professionally trained journalists and alternative investigation and newsgathering has blurred. The economics fueling this trend has been well documented; some of the money has gone online, sometimes to 'fake news'.

Much investigative journalism is now being carried out by relatively small organizations, themselves: CSOs/NGOs that raise funds from foundations, private donors, companies and government—a trend that started in the mid-1970s but has accelerated with the collapse of orthodox business models. CSOs/NGOs in the West now very often hire journalists to carry out their own investigative journalism which is later disseminated in a coordinated manner through a powerful global network of journalists. Given that the Bangladeshi media also faces many of the challenges faced by the global media, it is imperative that the local media and CSOs/NGOs now look for alternative avenues of partnership to jointly face the challenges that threaten both their existence.

MRDI organized interaction meetings at three divisional towns, and later another one in Dhaka, with these ideas and developments in mind. This report is compilation of the discussions on the opportunities and challenges, the insights and recommendations that emerged from the meetings, and observations from individual participants. Monjurul Ahsan Bulbul, CEO, Ekushey Television and President of Bangladesh Federal Union of Journalists (BFUJ) presented the keynote in each of the meetings. He spoke of the limitations and challenges being faced by the Bangladesh media, the pressure on the media being exerted by various groups - which is encouraging the practice of self-censorship, the state of international media and recent advances in journalism and the role of civil society organizations in promoting press freedom and developing the capacity of journalists.

Practicing journalists, union leaders and CSO representatives took part in the spontaneous discussions and came up with important observations. While the local media has suffered from the disruption affecting the media globally, Bangladeshi people still have a level of trust in the media. Whatever is published in media gets people's attention and provokes discussions. Whenever people hear things from different sources, they wait for the mainstream media's version of it. Journalists, particularly those working at the local level, have strong ties to the people. Some journalists are producing in-depth and investigative stories relating to public interest while there are still some media owners who respect the value of unbiased journalism. The wage board for journalists enforced by the government provides a measure of comfort to some journalists who work for organizations that abide by it. Journalists still believe there is a certain level of freedom to write. Many of the participants highlighted many past instances of successful collaboration between media and CSOs.

But many warning bells were issued from these interaction meetings as well. One particular area of worry for most participants was that businessmen with strong political connections have large scale ownership of media in Bangladesh. The fight over spoils among local journalists, exemplified by the state of press clubs, is a worrying sign for the future of journalism. Many people see journalism as a weapon to wield power. Very few media houses pay journalists according to the wage board structure. The culture of poor and irregular wages contributes to the tendency of self-censorship. Many local journalists represent a number of organizations at the same time to make a living. The Bangladesh media still lags behind in using technology in their day-to-day work. A dependence on stereotypical ways of producing news contents requires more human resource and takes longer than usual.

There is a common mindset among journalists that they cannot write against the government, political power, owners, and corporate groups. As a result, the practice of self-censorship in journalism is spreading. There is pressure from advertisers tied to corporate groups when they publish news that is deemed as going against their interest. The state is not the only threat to media, there are other political powers, non-state actors, religious groups, extremist and terrorist groups and division among journalists along political party lines. Female journalists face greater threats than the men who work in the media. Content diversity has become a major problem for Bangladeshi media. The media now focuses more on content related to political and corporate interests, than content related to public interest. The reflection of powerful voices, instead of the voice of the people, results in people losing trust in the media.

There is, however, a way out of this for the media, and that is, as mentioned above, building ties with CSOs. The media and civil society are two vital components of a modern society who have a common target, the people. Through coordinated efforts, they can complement each other in making meaningful changes in society. They can do advocacy on development issues and run social campaigns together to create mass awareness. Such coordination and cooperation will result in mutual benefits: The media will get healthy news content from the CSOs/NGOs and civil society organizations will be able to disseminate messages of public interest to the mass audience through greater media coverage. By allowing space for each other, the media and civil society can create a win-win situation.

Some of the structural problems, specific to the media, also need to be addressed. Participants observed that all the journalists should be paid their salaries under the government approved wage board structure. Editors should ensure a minimum academic qualification of journalists before issuing press cards, so that the sanctity of the institution and the authenticity of news is protected. The safety and security of journalists should be ensured for the sake of press freedom. Media owners should break out of this mentality of securing narrow interests. Lessons in media literacy should be included in the syllabus, both at secondary and higher secondary levels of education. There should be a monitoring mechanism for the media to identify who is doing better where. Organizations like Press Institute of Bangladesh and MRDI can help in this regard. A common platform led by media and CSO representatives can be formed at district or divisional levels from where their united voices will be raised.

VIBRANT MEDIA
HYPE AND HURDLES

The media in Bangladesh has been growing steadily since the 1990s. Despite low levels of literacy and marginal capability to purchase advanced communication devices by a significant portion of the population, newspapers, TV and online media outlets are still expanding.

Mainstream Media

Until not so long ago, newspapers have been the only source of information for the people and the dailies tried to meet their expectations all the time. These privately owned newspapers enjoy a large measure of freedom to carry diverse views. Major dailies express more or less neutral views on political and state policy issues. However, a portion of the press tends to favour either one of the two main political parties—the Awami League and the BNP—disregarding their professional duty of fairness.

Recently, other media outlets, mainly private television channels and FM radios have become major sources of information and entertainment. However it has not diminished the importance of dailies, evidenced by the arrival of new dailies every year.

The emergence of the first online news portal, bdnews24.com, has provided a fast and reliable source of news that is used extensively by all other Bangladeshi media as a primary news source. Following bdnews24, there has been a proliferation of online news portals including a good number at the local level outside the capital. This sudden growth of online portals has seriously undermined the quality and credibility of digital media. The ease of setting up an online portal with minimum investment has encouraged people to start such portals in peripheral areas without bothering about reporting quality and authenticity of sources.

Besides the private media channels, the government of Bangladesh owns and controls three TV channels, 16 radio stations and one news agency. BTV is the only terrestrial TV channel with access to the highest number of viewers.

Social Media

On 18 July 2015, 13-year-old Samiul Alam Rajon was beaten to death by a group of men in the northeastern city of Sylhet after they said he tried to steal a rickshaw. The incident was filmed on a mobile phone by one of the attackers and uploaded to his Facebook account. The video spread on social media and the story was soon picked up by the national news media. The perpetrators were swiftly arrested and in one of the quickest murder trials in recent times in Bangladesh, four of them were sentenced to death. Several others received prison sentences. The reporting on the lynching of the teenager is a prime example of how social media can act not only as a disseminator of news but also as a source of news.

There is, however, the other side of the story. Posts in social media with fake news often create unrest, even violence in the society. Such an incident occurred recently during street agitation by school children demanding "safe road" following the death of two students in a road accident due to reckless driving by two bus drivers. One post went viral over Facebook claiming that girls were being raped and that the eyes of an agitator had been gouged out by the activists of the student wing of the ruling party. This false news created panic and aggravated violence among the agitators and mass people.

These two opposite examples suggest that the most popular social media in Bangladesh, Facebook, has both benefits and risks. The challenge of how to maximize the benefits and minimize its abuses remains, especially since nearly 80% of the roughly 54 million Internet subscribers in Bangladesh use Facebook, according to the Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulatory Commission.

Challenges in Media

Diversity in media has increased in Bangladesh in the past few years. The enactment of the Right to Information Act 2009 has allowed journalists freedom to access information from public and non-government organizations. This has created opportunities for improving the quality of investigative journalism.

In addition to growing diversification, there has been significant development in the media's outlook and its focus on governance issues. Admittedly, media reporting and debates now are freer and more open, the analyses more sharp and relevant, and the presentation more attractive to the audience at large. Nonetheless, the media in Bangladesh experiences difficulties at different stages of the country's political history. The regulatory framework, ambiguous and restrictive at the same time, effectively constrains media freedom on pretexts of national security, official secrecy, and contempt of court, amongst other things. The media, being largely owned by big business houses has become politicized over the years, evident from the contents and analyses of the reports that are often overtly biased in favor of one party or the other. In their reporting, the media is also often found to represent particular business interests and even engage in unhealthy competition with each other, exacerbated by the multiplicity of the nature of businesses in which media owners are involved. This essentially clouds the objectivity of the media and raises questions regarding its independence. The absence of effective self-regulatory mechanisms erodes the accountability and integrity of the media. While the media, particularly private owned ones, are vocal regarding corruption of public officials, government irregularities, and other contentious issues, it also exercises a degree of self-censorship for fear of backlash by the government and political parties.

> The media, being largely owned by big business houses has become politicized over the years, evident from the contents and analyses of the reports that are often overtly biased in favor of one party or the other.

Press Freedom

The media plays a vital role in every society in preserving democratic values. Without free access to information, backed up by journalists who actually dig down and get to the truth, all other liberties celebrated in a democracy are endangered.

Press freedom is seen as one of the basic tools of democracy. The vigilant and thriving media, endowed with investigative abilities, helps democracy flourish.

The Article 39 of the constitution of Bangladesh guarantees citizens' freedom of thought and conscience and of speech. It further adds 'Subject to any reasonable restrictions imposed by law in the interests of the security of the State, friendly relations with foreign states, public order, decency or morality, or in relation to contempt of court, defamation or incitement to an offence, the right of every citizen of freedom of speech and expression; and freedom of the press, are guaranteed.'

Although the government claims that the media is free and independent, there are a lot of restrictions. A confrontational political environment nurtures intolerance and violence in society, which ultimately affects media freedom. Media and civil society members observed that physical violence and threats against journalists continue with impunity. The killing of journalists mostly remains unresolved and other acts of violence go unpunished.

The government initiates legal action against journalists under restrictive laws. Authorities sometimes block access to certain news websites and close down newspapers. In Bangladesh there are many laws to restrict the freedom of press. Some of these were enacted during the colonial times. The Special Powers Act of 1974 has been used by governments to harass news organizations; the Newsprint Control Order of 1974 was also used by the authorities to exercise control over the production and usage of newsprint - an indirect tool to pressurize the print media.

In 2014, the government formulated the National Broadcasting Policy that the Ministry of Information said would ensure freedom of speech, free flow of information and social responsibility of the media, as well as foster independent and responsible mass media in the country. Journalists, human rights groups and legal experts express grave concerns that provisions of the policy could be used to curb media freedom. The policy restricts airing news or programmes that will 'invade personal privacy and impede the state security and hurt religious values and non-communal spirit'. It will not allow any news or programmes in favour of any country that would be harmful to other countries as well as affect the relations with friendly countries, a provision that has come under fire from some who say it is meant to stifle criticism of India's policy towards Bangladesh.

The ICT Act-2006's section 57 (included in its amendment in 2013) is largely used against journalists and writers to gag their freedom of expression. Under the section 57, any person responsible for any post, image, or video in an electronic format that causes a deterioration in law and order, or which prejudices the image of the state or person, or hurts religious beliefs, will be liable to non-bailable punishment. The punishment for a successful conviction ranges from seven to 14 years in prison, and a fine of up to Tk. 1 crore. Till now a number of cases have been filed against journalists under this section. According to prosecution sources, three cases were filed in 2013 under the ICT Act, 33 in 2014, 152 in 2015, 233 in 2016, and 391 cases were lodged under this act, of which nearly 60% were filed under Section 57 in 2017.

Amidst criticism of the ICT Act 2006, the new Digital Security Act 2018 was enacted this year, keeping all the provisions of Article 57 of the ICT Act and making it more stringent. Editors and journalist union leaders termed the law 'draconian', as it retained a harsh provision that allows police officials to search or arrest anyone without warrant. Out of 19 Articles, 14 are non-bailable.

Section 32 of the new Act brought back the Official Secrets Act, 1923, of the colonial times, although the Right to Information Act, 2009, is also there. Bringing back the colonial regulations is bound to restrict independent journalism. Editors demanded amendments to nine sections of this Digital Act to protect independent journalism.

Quality of Journalists

No academic degree is required to become a journalist in Bangladesh. Amongst many qualified newspersons, there are many individuals claiming to be journalists who have nothing but identity cards of online portals or underground newspapers to prove their claim.

This is too common in district and upazila levels. Most of them are recruited for dubious purposes and mainly serve the business interests of the owners. As a result, the quality of journalism is falling. Also, these so-called journalists see journalism as a tool to access opportunities, serving their own interest or to threaten people to solicit undue benefits. The participants at the interaction meetings despaired that district-level journalism never grew into a profession and rather remains a part-time job or a job chosen as a hobby, while some choose this career to accumulate du wealth.

Ownership of Media

In the first two decades after its birth, the Bangladesh media sector was dominated by political parties or professionals with specific political goals, although there were a couple of state-owned newspapers in the market. But the post-1990 newspaper business in Bangladesh is clearly dominated by corporate groups. This represents a significant shift on a number of levels. All the state owned newspapers were closed by 1997, ending decades old government ownership in print media sector, which was initiated in the 1960s during the Pakistan era. It is said that the government subsidiary of its press outlets was established with two objectives: explicitly, to promote modern journalism in terms of production, news making and promoting government development programs. That is clearly an ideological function. And, implicitly, which was actually more important, to create platforms of pro-government media by using those publications as political propaganda tools.

However, the early years of the 1990s witnessed an explosion of interest to publish newspapers by business groups and within a decade new titles outnumbered the old market leaders, both in terms of circulation and influence to set policy and public agendas. Since then, we have witnessed a major change in ownership of media, mainly by political and influential groups. Currently, most of the media houses in Bangladesh are owned by political and influential groups who have used this

business as a safeguard. As a result, the media is under pressure and often compelled to serve the owners' interest that include: owners' personal relationship with any corporate groups that prevents the publishing of stories that goes against their interest or the cover up of any corruption they are involved in; if the media owner is a political leader there are restrictions in publishing news that condemns or criticizes his/her party or a party activist's actions. Besides, there is also a tendency in media houses to defer this concept of -'pro government media house' and 'anti-government house' - whose impact is visible in the content of the news. However, the "pro-government" gets more privileges in terms of doing good business through advertisement.

Captive to Commercial Interests

At least some sections of the Bangladeshi media have become derailed from its basic watchdog role. Media houses are weapons for many owners to defend the commercial or political interests of the government. To secure advertisement revenue, media houses often compromise with corporate houses.

Bangladeshi media houses have also been accused of compromising on news content, especially on issues related to corruption. In most cases, media and corporate houses have a tacit understanding that news of business groups will be confined to promotion of the group and avoid negative news and, in return, corporations will provide advertisement to the media houses.

However, media houses cannot be blamed entirely for this commercial attitude. The Bangladesh media never developed into an industry and has remained a micro-enterprise without any professional structure.

However, media houses cannot be blamed entirely for this commercial attitude. The Bangladesh media never developed into an industry and has remained a micro-enterprise without any professional structure.

Pressure /Threats

The Bangladesh media faces tremendous pressure from both state and non-state actors. There are threats and pressure imposed by different influential quarters. They play a major role in controlling media content alongside corporate groups who control the media by controlling the supply of advertisements to media houses. As a result, media houses that do not have sufficient financial strength develop a tendency to compromise with the situation.

Political Influence

The Bangladeshi media collectively present an array of views. However, political coverages are highly partisan as the owners of many private outlets exert influence over editorial control that reflects their personal political affiliations. Private broadcast outlets are compelled to air selected government-produced news segments and official speeches and that is part of the unspoken condition during the process of license approval.

In critical cases, journalists often have to serve the media house owner's interest as well as that of some powerful politicians in order to make them happy or to avoid certain inconsistency.

Self-censorship

Self-censorship by media outlets is on the rise in Bangladesh due to the negative influence of the owners. Media houses also exercise self-censorship to secure advertisements from various sources. Some professional journalists also practice self-censorship to avoid repercussions when reporting on sensitive topics; journalists may also self-censor in order to keep from harming the business or political interests of media owners.

At the grassroots level, the scenario is worse. The local journalists are often compelled to censor information to avoid pressure from political and influential groups. Since they work in a small boundary, it is hard to write against political and influential personalities out of concern for their own personal safety. Local newspaper editors also exercise self-censorship to

secure advertisement revenue, since their financial footing is weak. Some journalists at the local level also use information as a means for extortion.

Media Literacy

At this age of continuous flow of information, it is imperative that citizens learn to judge the reliability of news reports and other sources of information that they receive through social networks and other media outlets. The concept of news and media literacy has emerged from this feeling. News literacy enables recipients to ask questions about the information they will use in their day to day life. It helps people develop higher-order thinking skills and critical reasoning to judge the reliability and credibility of news reports from all media: print, TV, radio or online. A news literate person will be able to judge which one is news and which is not. Thus the audience/readers are prepared to make informed decisions.

Media in Bangladesh is vibrant but audience confidence is limited. A recent study of MRDI on news and current affairs acceptability says that only 14% fully believe, 28% saying they "somewhat believe" which means 42% are in the positive side. However 57% are more or less unsure. It means some sort of natural media literacy skills are being applied to filter news and the producers are being looked skeptically.

Journalist Associations/Unions - Nexus with Political Parties

Bangladesh is perhaps the only country in the world where the journalist union is divided along the lines of national party politics. There are two federal bodies of Journalist Unions — one backed by Awami League and the other backed by BNP and Jamaat. In line with the central division, all the district and divisional level journalist units and press clubs are also divided. Because of this division, journalist unions are unable to defend the rights of journalists.

Low Wages

Media professionals in Bangladesh have to face lots of obstacles in performing their duties because of poor pay structure. There is a dearth of job security. Only a few journalists are compensated under the wage board approved by the government. Moreover, journalists rarely enjoy other facilities or incentives stated in the wage board structure. Journalists usually blame the owners' commercial attitude for this sort of deprivation and therefore, most journalists are not satisfied with their jobs.

This situation is worse for district correspondents. The people who worked at the local level often have contracts that hardly provide them any benefits. Mostly, they double up as an advertisement collector and their earnings often consist of just a small percentage of the advertisements they manage to secure. If they get a salary, it is usually a miniscule amount and they are also paid irregularly. As a result, they often fall back on other sources of income, including illegal ones.

Lack of Investigative Journalism

Investigative Journalism (IJ) is at the heart of journalism, but in Bangladesh this has always remained a challenge due to lack of resources and a strong will. There is also reluctance among the editors and owners to invest in investigative reporting. As a result, in most media houses in Bangladesh, there are no dedicated IJ teams. Some media houses in television and print media have set up IJ teams, but in most cases they don't run investigations due to lack of funds, logistics and policy constraints.

Vulnerabilities of Journalists Working in the Grassroots

The journalists who work at the local level face the most difficult challenges. The local correspondents, who are assigned to cover almost all beats including politics, health, business, crime and even culture, hardly get any facilities from the media houses in terms of finance and logistics. As mentioned earlier, they are often paid poorly or not at all and since a single journalist will often work for a number of media houses to secure a stable income, self-censorship and corruption is rampant as a result.

The local journalists work in a severely coercive environment. They face more pressure and threats from both state and non-state political and influential groups. Since their area of work is small and often people know each other by face, there are more challenges for them in terms of safety. During the discussions, local correspondents said they hardly get any support from the media houses if and when they are in danger.

In addition, they lack opportunities to develop their skill and capacity since there is limited scope for training. As a result, there is little room for career growth for local correspondents.

Content Diversity

Content diversity is a major concern nowadays for Bangladeshi media. The media often ignores content that serves public interest and appear more enthusiastic to provide political coverage or serve corporate interests. A glance at daily newspapers/online portals/television, reveals that most news involves just the day's coverage: Daily event updates, political coverage and very few in-depth/investigative reports.

In print media, a full-page advertisement in the front page and a half page at the back on a regular day is not an uncommon scene.

Quality is a Concern

The quality of journalism is a concern, especially at the local level. The editors who attended the meetings despaired that they rarely come across potential candidates who are interested in journalism. They claimed that editors and media owners are willing to pay for good journalists but scarcely find any potential candidates. At the district level, excluding some developed areas, most journalists take up journalism as a part time profession due to the poor pay structure. Qualified candidates display a lack of interest to join the profession due to the uncertainties inherent to the profession. Many potential candidates, including journalism graduates, join the profession with enthusiasm but leave it midway due to the prevailing environment in the profession.

> At the district level, excluding some developed areas, most journalists take up journalism as a part time profession due to the poor pay structure. Qualified candidates display a lack of interest to join the profession due to the uncertainties inherent to the profession. Many potential candidates, including journalism graduates, join the profession with enthusiasm but leave it midway due to the prevailing environment in the profession.

Women in Journalism

The presence of women in the media industry of Bangladesh is very low compared to men. According to Global Media Monitoring Programme (GMMP), the largest international study of gender in the news media held in every 5 years since 1995, in its Report 2015, said that In Bangladesh news media 84% of journalists are male while women constitute a very lower figure 16 %. Among them, 8% female work in newspaper, 33 % in radio and 19% in television.

In National Press Club, the number of female journalists is only 72 among its 1252 permanent members. In Dhaka Union of Journalists there are 6000 members where the female journalist's number is only 150. In Reporters Unity, there are only 104 females among 1500 journalists.

However, among the working female journalists, a tendency is seen to choose desk jobs or being news presenter rather than doing reporting and covering crime and other important news beats. It is found that a good number of female journalists are joining the news media—but that this increased representation is often largely—although by no means exclusively—boosted by greater numbers of women hired as news presenters with these roles anecdotally going to younger, attractive women.

Also at the management level, the presence of women is very low. There is no correlation between gender ratios in management and regular staff in most of the Bangladeshi media. However, some media houses have female representation in newsroom management but the ratio is not up to the mark.

Lack of Professional Integrity

From the interaction meetings, it was clear that several participants felt that many journalists lack professional integrity. However, the reasons behind this situation appeared rather complicated. The participants felt that journalists are often the victim of their circumstances — financial constraints and concerns for safety and security — that drives them to explore immoral avenues. They also said that the easy access to press cards further contributed to this situation. If the quality and integrity of the candidates are ensured before the press card is issued, then immoral practices can be contained to a degree.

Technology Constraints

In Bangladesh, most of the media houses lag behind in their use of modern technology during their day-to-day work. Most of them still depend on stereotypical methods of producing news content, which requires more human resource and takes a longer time. Some journalists also struggle to cope with modern technology. Sometimes, due to their limitations, they face many legal issues in terms of maintaining the safety of their personal accounts and confidential documents.

No Written Ethical Guideline

Very few media houses have written ethical guidelines or any document on standards and practices. In most houses that do have this, they are not effectively used, shared, or debated about with staff. However, it is important to have detailed discussions on the ethical aspects of journalism.

In-House Training and Skills Development

Almost no media organization has formal, structured in-house training for journalists working in the organizations. As a result, professionals who have willingness to do better in their careers do not have opportunities to develop much. Correspondents who work at the grassroots have an urgent need for capacity training since they have to cover a huge number of things in a very short time, as there are fewer reporters in each upazila/district. In most cases, younger professionals learn by 'watching' their seniors. The limited systematic training extends to editorial levels: most editors acquire skills through experience only. Without skill development for newcomers, both at the national and local levels, a small number of editors can become a bottleneck on the institution's capacity to develop further — such as overseeing new functions like data mining or infographics, or even establishing and running IJ departments where none formally exists.

Safety and Security of Journalists

Journalists are vulnerable to being physically assaulted while working in the field, by both the police and locally influential people representing vested interests. Fear of non-state actors among journalists is high. They face threats, mostly to their personal safety and security, while working. They are victims of violence in the process of newsgathering. After publication of reports, many are harassed, resulting in frustration among newsmen. Most of the journalists in Bangladesh hardly have any training in dealing with high-risk situations or conflict scenarios. None of the media houses have a formal security protocol/guideline — that includes a set of rules and procedures that journalists, especially those in the field, must follow or use to find out who should do what during emergencies. Even, there are no dedicated newsroom security hotlines and no newsroom has staff specifically tasked with, or especially trained in, handling security related emergencies. Usually, the journalists rely mostly on their own connections and informal individual strategies.

Victim of the Politics-Business Nexus

The media in Bangladesh has never been more obedient to corporate and political forces as it is today. These days, prominent Bangladesh politicians and their associates and business houses are increasingly making underhanded investments in news media and the press is failing to serve as a potent, unbiased tool to inform public perception. Media outlets here are openly owned and controlled by political and business conglomerates, who are using the media to undermine the relevance of their opponents with scant regard for overall national interest.

The main casualty has been the ability of the citizen to find out the objective truth, as different media outlets divide into camps on any major issue, polarizing the reporting and their readerships. Bangladesh journalism, with its lack of freedom and self-regulation, cannot be trusted now-it is currently known for manipulation and bias.

Media pluralism is getting restricted with entities having cross media holdings occupying dominant positions in different media sectors. While more journalists want to expose corporate corruption and crony capitalism, it is increasingly being seen that corporations are openly buying up top positions in the profession.

In this environment, how can journalists not be forced-or feel compelled for the sake of job security-to report in ways that reflect the political opinions and business interests of the owners?

Institutions outside the state machinery endeavoring to advance shared goals and objectives generally constitute the civil society. The civil society contributes significantly in establishing a fair society by acting as a pressure group to convince the power holders of the state to conform to democratic norms and practices, protect rights and entitlements of citizens and uphold humanitarian values in society. Civil society members often play the critical role of a bridging entity between the state and the citizens, between service providers and recipients, between power holders and the powerless.

Civil society may comprise individuals or organized institutions / associations. Normally, an organized civil society has greater scope of creating an impact in society. Social workers, social thinkers, researchers are considered individual civil society members. Organized civil society includes non-government organizations (NGO), civil society organizations (CSO), community based organizations, research institutes, think tanks, and even media organizations. In the development sector of Bangladesh, NGOs and CSOs are found to be more active in promoting social causes, creating awareness on social issues and also providing services to meet community needs.

Despite having separate identities, NGOs and CSOs in Bangladesh have many things in common. Both of them are non-state actors working for the betterment of society and the country through voluntary commitment. Both types of organizations are normally registered with relevant government authority, though registration is not mandatory for organizations. However, registration is mandatory when organizations receive foreign donations for their programs or if they seek tax-exempt status.

To point out the sharp difference, NGOs are voluntarily formed by a group of citizens at a local, national or international level to perform a variety of activities addressing issues such as human rights, women empowerment, environment or health.

Being dependent on donor funds, these organizations have to serve the purpose of the donors and comply with their desires. NGO activities may not always address the real needs of the target community resulting in a failure to bring about the desired changes. But the dearth of resources compels them to seek funds from donors.

NGOs are normally more focused on social issues and specific areas of work. CSOs are also voluntary organizations working in wider issues and areas. CSOs may not have very specific area of focus. In fact CSOs may even cover NGOs as a component of the civil society. Often it becomes difficult to specifically identify these organizations when they are involved in similar type of programs and activities. However, the traditional concept of voluntarism has taken a turn with the advent of professionalism in voluntary activities and structural institutionalization of voluntary bodies. Activities of NGOs/CSOs are not any more confined within their organizational mission and agenda. Being dependent on donor funds, these organizations have to serve the purpose of the donors and comply with their desires. NGO activities may not always address the real needs of the target community resulting in a failure to bring about the desired changes. But the dearth of resources compels them to seek funds from donors.

Despite all these limitations and challenges, NGOs and the civil society as a whole are playing a formidable role in the country's development and governance as advocates, opinion mobilizers and service promoters. NGOs, irrespective of the size of their budget and the volume of activities, work to create awareness in the community about social issues, empower

the community members to lay claim to their rights and also play a complementary role in providing services in hard-to-reach areas where government services are insufficient.

In addition to social awareness and community development programmes, advocacy and watchdog roles of the civil society also have a significant impact. CSOs/NGOs at the national level negotiate with the state machinery on policies and regulations related to public interest. They often provide assistance to the government in policy reforms and implementation. They launch pilot interventions as success story examples that can be replicated by the government and other agencies for greater impact in society.

One example of civil society's successful advocacy at the policy level is the enactment of the RTI Act 2009. The RTI civil society forum lobbied with the government to take a legal stand for protecting people's right of access to information. The forum also provided technical assistance in drafting the law. RTI Act 2009 is the result of this advocacy. Some NGOs/CSOs are now working with the government and the Information Commission to create a demand for information and also to enhance capacity on the supply side.

Another instance of government-civil society collaboration is the progress in implementing the global Sustainable Development Goals (SDG). Under the umbrella "Citizen's Platform for SDGs, Bangladesh" CSOs/NGOs are working with a commitment to 'Leaving No One Behind', in support of the government's development priorities. The platform has already organized two big conferences that included top government officials.

Facing myriad adversities and challenges, CSO and NGOS are contributing substantially to bringing about social changes by empowering people and playing the watchdog role to connect people with the government and other power holders.

From discussions held across the country, the key point that surfaced was that the NGO sector in Bangladesh has to deal with a number of challenges in their work, including limitation in capacity, absence of strategic planning, political interference, threats, donor dependence and different forms of social barriers. One major limitation is that due to dependency on foreign funds, NGOs have very limited scope of working independently, beyond the agendas set by the project.

Donor-dependent

NGOs in Bangladesh are mostly dependent on foreign funds. This financial dependence has two consequences- i) most NGOs have made little attempt to mobilize funds by themselves and ii) in some cases their agenda becomes donor-driven, not merely in terms of funding, but also in terms of seeking donor assistance to legitimize their activities. Both the consequences have critical implications for accountability. As a part of aid conditionality, NGOs have to submit regular audited reports to funding agencies. Usually, these sorts of reports are submitted to donors who evaluate their activities, resulting in close and persistent scrutiny. This creates an identity crisis for NGOs, in terms of their legitimacy and accountability to their funding agencies. As a consequence of this trend, a reflection of donor's priorities, rather than the beneficiary's needs and aspirations, are visible in NGO policies.

It is widely accepted that NGOs undertake projects that are mainly prescribed by donors and, in most cases, local needs are not taken into consideration. Donor-driven programs are thought to have introduced management and payment structures that do not promote self-reliance on the part of the beneficiaries or of the organizations themselves. It has also been observed that because of donor-dependence, NGOs feel accountable only to donors, rather than to the government or members of the public.

Project-oriented

In Bangladesh, the NGOs and CSOs mostly implement projects planned for a certain period to meet the goal and objectives determined by the donor. As long as organizations fulfill the basic metrics, the project is considered a success. These timebound and target-specific projects can hardly bring about sustainable changes in the community. There is no scope to further the impact of successful interventions.

Poor Governance

The NGO sector has issues with good governance, which can often result in corruption and irregularities. In many cases, senior executives and board members take abnormally high remuneration and benefits from the organization. Governance in this case is not only a reference to financial transparency, but also programmatic development, institutional growth, organizational culture and practice, authority and organizational conflict resolution.

Absence of Strategic Planning

The other concern is that very few donor-dependent NGOs have a long-term strategic plan that would lead them towards institutional, programmatic and financial sustainability. This results in uncertainties once foreign funds discontinue. NGOs are hardly prepared to face such challenges. It emerged through the discussions that most of the NGOs have no explicit strategy for attaining long-term sustainability. They are weak even in meeting their basic requirements for organizational sustainability, e.g. articulation of coherent vision with social appeal; capacity to plan and implement efficiently through quality management; and the capacity to enlist support of the community and development stakeholders. Some NGOs, however, are engaging in various forms of income-generating business activities to face the challenges of financial sustainability.

Poor Communication/Network

Another challenge the participants identified is that there is very poor communication and networking within the NGO sector. This causes duplication of efforts, conflicting strategies at the community level, a lack of learning from experience and an inability of NGOs to address local structural causes of poverty, deprivation and marginalization. Unhealthy competition for resources also undermines the reputation of the sector and the effectiveness of NGO activities at the community level. As a result there is a great deal of suspicion, secrecy and a lack of transparency among NGOs. Many NGOs, both large and small, intervene at the community level without any community mapping and implement projects without due regard to ongoing community initiatives. Often NGOs are found fighting one another, one with resources but no community presence, another with community presence but no resources. As a result, they hardly have any knowhow on the other's fields of work or how to work together and find a mutually beneficial solution. This leads to communication gap between organizations and they cannot strengthen their position as independent organizations.

Limited Capacity

Lack of technical and organizational capacity is a major limitation of NGOs. They make minimum investment in human resource development and organizational capacity improvement. Organizational capacity is directly linked with fundraising, leadership, management, good governance and technical enhancement.

Flaws in Development Approaches

NGOs are generally aware of the increasing needs of poor people and feel they can respond to all these needs. But in most cases, they have limited scope to plan things in accordance with local needs. Usually donor agencies invite proposals from NGOs and CSOs with definite goals and objectives and the NGOs submit their proposal according to instruction. Once they get selected, they are assigned to implement the project as per the proposal under close scrutiny of the funding partner. Target beneficiaries hardly have any scope of participating in the planning and implementation process. The issues of long term sustainability and community participation are grossly ignored. Thus the community does not own the project and it hardly has any visible long-term impact on the community.

Relationship with INGOs

There is a concern among local NGOs that INGOs occupy a major space in the development sector, which creates difficulties for them. Local NGOs engage in an unequal competition with INGOs in securing funds. INGOs have a strong network of donor organizations. They pay high salaries and attract qualified and efficient personnel from local NGOs. As a result, local NGOs lag far behind INGOs in the race for funds. This is a grave concern for local NGOs.

Lengthy fund Release Process

This is one major concern for most of the foreign-fund recipients in the country. Due to lengthy and complex process at the NGO Affairs Bureau of Bangladesh (NGOAB) and also the donor's systematic approach, it is difficult to receive funds on time. This hampers flow of activities of the project.

Decreasing Fund Flow Trend

NGOs in Bangladesh are facing challenges in managing sufficient, appropriate and continuous funding for their work. Foreign funds are now on a downward trend and competition for funds is increasing, but dependency on donors is still very high.

Lack of Job Security in the Organization

There is no job security for NGO professionals in the country. As the NGOs recruit people based on project requirements, there is hardly any scope or system for financial benefits for employees after completion of the contract period. Organizations also have core staff in their organogram but they are usually very few. Even then, in most NGOs, the core staff hardly enjoys financial benefits like gratuity, provident fund, pension or other such schemes.

Interference and Control by State Body

Support from the state is of immense importance to NGOs in carrying out their activities. But sometimes interference of state bodies, particularly on those who work on governance and media issues, create barriers.

Shortage of Skilled Human Resource

One problem in the NGO sector is the shortage of skilled human resources. Qualified people are reluctant to work in NGOs due to job insecurity and project-based recruitment.

No Focal Person for Media Relation Development

There is a lack of a focal person in the CSOs/NGOs who handles media relations and focuses on where the media and CSOs can work together and explores potential fields for the benefit of the masses. Some NGOs do have media wings, though, that mainly looks after media coverage and promotional work. On the flipside, the media is also reluctant to give coverage to CSO interventions or publish detailed reports on findings or successes of NGO interventions because of restraints on content diversity. Content in media is mostly decided by editorial boards that take into consideration political and corporate interests. Usually, the media covers news of NGO/CSO interventions if they are invited for press coverage.

Pressure/Threats

There are instances of pressure from the state and non-state actors, which holds back CSO/NGOs from creating a coalition with the media. Safety and security for NGO workers, especially those working in sensitive fields, is also a concern.

No Systematic Approach to Media Engagement

The CSOs and the media lack procedures, standards, and strategies on how to approach each other. CSOs are confused about what kind of information they should provide to the media, who in turn often does not get sufficient, newsworthy information from CSOs/NGOs. This creates a barrier to establishing a relationship of mutual cooperation. The media and CSOs are often working on similar issues from their own positions: They interact with each other and fight for peace and justice in society, but rarely in collaboration. If the media and NGOs/CSOs work together, many potential fields can be explored and thus society can be greatly benefited. For example, NGOs that work on environmental issues can help the media to report on it. This will certainly have a better impact as the media can influence people's perception and create awareness on a large scale. Unfortunately, this kind of cooperation is hardly visible in Bangladesh. The main reason for this is the communication gap and a lack of understanding between the two sectors about where to work together and what to keep separate.

MEDIA-CSO RELATIONSHIP IN BANGLADESH

Both the media and CSOs have played a significant role in the development of Bangladesh. Following independence, CSOs, especially NGOs in Bangladesh, have made major contributions toward rebuilding the war-ravaged nation, while the media, through its role as a watchdog, has made noteworthy contributions to the development of Bangladeshi society. Bangladesh has been successful in reducing infant mortality, maternal mortality rates and fertility rates and increasing nutrition, primary school enrollment rates, as well as in disaster management and poverty alleviation. CSOs, especially the NGOs, and media played a vital role in this success.

Media relations are considered the center of public relations exercises of CSOs, since it can not only give exposure to their efforts, but also enhance their legitimacy. If the media and NGO/CSOs work together, many potential fields can be explored for the ultimate benefit of people and society.

In Bangladesh, however, the relationship is a little complex due to lack of understanding of each other's role in development. The media and CSOs lack procedures, standards, and strategies on how to approach each other, which and what kind of information they need to/should publish, how to measure their impact on the public/users and how to increase their influence through cooperation. Despite having similar roles in terms of ensuring the rights and well-being of the people, there remains a gap between them which holds them back from working together.

In many countries, joint collaboration between media and CSOs has led to unprecedented success in some cases. In South Africa, the collaboration between media and CSOs led to mass awareness on the prevention of HIV/AIDS, while in Kenya, because of poor communication and lack of interaction between media and CSOs, the programme struggled. Also in many developing countries, NGOs are supporting local media by collaborating and sharing ideas and experiences. They seek opportunities to provide training and equipment, even for local networks of journalists who usually report on issues that the NGO(s) deals with.

There is no doubt that media is the best means to deliver messages to people and as discussed in the interaction meetings, Bangladeshi people still have a level of trust in the news they provide. To ensure the full success of CSO initiatives in Bangladesh, it is important that the media and CSOs have good communication, interaction and collaboration. The supportive role of media to CSOs has already contributed to strengthening human rights and to boosting the campaigns against gender discrimination, religious extremism, violence against women and so on. There is also a notion among some that the media and CSOs have a very cozy relationship, as a section of the media is well disposed to certain NGOs. However, this sort of support has been ad-hoc and needs to be more integrated and wholesome.

The media and NGOs in Bangladesh should look beyond just press coverage or press conferences. They can collaborate and share ideas, experiences and seek opportunities to work together. Individual NGOs should build networks of journalists who report on issues that the NGO deals with. NGOs should have a better understanding of what interests the news media. Providing information accordingly can help them contribute to making a good story that serves the people's interest. In the end, the media is market-driven and news content is often dictated by audience interest.

In many African countries, there are forums for civic initiatives that include civil society actors including NGOs, policy think tanks, faith-based organizations, community based organizations, youth groups, labor organizations, gender groups, and individual citizens. Bangladesh can follow this strategy and form such groups, by also including the media, who will work on

the developmental and governance issues with clear understanding of their defined roles. This can also help Bangladesh achieve its SDG goals.

At present, however, forming such a coalition is a challenge for the both media and CSOs, since they are mired and overburdened by problems specific to their fields of work.

The History of Media-CSO Relationship in Bangladesh

The media and CSOs in Bangladesh have developed along two separate trajectories, often with different areas of interest or points of focus, although their paths have overlapped at important junctures.

The Bangladeshi media is the successor of a proud tradition of political activism-journalism, dating back not just to the period of East Pakistan, but to united Bengal under the colonial administration, where the media was often a vessel for the political aspirations of freedom and sovereignty of the Bengali people. Prior to independence, the East Pakistan-based Bangla-language media played a significant role in influencing public opinion for the independence of the country. This form of active engagement with politics also had unintended consequences, as post-independence Bangladeshi media still tends towards partisanship and polarization, instead of objective journalism. Additionally, especially in the first twenty years of independence except initial three years, the media had to cope with severe restrictions as the country fell under one-party rule and then military rule, with freedom of speech heavily curtailed.

The decade of 1990s is often considered the golden age for the print media, with more and more publications entering the market, introducing new formats of news presentation and new, bolder and wider-range of voices. This transitioned into the rise of privately owned television channels in early 2000s. This era, however, was short-lived as the media, owing unfortunately to its disproportionate power to influence public opinion, soon fell into the clutches of powerful corporate interests with direct and indirect ties to political forces. As discussed earlier, mainstream media is once again struggling to project its independent voice in an era of restrictive laws, competing political interests and ownership struggles.

CSOs, and more specifically NGOs, were born out of ad-hoc arrangements to provide relief and rescue to common people in a country where natural disasters are frequent and relentless. In the early years of independence, the NGOs played an important role in rebuilding the broken infrastructure and in providing life-saving services to the needy, at a time when the new government was ill equipped to handle such a huge and vulnerable population. When the benefits of such interventions proved to be short-lived and the beneficiaries often returned to previous states of suffering, CSOs and NGOs began to look for sustainable models of intervention. This search eventually led to the birth of financial models of developmental intervention such as the microcredit and the rise of modern NGOs and CSOs that are now often donor-driven. While NGOs have drawn a lot of positive international attention for their ability to address issues of welfare of the population outside the framework of the government, they have also faced criticism from the start for their inherent lack of accountability arising from providing services mandated to elected government bodies.

But despite such divergent histories, CSOs, both advertently and inadvertently, have played an important role in strengthening Bangladeshi media. CSOs working in the area of human rights have, over the last two decades, helped the media move beyond situational and descriptive reports of abuses and transgressions and helped journalists quantify situations by giving them access to the annual trend reports compiled by CSOs. Reports such as the Bangladesh Demographic and Health Survey conducted by the National Institute of Population Research and Training, once little-known to journalists, now play a major role in contributing to in-depth reporting on family planning trends, spread of HIV/AIDS and other diseases, tobacco use, domestic violence and child marriage. Many rights-based CSOs also played an important role in making the media gender-sensitive and children-sensitive, as most parts of mainstream media now follow certain identifiable standards while reporting on sensitive issues such as rape, taking careful steps to protect the identity of victims.

And there are some important instances of active collaboration between the two sectors in the past. One successful example is the containment of acid violence in Bangladesh, which was once the highest in the world. In 2002, 467 people fell victim to acid violence, but through active intervention from organisations such as Prothom Alo trust, a sister concern of the leading vernacular daily Prothom Alo, and Acid Survivors Foundation, the number fell to 44 in 2017. The media and CSOs together lobbied for stringent laws against acid violence, which finally came about in 2002, and since then acid violence has steadily declined at the rate of 15 to 20 % each year.

Another important instance of media collaboration is the introduction of anti-smoking laws in Bangladesh which seriously curbed the power of tobacco companies to advertise with consumers and which was brought about by the efforts of a number of CSOs banding together to work with public interest lawyers and progressive sections of the media. While anti-smoking laws, which have steadily led to a drop in tobacco consumption in Bangladesh, was brought about by some CSOs such as Adhunik, MANAS and others banding together under the banner of BATA, some sections of the media actively participated in this campaign to reign in tobacco companies. One shining example is the then leading newspaper Bhorer Kagoj who took a stand against tobacco advertising by refusing to publish them, going against their commercial interest, and instead published coloured ads against smoking for a month, free of cost.

Media-CSO Relationship at Present

Despite sporadic examples of successful collaboration between the media and CSOs over the years, both these institutions, by and large, appear inept at making the best use of each other to fulfill their goals. Recent developments in the political arena have left both these sectors fending for themselves, making them even more reluctant to find avenues of collaboration and partnership. This is unfortunate because this may very well be the time when successful collaboration could actually serve as a way out of their troubles.

The media is not just struggling with dwindling revenues, but also increasing pressure on freedom of speech, exemplified by draconian laws such as the Digital Security Act and Official Secrets Act. CSOs and NGOs are also operating in an environment of decreasing donor funds and increasing pressure from legislation such Foreign Donations Regulation Act 2016. A perfect example of a failed opportunity for collaboration is the protests that followed the Digital Security Act and Foreign Donations Regulation Act drafts, before they finally came into law. The leaders of both sectors lobbied hard with the government to modify sections of these laws to no avail. If the two sectors had actually backed each other in these goals - for example, if a common platform for NGOs had issued a statement protesting the Digital Security Act; or if the media had worked with NGOs in rallying public opinion against the more stringent aspects of the Foreign Donations Regulation Act - then the chances of success would have increased manifold.

Most NGOs see the media as an outlet to air their success, without understanding the instrumental role the media can play in helping them achieve their goals. CSOs and NGOs usually reach out to the media to get press releases published or to invite them to press conferences. In the worst manifestation of this relationship, CSOs have sometimes tried to buy coverage in the media through underhand payouts.

NGO officials present at the interaction meetings complained that the media was far more interested in covering political and business stories than issues that directly affect people. Media members, in turn, pointed out that most of the issues that interested NGOs were essentially driven by donor interest and therefore did not necessarily serve the interests of people.

One important factor contributing to the media's lack of interest in NGO issues is the tendency of news media outlets to focus on negative developments. NGOs have made major contributions over the years to the improvement of Bangladeshi society and highlighting some of their successes in a systematic way does no one any harm but rather, in the long run, contributes toward strengthening society at large.

WHY THE RELATIONSHIP IS IMPORTANT GOING FORWARD

Given the current constraints of the Bangladeshi media and the fast-paced nature of media work in general, media workers often struggle to dedicate enough time to research. This is where an active partnership with CSOs can make vital contributions. Instead of reaching out to the media for press coverage after the successful completion of a project or a phase of a project, NGOs can actually co-opt the media into projects from an early stage so that journalists can regularly generate stories from different angles to raise awareness about the issue and can impact the populace and decision-makers. This will eventually lead to what is known as a social audit — a series of systematic steps that help in keeping public offices and officials accountable. CSOs can play the role of systematically gathering evidence, while the media can take that evidence to the wider audience and influence and shape public opinion. An example of this in practice around the world is the use of RTIs, where CSOs regularly issue RTI requests on government offices and the media uses the information collected to inform the public on the state of various citizen's services.

CSOs can essentially shoulder a large burden of the systematic research that is required to make an objective and compelling news story or a series of stories, given the constraints of the media. A partnership between the media and CSOs will eventually lead to better-researched and better-investigated stories. CSOs can provide institutional support to the media in providing evidence and data. In the long run, this will help the Bangladeshi media transition into data-driven journalism, a trend that now encapsulates the globe, but is barely practiced in the country. The CSOs can become an authentic source for data-driven journalism.

> A partnership between the media and CSOs will eventually lead to better-researched and better-investigated stories. CSOs can provide institutional support to the media in providing evidence and data. In the long run, this will help the Bangladeshi media transition into data-driven journalism, a trend that now encapsulates the globe, but is barely practiced in the country. The CSOs can become the data bank for data-driven journalism.

On the flipside, journalists can also contribute to setting the agenda for CSOs. There are already a number of examples of investigations done by journalists — some of them later published in book form — making their way into project proposals of NGOs and CSOs. Powerful news stories have also played an important role in inspiring Public Interest Litigations, especially in the last two decades in Bangladesh, some of which have induced landmark rulings that have changed the face of Bangladeshi society.

A lot of good work done by CSOs is often lost in the cacophony of political news and propaganda and many projects never fulfill their potential because it has failed to reach the right ears. This is where collaboration with the media is vital. Journalists are often better able to package and disseminate the findings of NGOs and to reach bigger audiences. However, it is not just an issue of packaging but also of impact. A Transparency International study, involving businessmen from 30 countries, found that investigative journalism was by far the most effective way to combat corruption, corporate due diligence, national anti-bribery laws and international treaties.

The collaboration is also important from the point of view that often CSOs, the media and the relevant government agency, such as law enforcement, end up investigating the same issue thrice. Given that the purpose of both the media and CSOs is

to ensure accountability, there is certainly room to avoid repetitive investigation. In fact, one can argue that the media is better equipped to carry out investigations and many CSOs around the world have come to accept this and often hire professional journalists to carry out special investigations and sometimes have trained journalists in their full-time staff.

In fact, in this day and age of citizen journalism where private citizens more often lead in breaking news stories, the line between journalism and activism is blurring. More and more people writing or speaking in the media have moved away from the tenets of objective journalism, and are far keener to express their direct opinions and take up positions on issues. Investigative stories are no longer limited to creating impact but are also expected to bring about necessary changes in systems, government and society. This is where the partnership becomes vital. International examples of successful partnerships include the Panama Paper leaks where the media around the world systematically produced stories to bring to account important public figures in their own countries and CSOs used these stories to lobby for policy changes.

One particular area where such a partnership is very important in Bangladesh is the Chittagong Hill tracts. For decades now, the rights of the minorities living there have been systematically violated, but given the politically volatile situation in the region, both reporting and activism for rights have been very limited. Individual media and CSOs have worked on their own to defend and protect the rights of minorities with very limited impact. A common platform and united front in this area could go miles in improving the socio-political situation in those areas.

A common platform between media and CSOs will not just help produce investigative stories, but sometimes joint editorials and joint statements taking up united positions can have a strong impact in bringing about change. CSOs can help train the media on certain issues or even create press toolkits on issues for their better understanding. In Bangladesh at present, many of the organizational bodies representing the media or CSOs have become dysfunctional or have been divided along party lines. Some see a deliberate intent from powerful quarters in making this happen.

Clearly Defined Roles

There is no doubt that this sort of cooperation raises big issues — ethical issues, security issues, a clash of interests and so on. However, cooperation can take place by ensuring mutual freedom and the maintenance of each party's independence, structured and flexible cooperation (not coordination per se), and trust.

The media and CSOs should cooperate on the basis of clear evidence and data, with an understanding that each party has a different job to do. Cooperation should be limited and each organization will have its own staff, legal support and objectives and have clear protocols about sharing information.

If there is a joint commitment to independence, truth and transparency with each other and with audiences/constituencies about conflicts, as well as how successes are achieved, such projects will lead to greater impact. While such collaboration may not be entirely new — it certainly needs to be more systematic.

If journalists and activists and campaigners are going to work together, then some basic ground rules need to be established. Evidence should be fundamental for advocates and activists, as well as for journalists, if the starting point is a commitment to uncover and disseminate the truth.

Cooperation should be transparent between journalists and civil society, and the nature and extent of that cooperation, as well as how the work is funded, should also be made clear to audiences and other constituencies.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

The participants had very open and lively discussions during the meetings. Media representatives pointed to their limitations, challenges and made recommendations, while the CSOs gave their perspective. The findings of the Media-CSO interaction meetings have been segregated in this report in three parts: i) Opportunities ii) Challenges and iii) Recommendations.

OPPORTUNITIES

1. People's trust in media:
In the discussion the participants expressed the view that people still had trust in the media and rely on mainstream media to verify information collected from elsewhere.

2. Some owners still understand the value of free media:
There are still some media owners in Bangladesh who patronize good journalism and work for the betterment of the media while others appear to view the media outlet as a vehicle to project influence.

3. Freedom in doing journalism in the Chittagong Hill Tracts:
After the CHT accord, journalists from the hill tracts have more space to practice journalism, which was once impossible due to the political rift between the ethnic minorities and Bangalees.

4. A good number of in-depth/investigative stories being published:
The participants felt many good and in-depth investigative reports that help in securing people's interest by drawing the attention of the authorities are still being published.

5. Development as a result of media-CSOs joint intervention:
There are many good examples of collaboration between the media and the CSOs. The participants from Rajshahi said the relations between media and CSOs in Rajshahi were very good and they cooperated with each other when necessary.

6. Good relations between citizen and media:
The relationship between the media and mass people is healthy. When ordinary people want coverage for something or to draw attention to a problem, journalists usually extend their helping hand.

7. Wage board for journalists formulated by the government:
The wage board set by the government protects the interests of people working in the media.

8. Freedom to write:

Some participants felt there was still some freedom to write in the media. Although pressure is being exerted by many actors, there isn't any blanket restriction on people's freedom of speech.

9. Media's role in ensuring justice in society:

The media is still playing an important role in promoting justice in society through its stories and its role as a watchdog.

10. Media-friendly CSO:

There are many media-friendly civil society organizations who want to help the media and there is scope to work together.

11. Honest journalists:

There are many good journalists in media who do not compromise their integrity despite many challenges, pressure, threats and financial hardship.

CHALLENGES

For media

1. Marginalized mainstream media:

Mainstream media has been marginalized as corporate and political interests have taken control of media houses to serve their own purpose.

2. Division among journalists:

Journalists are divided into many groups. As a result, other actors are benefitting and are able to put pressure on journalists.

3. Safety and security concern:

Safety and security is a persistent concern for journalists, especially for those who work on the ground and cover sensitive beats such as crime.

4. Pressure from state and non-state actors:

There is pressure on journalists from state and non-state actors, political and corporate entities. Journalists, especially those working at the grassroots, are more vulnerable.

5. Unskilled journalists:

The opportunity for training and education is limited and often the best minds do not enter the profession for the risks involved—physical and financial.

6. Poor revenue and lack of investment:

Media owners are unwilling to make long-term investments that develop the institutional character of media houses, as they only seek to use the media to serve their political and corporate interests.

7. Lack of integrity among journalists:

Many journalists compromise on ethics, exercise self-censorship or sometimes take bribes or other benefits from influential groups in return for keeping silent on corruption or misconduct.

8. Limited press freedom:

There are numerous restraints on the media in Bangladesh. This is a result of pressure from the state, influential groups and business interests.

9. Lack of support for journalists from other actors:

When a journalist faces problems, hardly any state or non-state actor comes forward to help him or her.

10. Lack of implementation of the wage board:

Only very few media houses pay their journalists following the wage board pay structure. The government does not monitor the execution of the pay structure.

11. No legal support from government and non-state actors:

When a journalist faces legal hurdles, the government and non-state actors hardly ever come forward to support him or her.

12. Local correspondents in a state of deprivation:

Journalists working at the district level barely get paid, lack logistical support and face greater safety and security issues than journalists based in the capital."

13. Proliferation of media:

There are hundreds of daily newspapers, online portals, weeklies, bi-weeklies, and community radio stations in Bangladesh. This has become a threat to the quality of journalism.

14. Fake news:

Fake news has become a major concern. Because of the expansion of internet user base, people can easily access the web and circulate fake news. Some do this for commercial reasons while others are motivated by sinister political reasons. Such propaganda has caused many incidents of violence and communal attacks, including the ones at Nasirnagar and Rangpur.

15. Lack of gender balance:

Women rarely hold any managerial positions in the newsroom. In most cases, they prefer desk jobs or becoming a news presenter. This is a result of the absence of a conducive environment for women to work in.

16. More pressure on female journalists:

Women face more pressure and sometimes threats while trying to pursue journalism. They also have to fight social barriers in taking up journalism as a profession, since the society frowns upon women working in the public sphere.

17. Unwillingness of journalists to take risks:

Journalists now-a-days appear reluctant to take up challenges, and handle pressure and threats.

18. Scopes of investigative journalism has narrowed:

The scope of investigative journalism in the country has narrowed due to resources constraints, unwillingness and external pressure."

19. Multiple edition of newspapers:

As major media houses publish multiple editions of the daily newspaper, many important news on local issues are left out of the national edition. As a result, many important local issues do not reach the national policymaking levels.

20. Short deadlines for investigative reports:

Journalists, especially those working at the district and upazila levels, are hardly given time to produce in-depth investigative reports by their news managers.

21. No training for journalists:

There are no training facilities for journalists working in most of the media houses of the country. Journalists working at the national level sometimes have scope to develop their capacity but journalists working at the district and upazila level are mostly ignored.

22. Media owner's profit motive:

Media owners are more interested in making money than producing news that serves people's interest. As a result, the management often skimp on human resource, pay poor salary to journalists and compromise on news for advertisers."

23. Media as a vessel for advertisements:

The media has become a platform to promote political and corporate interests. As a result, full page advertisement on the first page and half page ads on the back page are more common than in-depth/investigative reports that serve people's interest.

24. No content diversity:

The media is more focused on political news, in covering daily events and in carrying advertisements, instead of expanding into stories that serve public interest or those that represent a cross-section of society.

25. The tendency of media houses to avoid conflict:

Media houses often compromise with news content to avoid conflict even when journalists are willing to cover the report in the media.

For CSOs

1. Limitation in playing a role in significant issues:

CSOs can hardly play a role in significant issues of national interest because of institutional constraints.

2. Donor dependence:

CSOs are donor dependent; that is why in most cases they serve the donor's objective.

3. Project-oriented:

As a result of being project-oriented, CSO/NGOs can hardly play a role beyond their project objectives.

4. Pressure from influential political and state actors:

There is pressure from different actors in society on CSO/NGOs. In fear of their own safety and security, they often cannot take a stand for press freedom.

Common Challenges

1. Gap between media and CSO:

There are gaps between media and CSO in terms of cooperation.

2. Media's lack of understanding of CSO's role in development of society:

The media lacks an understanding on what role CSO/NGOs play in development of society.

3. Lack of understanding about areas where the media and CSO can work together:

Both the media and CSO/NGOs lack a common understanding on how they can work together for the development of society.

RECOMMENDATIONS

In the discussion the participants suggested recommendations that could help establish a strong and independent media and a coalition of media and CSOs. This will contribute to social development and benefit the people in the end. The recommendations have been segregated in terms of the specific roles to be carried out by different segments of stakeholders.

For Media

- People's concerns should find a greater voice in the media.
- Strategies such as publishing common editorials, on an important issue, can be adopted.
- Grassroots voices should be represented in the media.
- There should be more interaction between the media and people, so that people feel the media is representing their voices and thus they will cooperate with the media.
- Reflect readers' changing interests in news content.

For Both Media and CSO

- Conduct more research for objective and in-depth journalism.
- A platform should be developed to serve the common interests of the media and CSOs; and to face common challenges from their own positions.
- Media has to be pro-active in covering geographical issues and natural disasters in collaboration with CSOs.
- The negative attitude of CSOs towards the media should change.
- More interaction among the Media, CSO and other professionals, to discuss the potential scope of working together, is necessary.
- There should be training facilities for journalists to develop their competence.
- Media organizations and CSOs can work together to build up the capacity of journalists.
- A forum involving media and CSOs can be formed to deal with the press freedom, journalist's safety and security, and other issues.

- The personal security of journalists should be taken into consideration. The media and CSOs can lobby with the government to ensure the safety of journalists after taking feedback and recommendations from media gatekeepers, individual journalists, union leaders and other stakeholders.

- Develop better understanding on how the media and CSO can work together and thus delineate their own respective roles.

- Introduce a media monitoring system to identify who is doing better. Organizations like Press Institute of Bangladesh and MRDI can help in this regard.

For Editors

- Set a minimum academic requirement to become a journalist, especially before issuing anyone a press identity card.

- Stakeholders should think about the consequences of corporate ownership of media to avoid biased, self-censoring journalism.

For Media Owners

- Ensure due financial benefits for journalists.

- The profit-making mindset of media owners and editors should change to ensure ethical journalism.

For Both Editors and Media Owners

- Legal assistance and job security of journalists have to be ensured.

- Grassroots journalists need more training.

- All journalists should be paid salaries under the government-approved wage board pay scale.

For Individual Journalists

- Prioritize journalism and never compromise on ethics, whatever adverse the situation is.

- Adopt a professional attitude towards work.

- While taking up journalism as a profession, think about ethical issues besides skill development.

For Journalist Associations

- Union members should have minimum educational qualification so they can lead the union properly.

- Journalists should put up a united front when faced with threats to press freedom.

- There should be a regulatory body at the national level to control the press clubs.

For Academics

- Include Media Studies as a bachelor course, with emphasis on the Bangladeshi context.
- Include lessons on Media Literacy in the syllabus both at secondary and higher secondary levels.
- Introduce separate majors for both Journalism and Mass Communication.

For Policymakers

- Freedom of speech as one's fundamental right should be ensured.
- Enact laws to control the growing number of newspapers, online and visual media.
- Guidelines for online and broadcast media should be introduced as soon as possible to make online publishers and television media accountable.
- Strengthen the press council and use the platform to ensure journalist's rights and benefits.
- Introduce a national guideline for journalists that includes qualification, benefits, safety and security.
- Monitor the process of TV channels, online portals and newspapers being registered in the country.
- Introduce a specific guideline for salary structure of journalists working for both national and local media.
- Ensure that there is not more than one press club in a district to avoid division among journalists.

For All

- All the organs of society should cooperate with the media to turn it into a representation of the collective voice of the people.

ANNEXURE

INTRODUCTION

The meeting at Khulna was held on 7 May 2018 at a local hotel. A total of 25 participants took part in the programme. Among the participants 8 were media owners and editors from Khulna division, 7 journalist union leaders and 10 from different NGOs and CSOs.

Monjurul Ahsan Bulbul, CEO, Ekushey Television and President of Bangladesh Federal Union of Journalists (BFUJ) presented the keynote while Syed Ishtiaque Reza, Editor-in Chief, GTV and sarabangla.net moderated the programme. The programme was also addressed by Hasibur Rahman, Executive Director, MRDI and Zain AL Mahmud, Country Director, Internews Network, Bangladesh.

THE KEYNOTE

In his keynote presentation Monjurul Ahsan Bulbul discussed the limitations and challenges being faced by the Bangladesh media. He also pointed out the pressure on media from various groups that resulted in the practice of self-censorship by the media houses. At the beginning of his presentation he brought out picture of international media how they are doing journalism in an advanced way. He also highlighted role of Civil Society Organizations that they can play to ensure press freedom and develop capacity of journalists. He covered some major issues like proposed Digital Security Act and its pros and cons; role of CSO in initiating Right to Information Act-2009; role played by CSO in amending the Digital Security Act before it was passed in parliament; role of different tiers including media owners, editors & journalists, government & policy makers and CSOs to establish press freedom; pressure from state actor to media, ownership pattern of media; skill and ethical values of journalists; financial and safety & security concern of journalists and legal pressure to media.

Discussions Beyond the Paper: Mr. Monjurul also discussed some challenges that Bangladesh media is facing. He also recommended some ways out to overcome the situation. These are given below:

CHALLENGES

i) Legal pressure: In Bangladesh there are many laws that ensure people's access to information and at the same time there are many hindrances too. For example, RTI act ensures people's access to information but at the same time it strictly prohibits to ask information from 8 state security and intelligence agencies that limits people's right of access to information. There are also some old laws which are yet to be reformed to pave the way for greater freedom. Another major concern is that the country has no law to regulate broadcasting media and online portal that resulted in mushroom growth of broadcasting and online media houses affecting the quality of journalism.

ii) Ownership of the media: This is another major concern as businessmen having strong political connections have taken a major portion of media ownership in Bangladesh.

iii) Threats: The state is not the only threat for media. Also political forces, non-state actor, religious groups, extremist and terrorist groups and division among journalists in line with politics are seen as threats to media.

iv) Technology: We lag behind in terms of using technology in day to day work in media. Still we depend on stereotype method to produce news contents which requires more man power and takes longer time than usual.

v) Psychological barriers: Journalists have developed a mindset that they cannot write against the government, political power, owners, and corporate groups. As a result practice of self-censorship is seen among journalists.

vi) Advertisement: There is pressure in advertisement from corporate groups when they publish news against their interest. Journalists seem compromising to avoid financial crisis and thus impose self-censorship in reporting.

vii) Low wages: It is a major concern for journalists. In Bangladesh, very few media houses pay journalist according to wage board pay structure. Low and irregular wage culture also increased the tendency of self-censorship.

Ways to overcome the challenges

- Bangladesh media can take lessons from other countries who are already facing such kind of challenges and overcome it.

- A national mass-media commission can be formed which will ensure protection of journalists from political, state and non-state actors' pressure.

- NGOs, CSOs can organize training on ethical journalism. They can also go for advocacy on press freedom and access to information.

- A coalition can be formed among CSOs and mass media which will work on the following issues:

  - Advocacy on press freedom and access to information.

  - Improve relation between the stakeholders

  - Plan activities and monitor implementation

  - Sustain the coalition

SUMMARY OF THE DISCUSSIONS

In the programme participating journalists, union leaders and CSO hi-ups took part in the discussions spontaneously. In their discussions, self-censorship journalism, press freedom and opportunities were raised and a number of recommendations were made. The excerpts:

Opportunities

- Citizen and media are intricately helping each other.
- Journalists are friends of people.
- The current scenario of media in Bangladesh is quite independent.
- There is approved wage board for journalists by the government
- Media-CSO coalition can broaden the avenue for journalists.

Challenges

- Mainstream media has been marginalized.
- Journalists are divided in groups by themselves that's why they cannot face pressure from both state and non-state actors.
- In fear of safety and security and political and government pressure, CSOs are not supporting media.
- Political pressure compels journalists to adopt self-censorship.
- Due to lack of skilled journalist, the political leader, businessman and corporate houses are grasping the ownership of media.
- As the media houses are not financially strong enough they have to compromise with news.
- The journalists are losing their integrity by making relations with political groups, businessman, corrupt people and terrorists.
- There is no environment to express one's opinion as freedom of speech is under pressure.
- The freedom of press is hindered due to corporate and political ownership of media, lack of skill among journalists, risks, threats and safety and security of journalists.
- When a journalist is in trouble, he/she hardly gets anyone beside him.
- There is an approved wage board for journalists by government but only a few media owners follow this law of the land.
- There is no freedom of speech in the country.
- When any journalist is attacked, there is no legal action taken by government or non-state actor.
- Journalists often failed to get assistance from any state actor or non-state actor and respective media houses while in danger, as a result many of them are driven to self-censorship journalism.
- There is no monitoring of government on whether the journalists are paid under Government approved wage board structure.
- The local correspondents are deprived of all kinds of facilities and financial benefits despite their remarkable role in pursuing good journalism.

- Journalism has become a part of political supporting force.

- The media has become medium of self- exposure.

- Journalists are moving aside from their commitment towards profession.

- Partisan politics among journalists has become a concern pushing journalism towards wrong directions.

- The media becomes powerless because of corrupt attitude of journalists by themselves.

- The newly proposed Digital Security Act will cause pressure on media and people's freedom of expression if some clauses are not changed.

- Neutrality of journalists is often discussed but in reality the journalists have to support a party often.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- There should be a specific guideline for salary structure for journalists both working in national and local media.

- Journalists should not only have education but also have to ensure ethical values and fair thoughts.

- Journalists should have priority to their profession first. They should not compromise at any adverse situation.

- A platform should be developed between media and CSOs which will assist the victims who are humiliated/ harassed/ attacked while supporting freedom of expression.

- Media studies should be included in secondary level curriculum to ensure national developments through journalism.

- The editor should recheck candidate's quality before issuance of press card.

- There should be training facilities for journalists to develop their competence.

- The local journalists need more training.

- Financial solvency of media is very important.

- Guidelines for online, broadcasting media should be introduced as soon as possible to make the online and television media accountable.

- Personal security of journalists should be taken under consideration. The media and CSOs can push government to ensure safety of journalists after taking feedbacks and recommendations from media gatekeepers, individual journalists, union leaders and other stakeholders.

- Media organizations and CSOs can work together to build up capacity for journalists.

- Media and CSOs can work together to ensure safety and security of journalists.

- A forum between media and CSO can be developed which will work to deal with the press freedom, journalist's safety and security and other issues.

- For the sake of journalism, it is important to have people's cooperation to journalists.

- If everyone practices ethics in his/her respective position then the media will be strengthened.

- To ensure press freedom there is no other alternative to have unity among journalists.

- The media have to work together with civil society to establish independent media in Bangladesh.

- More interactions are needed between media and CSO.

- There should be a coalition between media and CSOs which will focus to ensure the interests of both. Initially we can start from local level and later we push the issues at national level.

- Journalists should achieve freedom by themselves.

- The journalist union members should have minimum educational qualification so that they can lead the union in a right way.

- Emphasis should be given on participatory journalism.

- Media and CSOs should be united to combat government pressure on media.

- Press friendly law is needed.

- Negative attitude of CSOs towards media should be changed.

OPEN DISCUSSIONS (INDIVIDUAL)

Shamima Sultana Shilu
Executive Director, Manob Sheba O Samajik Unnayan Songstha (MASAS), Khulna

- Self-censorship in journalism is increasing day by day in the country.
- We want to know news behind the news through media.
- If there is no freedom how people's right will be ensured.
- Bangladesh is a People's Republic. How the government can allow people's interest hampered by pressurizing media to disclose the truth.
- There should be a specific guideline for salary structure for journalists both working in national and local media.

Manirul Huda
Editor -in-Chief, Dainik Jonmovumi, Khulna

- Journalists are divided in groups by themselves that's why they cannot face pressure from both state and non-state actors.
- Many Journalists resort to yellow journalism and often they serve purpose of political/corporate groups.
- Journalists should not only have education but also have to ensure ethical values and neutrality.
- Journalists should have priority to their profession first. They should not compromise at any adverse situation.

Swapan Kumar Guha
Executive Director, Rupantor

- Those who are practicing journalism should have minimum ethical knowledge about journalism.
- The editor should recheck candidate's quality before issuance of press card.
- The local journalists need more training.
- Media literacy should be included in secondary level curriculum to ensure national developments.

Fizer Choudhury

Assistant News Editor, Dainik Mathabhanga, Chuadanga

- Political pressure compels journalists to adopt self-censorship journalism.
- Journalists are divided in groups. If they remain strict in their position the state and non-state actors cannot create problems.

Mostafa Nuruzzaman

Chief Executive, Sushilon, Khulna

- Citizen and media are intricately helping each other.
- Financial solvency of media is very important.
- Quality of journalist is a major concern for us.

Dr. Hosna Ara

Chairman, Mass Communication and Journalism Discipline, Khulna University, Khulna

- Journalists are friends of people.
- The current scenario of media in Bangladesh is quite independent.
- There should be a definite guideline for media including print, online, television.
- There should be training facilities for journalists to develop their competence.
- There should be a satisfactory salary structure for journalists working in both national and local level.
- Personal security of journalists should be taken under consideration. The media and CSOs can push government to ensure safety of journalists after taking feedbacks and recommendations from media gatekeepers, individual journalists, union leaders and CSOs.

Ekram-Ud-Daullah

Editor, Daily Kollyan, Jashore

- Due to lack of skilled journalist, the political leaders, businessmen and corporate houses are grabbing the ownership of media.
- Media organizations and CSOs can help journalists by providing training.
- Media and CSOs can work together to ensure safety and security of journalists.

Mobinul Islam Mobin

Editor, GramerKagoj, Jashore

- For the sake of journalism, it is important to have people's cooperation to journalists.
- The freedom of press is hindered due to corporate and political ownership of media, lack of skill among journalists, risks, threats and safety and security of journalists.
- When a journalist is in mishap hardly he finds anybody to stand beside him.
- As the media houses are not financially strong enough they have to compromise with news.
- The journalists are losing their integrity by making intimate relations with political groups, businessman, corrupt people and terrorists.
- A forum of media and CSOs can be formed which will work to deal with the press freedom, journalists' safety and security and other issues.

Gouranga Nandy
Bureau Chief, Kaler Kontho, Khulna

- There is no freedom of speech in the country.
- If any journalist falls in danger, hardly any help from government is provided.
- When any journalist is attacked, there is no legal action taken by government.
- A journalist hardly gets assistance while he/she is in danger that results in the practice of self-censorship.
- There is an approved wage board for journalists by government but hardly any media owner follows it.
- There is no monitoring of government on whether the journalists are paid under wage board structure.
- Those who run media have capacity to afford the expenses and pay good salary to journalists; but why it is not done is a big question.
- If everyone practices ethics in his/her respective position then the media will be strengthened.

Ahmed Ali khan
Executive Editor, The Daily Purbanchal, Khulna

- To ensure press freedom there is no other alternative to have unity among journalists.
- The media have to work together with civil society to establish independent media in Bangladesh.

Sheikh Salim
General Secretary, Press Club, Jhenaidah

- The local correspondents are deprived of all kinds of facilities and financial benefits despite their remarkable role in journalism.
- The government approved wage board, but hardly the media houses follow the salary structure for the local correspondents according to the Wage Board policy.

Rafiqul Islam Khokan
Executive Director, Rupantor, Khulna

- If the mass media is not free, the civil society cannot be safe.
- Mainstream media has been marginalized
- There should be a coalition between media and CSOs which will focus to ensure the interests of both. Initially we can start from local level and later we push the issues at national level.

ATM Zakir Hossain
Executive Director, Jagroto Jubo Songstha, Khulna

- Chain of problems needs more attention and accordingly we have to find out solution.
- Media -CSOs friendship is important; but how to establish it is the question.

S M Tauhidur Rahman
General Secretary, Press club, Jashore

- Journalism has become a part of political supporting force.
- The media has become medium of self- exposure.
- Journalists are moving aside from their commitment towards profession.
- Journalists have to achieve freedom by themselves.
- Politics among journalists has become a concern which is leading journalism towards a wrong direction.
- The media is powerless now because of corrupt attitude of journalists.
- The journalist's union member should have minimum educational qualification so that they can lead the union in a right way.

Mohon Kumar Mondal

Executive Director, Leaders, Satkhira

- The proposed Digital Security Act will cause pressure on media and people's freedom of expression will also be under pressure.
- A platform should be developed between media and CSOs which will assist the victim who are humiliated/ harassed/ attacked because freedom of expression.

Mallick Sudhangshu

General Secretary, Press Club, Khulna

- There should be a bridge between media and CSOs.
- Neutrality of journalists is often discussed but in reality, the journalists themselves are far away from this.
- If one takes the vow to work for people, the bridge between the society and media will be developed.

Md. Abdul Bari

General Secretary, Press Club, Satkhira

- Out of fear of safety and security and political and government pressure, Civil Society Organistaions are not supporting media.

Md. Shameem Ahmed Khan

General Secretary, Press Club, Magura

- To make coalition between media and CSOs there should be a structured platform.
- Guidelines for online, broadcasting media should be introduced as soon as possible to make the online and television media accountable.

Advocate Md. Alamgir Siddique

President, Press Club, Narail

- Journalism should be patronized to ensure quality of media.
- Payment and salary issues for journalists need to be addressed.

A S M Monzurul Hasan

Executive Director, Badhon Manob Unnayan Songhtha, Bagerhat

- Political pressure and self-censorship journalism are major two barriers for media.
- Emphasis should be given on participatory journalism.
- Media and CSOs should be united to combat government pressure on media.

Faruq Ahmed

President, Press Club, Khulna

- The quality of journalism is falling due to lack of ethical practice.
- Media-CSOs coalition can bring new dimension in journalism.
- More interactions are needed between media and CSO
- There should be capacity building programme for journalists especially for local media.
- Press friendly law is needed.
- Negative attitude of CSOs towards media should be changed.

INTRODUCTION

The Chattogram meeting was held on 8 July 2018 at a local hotel. A total of 21 participants took part in the programme. Participants included 11 editors, media owners and journalist leaders from Chattogram division and 10 from different NGOs and CSOs.

Monjurul Ahsan Bulbul, CEO, Ekushey Television and President of Bangladesh Federal Union of Journalists (BFUJ) presented the keynote while Syed Ishtiaque Reza, Editor-in Chief, GTV and sarabangla.net moderated the programme. The programme was also addressed by Hasibur Rahman, Executive Director, MRDI.

THE KEYNOTE

In his keynote presentation Monjurul Ahsan Bulbul, CEO, Ekushey Television and President of Bangladesh Federal Union of Journalists (BFUJ)discussed the limitations and challenges being faced by the Bangladesh media. He also pointed out the pressure on media from various groups that resulted in the practice of self-censorship by the media houses. At the beginning of his presentation he brought out picture of international media how they are doing journalism in an advanced way. He also highlighted role of Civil Society Organizations in promoting press freedom and develop capacity of journalists.

He covered some major issues like proposed Digital Security Act and its pros and cons; role of CSO in initiating Right to Information Act-2009; role played by CSO in amending the Digital Security Act before it is passed in the parliament; role of different tiers including media owners, editors & journalists, government & policy makers and CSO organizations to establish press freedom; pressure from state actor to media, ownership pattern of media; skill and ethical values of journalists; financial and safety & security concern of journalists and legal pressure on media.

Discussion Beyond the Paper: Mr. Monjurul also discussed some challenges that Bangladesh media is facing. He also recommended some ways out to overcome the situation. These are given below.

i) Legal pressure: Many of the Bangladeshi laws ensure people's access to information and there are some hindrances too. For example, RTI Act which ensures people's access to information also strictly prohibits to ask information from 8 state security and intelligence agencies that limits people's right of access to information. There are also some old laws which are yet to be reformed to pave the way for greater freedom. Another major concern is that the country has no law to regulate broadcasting media and online portal that resulted in mushroom growth of broadcasting and online media houses affecting the quality of journalism.

ii) Ownership of the media: This is another major concern as businessmen having strong political connections have established large scale ownership of media in Bangladesh.

iii) Threats: The state is not the only threat for media. There are also political power, non-state actor, religious groups, extremist and terrorist groups and division among **journalists in line with politics are seen as threats to media.**

iv) Technology: We lag behind in using technology in day to day work in media. Still we depend on stereotyped method to produce news contents which requires more man power and takes longer time than usual.

v) Psychological barriers: Journalists have a common mindset that they cannot write against the government, political power, owners, and corporate groups. As a result practice of self-censorship journalism is seen among journalists.

vi) Advertisement: There is pressure in advertisement from corporate groups when they publish news against their interest. Journalists seem compromising to avoid financial crisis and thus impose self-censorship.

vii) Low wages: It is a major concern for journalists. Very few media houses pay journalist according to wage board pay structure. Low and irregular wage culture also increases the tendency of self-censorship.

viii) Content Diversity: Content diversity has become a major problem for Bangladeshi Media. The media which vows to reflect different interests and values in society and provide access to the widest possible range of voices has narrowed down its focus. The media has now more focus on content related to political and corporate interest than content related to public interest. The reflection of powerful voices instead of the mass voice results in people's losing of trust in media.

ix) Threat to women Journalists: Women journalists are facing more threat than the men who work in media. Often they become victims of circumstances while engaged in any risky assignment. Women show less interest to take journalism as profession due to lack of security.

Ways to overcome the challenges

- Bangladesh media can take lessons from other countries who are facing similar challenges.
- Trust in media to be uphold through establishing neutrality in journalism, ensuring quality of the content and its diversity and also as a medium of mass voice.
- A national mass-media commission can be established to ensure protection of journalists from political, state and non-state actors' pressure.
- NGOs, CSOs can organize training on ethical journalism. They can also go for advocacy on press freedom and access to information.
- A coalition of CSOs and mass media can be formed to ensure following issues:
  - Advocacy on press freedom and access to information.
  - Improve relation between the stakeholders
  - Plan activities and monitor implementation
  - Sustain the CSO media coalition

SUMMARY OF THE DISCUSSIONS

Participating journalists, union leaders and CSO hi-ups took part in the discussions spontaneously. Self-censorship journalism, press freedom and opportunities were discussed and a number of recommendations were made. The excerpts:

Opportunities

- Still people have trust in media.
- Still many good reports are being published.
- Some media owners are media friendly and do their best to patronize journalism.
- There are examples of development due to Media-CSOs joint intervention. Such efforts can continue.
- After CHT accord, journalists can work independently in hill tracts area what they could not once.
- We have many potentials along with problems.
- The potential sides have to be explored.
- Due to globalization, mass people have enriched their knowledge, ethics and morality.

Challenges

- Defining media has become challenge amid thousands of licensed and unlicensed media.
- There is a gap between Media and CSO.
- The journalists often get involved in extortion and other unethical activities which questions ethical value of journalism.
- The internal conflict among journalists is dividing themselves.
- There is no freedom of press in the country.
- Journalists are facing hard reality due to their job.
- Journalists hardly get any support from state and non-state actors while they are in danger.
- There are huge political pressures at the local level as the area is small and people are known each other.
- Any report on corruption may go against interest of some powerful people. So the journalist has to compromise or pay off for this.
- The current media have to follow pro-government strategy in their news.
- Often the role of Non-State actor is narrowed down.
- Hardly CSO can play significant role in any serious issue due to their limitations and pressure.
- Currently, not only press freedom but also all democratic rights are at stake.
- Media is facing crisis in terms of trust.
- Fake news propaganda has become serious; sometimes it leads to communal attack.
- Internal threat, rift between media houses and media's outlook toward presenting a content whether its pro-government or anti-government are demeaning the position and acceptance of media in the society.
- Salary and benefits of a journalist are always a concern as no rule is followed here regarding this.
- Capacity of a woman journalists is a concern along with their safety.
- Fake news propaganda creates pressure among journalists at local level.
- Woman journalists are facing more problems due to social restrictions.

- Local journalists have to often face court hassle for fake cases filed by influential/ political/ corporate groups when any news published against their interest.

- There are pressures on media from different tiers which leads journalist to self-censorship journalism.

- Media houses are compromising their ethical standard for the sake of advertisement.

- News content is decided by the government now.

- There is no safety of journalists if they fall in any danger.

- Journalists do not want to take risk and adopt self-censorship to avoid hassle or also to be benefited.

- Journalists are sold out.

- Scope of producing investigative journalism has narrowed down.

- Corporate ownership of media houses creates conflict of interest.

- Journalist are making syndicated news due to short deadline.

- Media is serving other's interest.

- Journalists have lost their own mission what they could do in the past.

- Media has become a product, lost the charm they once had.

- In such suffocating and controlled situation, CSO cannot stand beside media.

- How media can publish news if any information is not received from any organ of the society?

- Some editors stop publishing sensitive news due to their conflict of interests.

- Due to multiple edition of newspapers, many news cannot reach the policy level.

- Media is the reflection of owner's interest and s freedom of media and journalist is mostly decided by it.

- There are more pressures from influential groups than the government.

- Investigative reports with less resources is impossible.

- In many media houses there is no IJ team.

- Mass-media is now divided through many press clubs and unions.

- Media owner's money making attitude is destroying the media.

- There is no safety and security of journalists in terms of financial and physical matters.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Freedom of speech should be ensured as one's fundamental right.
- The role of media should be defined.
- The focus of media should be defined.
- The role of CSO should be identified in terms of Media and CSO relations for the betterment of the society.
- Still there are scopes of good work in media, for which we need positive attitude.
- Many strategies including common editorial on an alarming issue can be adopted.
- To strengthen independent media it is must to ensure strong democracy as a prerequisite.
- Mass voice should be relected in media.
- The journalist have to solve their own problems; only then they can think about press freedom and other issues.

- Need more research to ensure safety, security and ethical journalism.

- Journalists have to be united to face all the problems.

- A platform should be developed to talk about the common interest of Media and CSO; and to face upcoming crises from their own perspective.

- Media has to be pro-active to cover geographical and other alarming issues in cooperation with CSO.

- Content of investigative stories should be focus-oriented which will benefit mass people.

- Journalists have to write with courage.

- There should be a law to control the growing number of newspaper, online and visual media.

- There should be only one press club in a district to avoid grouping among journalists.

- Qualification of a journalist should be definite.

- Positive journalism will be appreciated instead of negative.

- All the organs of the society should cooperate media, to establish a strong media.

- The media owners have to ensure due financial benefits to journalists otherwise no change will happen.

- Representation of local voices in the media should be ensured to strengthen it as well as bringing change.

- More interactions are needed between Media, CSO and other professionals to discuss the potential scope of working together and thus take action.

OPEN DISCUSSIONS (INDIVIDUAL)

Saima Alam
Assistant Professor, Mass communication and Journalism Department, Chittagong University

- Defining media is now challenge amidst thousands of licensed and unlicensed media outlets.

- Citizen journalism is appreciated in the era of technology but how far our freedom of speech is ensured.

- Freedom of speech should be ensured as one's fundamental right.

Ripan Chakma
Executive Director, Trinomul Unnayan Shongstha

- There is a gap between Media and CSO.

- The role of media should be defined.

- The journalists often get involved in extortion and other unethical activities which puts media under question.

- The focus of media should be defined.

Sunil Kanti Dey
President, Rangamati Press Club and Hill Tracts correspondent, The Daily Sangbad

- The internal conflict among journalists is dividing themselves.

- There is no freedom of press in the country.

- Journalists are facing hard reality due to their job.

- Journalists hardly get any support from state and non-state actors while they are in danger.

Amirul Islam Harun
Editor, Daily Sochitro Noakhali

- There are huge political pressure in the local level as the area is small and people are known to each other.
- When journalist writes on corruption that goes against some power holder's interest. The journalist has to compromise or pay off for this.
- The current media have to follow pro-government strategy in their news.

Kanij Farhana
Project coordinator, BITA

- Often the non-state actor's role is narrowed down.
- There is a gap between Media and CSO.
- Hardly CSO can play significant role in any serious issue due to their limitations and pressure.
- In terms of Media and CSO relations for the betterment of the society, the role of CSO should be identified.

A K M Raisul Haq Bahar
Executive Secretary, Fulki

- Media is facing crisis in terms of trust.
- Fake news propaganda has become serious. Sometimes it leads to communal attack.
- Thinking about independent media is impossible in a country like Bangladesh, which has no opposition voice even.
- Internal threat, rift between media houses and media's outlook toward presenting a content whether it is pro-government or anti-government are demeaning the position and acceptance of media in the society.
- Salary and benefits of a journalist is always a concern as no rules are followed here regarding this.
- In the era of online media, a means of instant news, print media is losing its charm. For this, print media can adopt new strategy.
- Capacity of a woman journalist is a concern along with their safety.
- Still there are scope of good work in media, for which we need positive attitude. Many strategies including common editorial on a blazing issue can be adopted.
- To strengthen independent media it is must to ensure strengthen democracy as its prerequisite.

Yasmin Reema
Cumilla Correspondent, New Age

- Fake news propaganda creates pressure among journalists at local level.
- Woman journalists are facing more problems due to social restrictions.

Mohammad Farhad Iqbal
Editor, Daily Shokaler Cox's Bazar

- Still people have trust in media.
- There are pressure on media not only from political groups or corporate but also from influential figure in the society.
- Local journalists have to often face court hassle for fake cases filed by influential/ political/ corporate groups when any report is published against their interest.

Rusho Mahmud
Editor, Daily Suprovat Bangladesh

- There is no environment of expressing different opinion.
- Freedom of speech is under pressure.
- There are pressures on media from different tiers which leads journalist to self-censorship.

Kh. Ali Ar Raji
Associate professor, Mass communication and Journalism, Chittagong University

- Media houses are compromising their ethical standard for the sake of advertisement.
- News content is decided by the government now.
- There is no safety of journalists if they fall in any danger.
- There is no financial security for journalists if they lose their job; even they are not well-paid or paid regularly.
- There is no power of media.
- The media now hardly represents mass voices.
- Journalists do not want to take risk and adopt self-censorship to avoid hassle and also to be benefited.
- Journalists are sold out.

Md. Abul Kalam Azad
Chairman, Mass Communication and Journalism, Chittagong University

- Mass voice should be represented in media.
- Scope of producing investigative journalism has narrowed down.
- Corporate ownership of media houses creates conflict of interest.
- Journalists are making syndicated news due to short deadline.
- Fake news becomes a concern for all.
- Integrity of journalists has been sold out.
- The journalists have to solve their own problem, and only then they can think about press freedom and other issues.
- Need more research to ensure safety, security and ethical journalism.
- Still many good reports are being published.
- Journalists have to be united to face all the problems.

Moung Thowai Ching
Executive Director, Green Hill

- A platform should be developed to talk about the common interest of Media and CSO; and to face upcoming crises from their own perspective.
- Media has to be pro-active to cover geographical and other alarming issues.
- Content of investigative stories should focus- oriented which will benefit mass.

Ayasur Rahman
Executive member, BFUJ, and Cox's Bazar press club

- Media is still confined at the dark age.
- Corporate houses grasp the media by their power.

Omar Kaiser
Deputy News Editor, Prothom Alo

- Media is serving other's interest.
- Journalists have lost their own mission what they could do in the past.
- Media has become a product, lost the charm they had in the past.

Dr. M Ramizuddin Chowdhury
Editor, Daily Purbokoun

- Some media owners are media friendly and do their best to patronize journalism.
- Currently, not only press freedom but also all democratic rights are at stake.
- Journalists have to write with courage.

Rokeya Begum Shafali
Executive Director, Aid Khulna

- There is no press freedom in the country. You cannot utter a single word against government.
- In such suffocating and controlled situation, CSO cannot stand beside media.
- There should be a law to control the growing number of newspaper, online and visual media.
- There should be only one press club in a district to avoid grouping among journalists.
- Positive journalism will be appreciated instead of negative.
- Some visible developments have taken place in the country due to Media-CSOs joint intervention.
- Qualification of a journalist should be defined.

Monirul Islam Monu
Staff Reporter, Kaler Kontho

- All the organs of the society have to cooperate media, to establish a strong media.
- How media can publish news if any information is not received from any organ of the society?
- Journalism has become a commodity now.
- Some editors stop publishing sensitive news due to their conflict of interests.
- Due to multiple edition of newspapers, many news cannot reach the policy level.

Enamul Haque Quashemi
Bandarban Correspondent, BSS, Daily Azadi

- After CHT accord, journalists can work independently in hill tracts area what they could not do before.
- Journalism is more challenging for district correspondents.
- Cooperation needed from all level of the society to ensure journalism for betterment.

Kalim Sarwar
President, Chattogram Press Club

- Freedom of media and freedom of journalist are two different things.
- Media is the reflection of owner's interest and perception.
- There are more pressure from influential groups than the government.
- Still people have trust in media.

- The media owners have to ensure due financial benefits to journalists otherwise no change will happen.

- In many newspapers, journalists are not paid salary or if paid it is very poor in amount.

- Investigative reports with less resources is impossible.

- In many media houses there is no IJ team. Even if they have, they are not fully paid.

Arifur Rahman
Chief Executive, YPSA

- We have many potentials along with problems.

- The potential sides have to be explored.

- Mass media is now divided through many press clubs and unions.

- Representation of local voices in the media will strengthen it as well as bring change.

- More interaction needed between Media, CSO and other professionals to discuss the potential scope of work together and thus take action.

Aftabur Rahman Jafri
Chief Executive Director, Ghasful

- Due to globalization, mass people have enriched their knowledge, ethics and morality.

- Government is controlling things.

- Media owner's money making attitude is destroying the media.

- There is no safety and security of journalists in terms of financial and physical matters.

Media-CSO interaction Meeting at Rajshahi

19 July2018

INTRODUCTION

The meeting at Rajshahi was held on 19 July 2018. A total of 26 participants took part in the programme. Among the participants13 were editors, media owners and journalist leaders from Rajshahi division and 13 were from different NGOs and CSOs. Among them 2 were females.

Monjurul Ahsan Bulbul, CEO, Ekushey Television and President of Bangladesh Federal Union of Journalists (BFUJ) presented the keynote while Syed Ishtiaque Reza, Editor-in Chief, GTV and sarabangla.net moderated the programme. The programme was also addressed by Hasibur Rahman, Executive Director, MRDI.

THE KEYNOTE

In the keynote presentation Monjurul Ahsan Bulbul, CEO, Ekushey Television and President of Bangladesh Federal Union of Journalists (BFUJ) discussed the limitations and challenges being faced by the Bangladesh media. He also pointed out the pressure on media from various corners resulting the practice of self-censorship by the media houses. At the beginning of his presentation he brought out picture of international media who are doing journalism in an advanced way. He also highlighted role of Civil Society Organizations to ensure press freedom and develop capacity of journalists. He covered some major issues like proposed Digital Security Act and its pros and cons; role of CSO in initiating Right to Information Act-2009; role played by CSO in amending the Digital Security Act before it is passed in parliament; role of different tiers including media owners, editors & journalists, government & policy makers and CSOs to establish press freedom; pressure from state actor on media, ownership pattern of media; skill and ethical values of journalists; financial and safety & security concern of journalists and legal pressure on media.

Discussion Beyond the Paper: Mr. Monjurul also discussed some challenges that Bangladesh media is facing. He also recommended some ways out to overcome the situation. These are given below.

CHALLENGES

i) Legal pressure: There are many laws in Bangladesh that ensure people's access to information and at the same time there are many hindrances too. For example, RTI act ensures people's access to information but at the same time it strictly prohibits to ask information from 8 state security and intelligence agencies that limits people's right of access to information. There are also some old laws which are yet to be reformed to pave the way for greater freedom. Another major concern is that the country has no law to regulate broadcasting media and online portal that resulted i mushroom growth of broadcasting and online media houses affecting the quality of journalism.

ii) Ownership of the media: Another major concern is that the businessmen with strong political connections have taken a major portion of media ownership in Bangladesh.

iii) Threats: The state is not the only threat for media. Political power, non-state actor, religious groups, extremist and terrorist groups and division among journalists in line with politics are also seen as threats to media.

iv) Technology: We lag behind in terms of using technology in day to day work in media. Still we depend on stereotype method to produce news contents which requires more man power and takes longer time than usual.

v) Psychological barriers: Journalists have developed a mindset that they cannot write against the government, political power, owners, and corporate groups. As a result practice of self-censorship is seen among journalists.

vi) Advertisement: There is pressure in advertisement from business groups when media publishes news against their interest. Journalists seem compromising to avoid financial crisis and thus impose self-censorship journalism.

vii) Low wages: It is a major concern for journalists. In Bangladesh, only very few media houses pay journalist according to wage board pay structure. Low and irregular wage culture also increase the tendency of self-censorship.

viii) Content Diversity: Content diversity has become a major problem for Bangladeshi Media. The media which vows to reflect different interests and values in society and provide access to the widest possible range of voices has narrowed down its focus. The media has now more focus on content related to political and corporate interest than content related to public interest. The reflection of powerful voices instead of the mass voice results in people's loosing of trust in media.

ix) Threat to women Journalists: Women journalists are facing more threat than the men who work in media. Often they become victims of circumstances while in any risky assignments. Women show less interest to take journalism as profession due to lack of security.

Way to Overcome the Challenges

- Bangladesh media can take lessons from other countries who are facing similar challenges.

- Trust in media to be uphold through establishing neutrality in journalism, ensuring quality of the content and its diversity and also as a medium of mass voice.

- A national mass-media commission can be established to ensure protection of journalists from political, state and non-state actors' pressure.

- NGOs, CSOs can organize training on ethical journalism. They can also go for advocacy on press freedom and access to information.

- A coalition of CSOs and mass media can be formed to ensure following issues:

    - Advocacy on press freedom and access to information.

    - Improve relation between the stakeholders

    - Plan activities and monitor implementation

    - Sustain the CSO media coalition

SUMMARY OF THE DISCUSSIONS

Participating journalists, union leaders and CSO hi-ups took part in the discussions spontaneously. Self-censorship journalism, press freedom and opportunities were discussed and a number of recommendations were made. The excerpts:

Opportunities

- Media-CSO have good relation.
- People still have trust on media.
- Still media is playing great role in ensuring justice in the society.
- Still journalists have freedom to write.
- There are many good examples of joint work by Media and CSO.
- Still there are many scopes of working together for both media and CSO.
- Media-CSO relation in Rajshahi is really good.
- Media is helping CSO when it is needed. There are many good examples of achievements that media and CSO have done together.
- There are some civil society organizations which want to cooperate with journalist.
- Some journalists are trying their best to practice ethical journalism despite all the challenges.

Challenges

- Media is under pressure.
- Media was never free and neutral.
- Press freedom is hindered due to corporate ownership of media and political pressure from state.
- Journalists often have to compromise with the content due to pressure form state.
- Newspaper has become supplement for advertisement.
- CSOs show lack of cooperation with media when there are issues to work together.
- The journalists are divided among themselves.
- CSOs and NGOs are controlled.
- Journalists are working considering political groups/interest. If it is stopped we can ensure neutral journalism.
- Media owners ignore problems and safety & security of journalist.
- Journalists have freedom to write but pressure is coming from media house.
- The relation between Media and CSO are changing due to political pressure and threat.
- Press club politics at local level has become a challenge due to the interest securing attitude of the journalists.
- National level journalist leaders seem reluctant to solve the issues of journalists at local level.
- The current state of the media and CSO is narrowing down the scope of working for the society.
- Local level journalists have to suffer the most while doing their job.
- People have no freedom of expression due to threat from police.
- Journalism is used as weapon of power.

- There is competition among CSOs.

- Due to limitation in press club membership many unions and clubs are being formed.

- Maintaining salary structure under wage board pay scale is difficult to follow for local newspapers.

- Due to low salary, local level journalists have to work for multiple media.

- Influential pressure from the society on journalists hampers practicing journalism

- Being dependent on donor the NGO and Civil Society Organization have a very limited role to play.

- There are no scope of implementing wage board salary structure at local newspapers due to financial constraints.

- Journalists practice self-censorship due to fear.

- There is politics in journalism that mars its acceptance to mass.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Journalists have to consider reader's changing interest on news content.

- Journalist should pay more attention to news content rather than publishing day to day events.

- Professionalism of a journalist and identity of political leader should be kept aside while doing journalism.

- The power of press council should be strengthened further and it should be used to ensure journalist's rights and benefits.

- Unity is needed among the journalist to secure their rights.

- Need more understanding on how Media-CSO will work together and thus decide their role.

- There should be a regulatory body at national level to control the press club.

- Media house should stand beside the journalist when there is pressure from other side.

- Media house should not impose any pressure on the journalists working at local level when there are sensitive issues.

- Legal aid and job security of journalist have to be ensured.

- CSO and other people of the society have to come forward and stand beside the journalists to ensure their right.

- Lobby should be carried out at the policy level to ensure job security of journalist.

- There should be a national guideline for the journalist that includes their candidature, benefits, safety and security.

- More trainings are needed to develop capacity of the journalists.

- Press freedom and safety & security of journalist are must to ensure human rights of the people of the society.

- Authority should monitor the process of registering numerous TV channels, online portal and newspapers in the country.

- Mindset of media owners and editors should be changed to ensure quality and ethical journalism.

- Journalists need to bring changes in their commitment to profession.

- Business making mindset of media owners should be changed for the sake of journalism.

- Local level journalists hardly can make investigative report due to time, resources constraint and pressure from influential people of the society.

- Lessons on media literacy should be included in the syllabus both at secondary and higher secondary level.

- There should be separate majors for both Journalism and Mass communication.

- Reasons behind self-censorship attitude of journalist should be identified and efforts should be taken to reach solution.

- There should be more interaction between media and mass, so that they can understand media is representing their voices and thus they will cooperate media.

- There should be a monitoring system for media to know which one is doing better where. Organizations like Press Institute of Bangladesh and MRDI can help.

- A basic lesson on media literacy should be included in secondary and higher secondary level.

- Formation of watch group or a commission including all media can help preventing division among journalist and thus quality journalism will be ensured.

- A common platform led by media and CSO representatives can be developed at district or divisional level where mass voices will be heard.

- Developing responsible attitude to profession is a must for journalists.

- Educational qualification of local level journalists should have a minimum standard.

- The role of CSO should be taken under consideration since they are donor dependent.

- All the journalists should be paid their salary under government approved wage board scale.

- Editors should confirm minimum academic qualification of the journalist before issuing press card.

- Journalist have to come out from conventional method of journalism.

- Unions have to be united to deal with journalist problems.

- Policy makers should play their role in preventing self-censorship journalism through digging out the root of the problem and thus make a solution.

- A bachelor course should be developed on Media Study considering the context of Bangladesh so that it will be more focused, elaborative.

OPEN DISCUSSIONS (INDIVIDUAL)

Shamima Laizu Neela
Executive Director, Alo

- Lobby with policy level to ensure job security of the journalist.

- There should be a national guideline for the journalist that includes their candidature, safety and security.

Rezaul Karim Reza
Editor, Uttar Kontho

- It's difficult to get help from civil society organisations while journalists are in crisis.

- There should be a regulatory body at national level to control the press club.

- The journalists are divided among themselves due to serving the interests other than their job.

- Media house should stand beside the journalist when there is pressure from other side.

- Some journalists are trying their best to practice ethical journalism despite all the challenges.

- Media house should not impose any pressure on the journalists working at local level when there are sensitive issues.

- Legal aid and job security of journalist have to be ensured.
- CSO and other people of the society have to come forward and stand beside the journalists to ensure their right.

Md. Shahidur Rahman
Editor, Daily Notun Bishwo Barta

- Local level journalists have to suffer the most while doing their job.
- Journalists are working considering political groups/interest. If it is stopped we can ensure neutral journalism.
- There are civil society organizations which want to cooperate journalist.
- Unity among journalists is needed to ensure ethical journalism.

Abdullah Al Mamun
Chairman, Mass communication and journalism department, Rajshahi University

- Still people have trust in media.
- Newspaper has become supplement for advertisement.
- CSOs show lack of cooperation with media when there are issues to work together.
- Division among journalists is making journalism more challenging.
- There should be a positive force to secure positive journalism in the country.
- Journalists often have to compromise with the content due to pressure form state.
- More trainings are needed to develop capacity of the journalists.
- There should be more scope of quality education on journalism for the betterment of the media.

Omar Faruk
Naogaon Correspondent, Prothom Alo

- The relation between Media and CSO is changing due to political pressure and threat.
- Press club politics at local level has become a challenge due to the interest securing attitude of the journalists.
- Journalists need to bring changes in their commitment to profession.

Faridul Karim
Naogaon Correspondent, Kaler Kontho

- Politics among journalists is creating division.
- Local level journalists hardly can make investigative report due to time, resources constarint and pressure from influential people of the society.
- Minimum qualification of journalist should be considered before issuing press card to them.

Professor Md. Abdus Salam
President, Sonak, Rajshahi

- Journalists have to consider reader's changing interest on news content.
- They should pay more interest to news content rather than publishing day to day events.

Dulal Chandra Biswas
Professor, Mass Communication and Journalism department, Rajshahi University

- There is politics in journalism that mars its acceptance to mass.
- A bachelor course should be developed on Media Study considering the context of Bangladesh so that it will be more focused, elaborative.

- CSOs are divided among themselves.
- Media literacy is must at root level.
- There should be more interaction between media and mass, so that they can understand media is representing their voices and thus they will cooperate media.
- There should be a monitoring system for media to know which one is doing better where organization like Press Institute of Bangladesh and MRDI can help.
- Advertisement should not get more importance than news in media.
- A basic lesson on media literacy should be included in secondary and higher secondary level.
- Formation of watch group or a commission including all media can help preventing division among journalist and thus quality journalism will be ensured.

Hasibur Rahman Bilu
Bureau Chief, Independent Television

- People still have trust in media.
- Still media is playing great role in ensuring justice in the society.
- Minimum educational qualification should be ensured when recruiting journalist.
- Now a days, a person without media literacy can be a journalist which is a big challenge for us.
- Media-CSO have good relation.
- Policy makers should have play their role in preventing self-censorship journalism through digging out the root of the problem and thus reach a solution.

Prodip Bhattacharjee Shankar
President, Press Club, Bogura

- Media was never free and neutral.
- CSOs do not want to support media.
- Media owners ignore journalist problems and safety & security.
- Minimum educational qualification of journalist should be ensured.
- Journalist have to come out from conventional method of journalism.
- Unions have to be united to deal with journalist problems.

Noor-A-Zannat
Executive Director, SBMSS

- Media is helping CSO when it is needed.
- There are many good examples of achievements that media and CSO have done together.
- Now a days, journalists take refuge to self-censorship due to fear.

Fayezullah Choudhury
Director, Barendra Unnayan Prochesta

- People fear police and journalist.
- The role of CSO should be taken under consideration since they are donor dependent.
- There are scopes of working together for both media and CSO.
- Editors should consider candidate's background and academic qualification before issuing press card.
- Being dependent on donor the NGO and Civil Society Organization have a very limited role to play.

Rashed Ripon
Chief Executive, Poriborton

- All the journalists should be paid their salary under government approved wage board scale.
- Editors should confirm minimum academic qualification of the journalist before issuing press card.
- There are no scope of implementing wage board salary structure at local newspapers due to financial restraints.
- Media-CSO relation in Rajshahi is really good.

Enamul Hoque Khokhon
Sirajganj Correspondent, Prothom Alo

- Influential pressure from the society on journalists hampers practicing journalism.
- Educational qualification of local level journalists should have a minimum standard.

Md. Hasib Hossain
Executive Director, Proyash and Editor, Gouro Bangla

- There is no unity between Media and CSO both at the national and local level.
- Interaction meeting with media-CSO will help to ensure quality journalism thus development of the society will be possible.

Pradip Kumar Panday
Associate Professor, Mass communication and journalism department, Rajshahi University

- Press freedom and safety & security of journalist are must to ensure human rights of the people of the society.
- Authority should monitor the process of registering numerous TV channels, online portal and newspapers in the country.
- Mindset of media owners and editors should be changed to ensure quality and ethical journalism.
- Business making mindset of media owners should be changed for the sake of journalism.
- Lessons on Media Literacy should be included in the syllabus both at secondary and higher secondary level.
- There should be separate majors for Journalism and Mass communication.

Akbarul Hasan Millat
Editor (Acting), Doinik Sonar Desh

- Professionalism of a journalist and identity of political leader should be kept aside while doing journalism.
- Maintaining salary structure under wage board pay scale is difficult to follow for local newspapers.
- There are many good examples of joint work by Media and CSO.
- Due to low salary, local level journalists have to work for multiple media.

Md. Kamal Uddin
General Secretary, Chapainawabganj Press club and Editor, Chapai Chitro

- There should be rules and regulations before issuing approval for registering a new media.

Md. Harun-or-Rashid
Executive Director, Light House, Bogura

- National level leaders seem reluctant to solve the issues of journalists at local level.
- The current state of the media and CSO is narrowing down the scope of working for the society.
- People have no freedom of expression due to threat from police.

- To ensure democracy media has to be independent.
- A common platform led by media and CSO representatives can be developed at district or divisional level where mass voices will be heard.

Md. Monjed Ali
Executive Director, Jamuna Somaj Kollyan Songstha

- Journalism is used as a weapon of power.
- There is competition among CSOs.
- Responsible attitude to profession must for journalists.
- Due to limitation in press club membership many unions and clubs are being formed.

Md. Alauddin Khan
Executive Director, National Development Programme

- Corporate ownership of media causes biased and self-censored journalism.
- Need more understanding on how Media-CSO will work together and thus decide their role.

Sarwar-e-Kamal
Chief Executive, CCBVO

- Political force and corporate pressures are hindering press freedom.
- Reasons behind self-censorship attitude of journalist should be identified and efforts should be taken to reach solution.
- More training is needed for journalist to develop skills.

A K M Abdullah Al Mahmud
Editor, Uttara Protidin

- CSOs and NGOs are controlled.
- Journalists have freedom to write but pressure is coming from media house.

Tosiqul Islam
Editor, Daily Sunshine

- Still journalists have freedom to write.
- Press freedom is hindered due to corporate ownership of media and political pressure from state.
- The journalists are divided among themselves.
- Unity is needed among the journalist to secure their rights.

Liakat Ali
Editor, Sonali Sangbad

- Media is under pressure.
- The power of press council should be strengthened further and it should be used to ensure journalist's rights and benefits.

Findings Sharing Meeting
Strengthen Linkages and Collaboration between Media-CSO/NGO

22 September 2018, Dhaka

MRDI organized a findings sharing meeting at Dhaka on 22 September 2018. Eminent development activists, academics and gatekeepers from national media along with divisional level journalists, media leaders and civil society were present in the programmee. The programme was organized to catalyze understanding of the factors driving self-censorship, increase awareness of protections against threats, and to begin laying the foundation for a media-CSO coalition supporting media freedoms.

A total of 29 participants took part in the programme. Among those 7 were eminent development activists from Dhaka, 3 academics, 7 gatekeepers form national media and 12 journalists, NGO executives and union leaders from Chattogram, Khulna and Rajshahi districts who took part in the divisional level interaction meetings with media and CSOs. Among the participants 2 were female. Monjurul Ahsan Bulbul, Editor-in-Chief and CEO, Ekushey Television presented the findings while Syed Ishtiaque Reza, Editor-in Chief, GTV and Sarabangla.net moderated the programme.

Hasibur Rahman, Executive Director of MRDI welcomed the participants while Zain AL Mahmud, Country Director, Internews briefly narrated the objective of the programme.

The programme was very much interactive and participatory. The participants shared their limitations and challenges while doing journalism, how media is facing pressure and journalists are compelled to practice self-censorship journalism. The participants also put many recommendations to get over from the crisis and establish strong and independent media.

The findings

MRDI organized 3 interaction meetings at Chattogram, Rajshahi and Khulna between May to July 2018. In the meetings 18 editors and media owners, 9 journalists, 12 journalist leaders and 32 CSO participated where 7 participants were female. Participants discussed the existing opportunity in media and society, challenges and recommendations. Monjurul Ahsan Bulbul, CEO, Ekushey Television and President of Bangladesh Federal Union of Journalists (BFUJ) shared the findings and also discussed his keynote that he presented in those meetings.

In the findings sharing meeting the participants approved recommendations received in the interaction meetings, discussed the pros and cons of the suggested recommendations and put some new recommendations.

SUMMARY OF THE DISCUSSIONS

In the programme the participants both journalists, union leaders and CSO hi-ups took part in the discussions spontaneously. In their discussions they put some recommendations and also mentioned some challenges. The excerpts:

Challenges

- More than one press club are making divisions among journalists.
- Besides government non-state actors are creating pressure on media.
- People trust media more when the number of media was less. But now media is losing trust of people despite having huge in number.
- Media is developed now a days to patronize and serve political interest what can be seen in its content.
- Difficult to make coalition or extend hand of cooperation by CSO/NGO due to several groups among journalists.
- Media is a place for both trust and fear.
- Journalists outside Dhaka are most vulnerable.
- Culture of fear is a concern.
- People are losing trust on government; on the other hand they are depending on media.
- Though the number of media houses is increasing but there are concerns about the role of media.
- CSO/NGO intervention depends on fund availability, thus quality is a concern.
- There are lack of investigative reports in the media.
- Media usually focuses on political issues rather than investigative contents.
- Media houses are owned by political and corporate groups.
- Difficult to publish any news that goes beyond the interest of any powerful groups due to threat and pressure.
- Advertisement creates pressure in publishing/broadcasting content when content go beyond their interest.
- There is no room of accountability of journalists/ editors.
- Printing edition of national dailies at divisional level is a problem since many important issues are omitted in national edition thus it deprived of getting proper attention to sort out.
- Journalism has not been established yet as a profession in Bangladesh. It is mostly treated as secondary profession or do as a hobby.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- A political mapping needed to gauge common interest, identify common challenge and define common role

- Define code of ethics for media so that journalists can be aware about their commitment and thus meet it.

- Separate code of ethics is needed for editor and media owners.

- Every media house can develop their own code of ethics.

- Emphasis needed on the issue of women's presence in media and make out a solution to address the problem.

- Ownership of media and advertisement issues need to be addressed.

- Produce news that meet public's interest through ensuring professionalism and accuracy and impartial content in the media.

- Raining needed for developing capacity of the journalists.

- More training on safety & security of journalists are needed.

- Define the specific rule for Media/CSO/NGO in the coalition who is responsible for what

- People's basic need can be included in the proposed media forum besides fundamental rights such as freedom of expression, right to information and CSO's rights. It will help to develop interpersonal relationship and make a good coordination among media, CSOs and NGOs.

- Training is needed to ensure quality journalism

- The press card should be issued after ensuring minimum qualifications and knowledge on journalism.

- Besides publishing the report, an action plan should be made to implement or execute the recommendations developed in the Media-CSO interaction meetings at three divisions and Finding sharing meeting.

- Media should play significant role to ensure people's interest through its content and reports.

- A clear concept of CSO is needed since it is creating confusion who is CSO and who is not.

- Content diversity should be ensured and quality should not be compromised at any cost.

- RTI can be a great tool for collaboration and linkages.

- CSO/NGO can help media by sharing data and information to the journalists for producing investigative/in-depth reporting.

- Media friendly owners needed who will patronize journalism.

- Journalists have to carry on their job amid legal risk, cases and crises.

- Journalists should publish content considering reader's interest especially for the youth.

- Content for news should be positive and also hold people interest and thus serve their interest.

- Training is a must for journalists to develop their capacities.

- Press club can organize training in order to develop the capacity of the journalists.

- The relationship between media and government should be taken under consideration.

- The existing acts which are curtailing media's freedom should be taken under consideration.

- To ensure governance at every level and national integrity strategy it is important to take CSO beside media.

- An SDG media forum can be formed where MJF can help.
- The guideline that includes code of conduct for journalists should be taken under consideration by CSO and NGO.
- There should be a guideline to observe functioning of growing number of media.
- Quality of journalism should be ensured
- Media friendly law is needed to ensure quality journalism thus independent media.
- Female journalist's presence in media is a concern.
- Media literacy/studies should be added in the curriculum both in secondary course and bachelor degree level.
- Journalists have to take the responsibility of his/her own safety & security.
- The issue of women's participation in media should be addressed.
- Women's position at policy level need to be ensured in media.
- Media has relation with CSO but CSO has to come forward to improve the relation between media and CSO.
- A CSO-Media platform can be formed which will follow a definite guideline and decide do's and don'ts from both end.
- Solvency is needed to ensure quality journalism.
- Professionalism among journalists needs to be developed.
- Research needed to identify the main problem of journalism.
- A minimum level of qualification should be ensured before issuing press card.
- To ensure independent media it is important to consider changing trend of journalism.
- A joint voice of media, CSO and academics can help to restore press freedom.
- It is important to consider current position of CSO before forming any new coalition with media.
- This is time for impact journalism not quantity journalism.
- It is important to identify who is a journalist actually.
- There should be a policy to observe the activities of media.
- A monitoring system needs to be developed before issuing approval license to any new media.
- If the collaboration is any specific issue oriented, it will be more sustainable, strong and effective.
- Community based TV, radio need more patronization since they are focusing local issues and serving their interests.
- It is important to consider ownership and financial investor of media to establish independent media.
- For fund, media can consider crowd-funding or angel investor's options otherwise independent media will not be possible.
- We need to assess the risk factors as the government is imposing pressure which nether media or CSO or NGO can face alone.
- Unity among Media, CSO, and NGO's can help facing pressure from all the actors.

OPEN DISCUSSIONS (INDIVIDUAL)

Dr. Iftekharuzzaman
Executive Director, Transparency International Bangladesh

- A political mapping needed to gauge common interest, identify common challenge and define common role
- Define code of ethics for media so that journalists can be aware about their commitment and thus meet it.
- Separate code of ethics is needed for editor and media owners.
- Every media house can develop their own code of ethics.
- Emphasis needed to ensure women's presence in media and make out a solution to address the problem.
- Produce news that meet public's interest through ensuring professionalism and accuracy and impartial content in the media.

Tahmina Rahman
Executive Director, Article 19

- Training needed for developing capacity of the journalists.
- More training on safety & security of journalists is needed.
- Define the specific rule for Media/CSO/NGO in the coalition who is responsible for what

Mohsin Ali
Executive Director, Wave foundation

- More than one press club are making divisions among journalists.
- Besides government non-state actors are creating pressure on media.
- People's basic need can be included in the proposed media forum besides fundamental rights such as freedom of expression, right to information and CSO's rights. It will help to develop interpersonal relationship between media and CSO/NGOs.

Swapon Kumar Guho
Executive Director, Rupantor

- People trust media more when the number of media was less. But now media is losing trust of people despite having huge in number.
- Training is needed to ensure quality journalism
- The press card should be issued after ensuring minimum qualifications and knowledge on journalism.
- Besides publishing the report, an action plan should be made to implement or execute the recommendations developed in the Media-CSO interaction meetings at three divisions and Finding sharing meeting.
- Media should play significant role to ensure people's interest through its content and reports.

Sisir Dutta
Executive Director, Bangladesh Institute of Theatre Arts, Chittagong

- A clear concept of CSO is needed since it is creating confusion who is CSO and who are not.
- Media is developed now a days to patronize and serve political interest what can be seen in its content.
- Content diversity should be ensured and quality should not be compromised at any cost.

Sukanta Gupta Alak
Editor (News and Current Affairs), Desh Television

- Difficult to make coalition or extend hand of cooperation by CSO/NGO due to several groups among journalists.
- RTI can be a great tool for collaboration and linkages.
- CSO/NGO can help media by sharing data and information to the journalists for producing investigative/in-depth reporting.

Lazzat Enab Mahsi
Deputy Editor, Prothom Alo

- Media is a place for both trust and fear.
- Journalists outside Dhaka are most vulnerable.
- Media friendly owners needed who will patronize journalism.
- Culture of fear is a concern.
- Journalists have to carry on their job amid legal risk, cases and crises.
- Journalists should publish content considering reader's interest especially for the youth.
- Content for news should be positive and also hold people interest and thus serve their interest.
- Training is a must for journalists to develop their capacities.
- Press club can organize training in order to develop the capacity of the journalists.

Dr. Rezwan Ul Alam
Director-Knowledge Management, ManusherJonno Foundation

- The relationship between media and government should be taken under consideration.
- The existing acts which are curtailing media's freedom should be taken under consideration.
- People are losing trust on government on the other hand they are depending on media.
- To ensure governance at every level and national integrity strategy it is important to take CSO beside media.
- An SDG media forum can be formed where MJF can help.
- The guideline that includes code of conduct for journalists should be taken under consideration by CSO and NGO.

Dr. Kaberi Gayen
Professor & Chairman, Mass Communication and Journalism Department, Dhaka University

- There should be a guideline to observe functioning of growing number of media.
- Quality of journalism should be ensured
- Media friendly law is needed to ensure quality journalism thus independent media.
- Female journalist's presence in media is a concern.
- Media literacy/studies should be added in the curriculum both in secondary course and bachelor degree level.

Shahnaz Munni
Chief News Editor, News 24

- Journalists have to take the responsibility of his/her own safety & security.
- The issue of women's participation in media should be addressed.
- Women's position at policy level need to be ensured in media.
- Though the number of media houses is increasing but there are concern about the role of media.

S M Touhidur Rahman
Secretary, Jashore Press Club

- Media has relation with CSO but CSO have to come forward to improve the relation between media and CSO.

- A CSO-Media platform can be made which will follow a definite guideline and decide do's and don'ts from both end.

- CSO/NGO intervention depends on fund availability, thus quality is a concern.

Kh. Ali Ar Raji
Associate Professor, Journalism and Mass communication, Chittagong University

- Solvency is needed to ensure quality journalism.

Pradip Kumar Panday
Professor, Journalism and Mass communication, Rajshahi University

- Professionalism among journalism need to be developed.

- Research needed to identify the main problem of journalism.

- A minimum level of qualification should be ensured before issuing press card.

- To ensure independent media it is important to consider changing trend of journalism.

- A joint voice of media, CSO and academics can help to restore press freedom.

Philip Gain
Director, Society for Environment and Human Development (SHED)

- It is important to consider current position of CSO before forming any new coalition with media.

- There are lack of investigative reports in the media.

- Media usually focuses on political issues rather than investigative contents.

Akbarul Hasan Millat
Editor (In-Charge), Sonar Desh, Rajshahi,

- Media houses are owned by political and corporate groups.

- Difficult to publish any news that goes beyond the interest of any powerful groups due to threat and pressure.

- Advertisement creates pressure in publishing/broadcasting content when content go beyond their interest.

- There is no room of accountability of journalists/ editors.

- Ownership of media and advertisement issues need to be addressed.

Monirul Islam Monu
Staff Reporter, KalerKontho, Bandarban

- Printing edition of national dailies at divisional level is a problem since many important issues are omitted in national edition thus it deprived of getting proper attention to sort out.

- Journalism has not been established yet as a profession in Bangladesh. It is mostly treated as secondary profession or do as a hobby.

Reaz Ahmad
Executive Editor, United News Bangladesh

- This is time for impact journalism not quantity journalism.

- It is important to identify who is a journalist actually.

- There should be a policy to observe the activities of media.

- A monitoring system need to be developed before issuing approval license to any new media.

Arifur Rahman
CEO, Young Power in Social Action (YPSA)

- If the collaboration is any specific issue oriented, it will be more sustainable, strong and effective.

- Community based TV, radio need more patronization since they are focusing local issues and serving their interests.

Ashish Saikat
Chief News Editor, Independent television

- Before forming Media-CSO coalition it is important to conduct survey, census or action research to find out tactics to run it successfully.

Shamim Zahedy
Executive Editor, The Independent

- Financial solvency is needed in media.

- It is important to consider ownership and financial investor of media to establish independent media.

- For fund, media can consider crowd-funding or angel investorsoptions otherwise independent media will not be possible.

Avra Bhattacharjee
Director, Dialogue and outreach, Center for policy Dialogue

- We need to assess the risks factors as the government is imposing pressure which nether media or CSO or NGO can face alone.

- Unity among Media, CSO, NGO's can help facing pressure from all the actors.

KHULNA PROGRAMME

1.	A S M Monzurul Hasan	Executive Director, Badhon Manob Unnayan Songhtha, Bagerhat
2.	Md. Abdul Bari	General Secretary, Press club, Satkhira
3.	Advocate Md. Alamgir Siddique	President, Press Club, Narail
4.	Ahmed Ali khan	Executive Editor, The Daily Purbanchal, Khulna
5.	ATM Zakir Hossain	Executive Director, Jagroto Jubo Songstha, Khulna
6.	Dr. Hosna Ara	Chairman, Mass Communication and Journalism Discipline Khulna University, Khulna
7.	Ekram-Ud-Daullah	Editor, Daily Kalyan, Jashore
8.	Faruque Ahmed	President, Press Club, Khulna
9.	Fizer Choudhury	Assistant News Editor, Dainik Mathabhanga, Chuadanga
10.	Gouranga Nandy	Bureau Chief, Kaler Kontho, Khulna
11.	Mobinul Islam Mobin	Editor, GramerKagoj, Jashore
12.	Mohon Kumar Mondal	Executive Director, Leaders, Satkhira
13.	Mallick Sudhangshu	General Secretary, Press Club, Khulna
14.	Manirul Huda	Editor-in-Chief, Dainik Jonmovumi, Khulna
15.	Mostafa Nuruzzaman	Chief Executive, Sushilon, Khulna
16.	Rafiqul Islam Khokan	Executive Director, Rupantor, Khulna
17.	S M Tauhidur Rahman	General Secretary, Press club, Jessore
18.	Md. Shameem Ahmed Khan	General Secretary, Press Club, Magura
19.	Shamima Sultana Shilu	Executive Director, Manob Sheba O Samajik Unnayan Songstha (MASAS), Khulna
20.	Sheikh Salim	General Secretary, Press Club, Jhenaidah
21.	Swapan Kumar Guha	Executive Director, Rupantor

CHATTOGRAM PROGRAMME

1.	A K M Raisul Haq Bahar	Executive Secretary, Fulki
2.	Aftabur Rahman Jafri	Chief Executive Director, Ghasful
3.	Amirul Islam Harun	Editor, Daily Sochitro Noakhali
4.	Arifur Rahman	Chief Executive, YPSA
5.	Ayasur Rahman	Executive member, BFUJ, and Cox's Bazar press club
6.	Dr. M Ramizuddin Chowdhury	Editor, Daily Purbokoun
7.	Enamul Haque Quashemi	Bandarban Correspondent, BSS, Daily Azadi

8.	Mohammad Farhad Iqbal	Editor, Daily Sokaler Cox'sBazar
9.	Kalim Sarwar	President, Chattogram Press club
10.	Kanij Farhana	Project coordinator, BITA
11.	Kha Ali Ar Raji	Associate professor, Mass communication and Journalism, Chittagong University
12.	Md. Abul Kalam Azad	Chairman, Mass Communication and Journalism, Chittagong University
13.	Moung Thowai Ching	Executive Director, Green Hill
14.	Monirul Islam Monu	Staff Reporter, KalerKontho
15.	Omar Kaiser	Deputy News Editor, Prothom Alo
16.	Ripan Chakma	Executive Director, Trinomul Unnayan Shongstha
17.	Rokeya Begum Shafali	Executive Director, Aid Khulna
18.	Rusho Mahmud	Editor, Daily Suprovat Bangladesh
19.	Saima Alam	Assistant Professor, Mass communication and Journalism Department Chittagong University
20.	Sunil Kanti Dey	President, Rangamati Press Club and hill tracts correspondent, The Daily Sangbad
21.	Yasmin Reema	Cumilla Correspondent, New Age

RAJSHAHI PROGRAMME

1.	A K M Abdullah Al Mahmud	Editor, Uttara Protidin
2.	Abdullah Al Mamun	Chairman, Mass communication and journalism department, Rajshahi University
3.	Md. Alauddin Khan	Executive Director, National Development Programme
4.	Dulal Chandra Biswas	Professor, Mass Communication and Journalism department, Rajshahi University
5.	Enamul Hoque Khokhon	Sirajganj Correspondent, Prothom Alo
6.	Fayezullah Choudhury	Director, Barendra Unnayan Prochesta
7.	Faridul Karim	Naogaon Correspondent, Kaler Kontho
8.	Md. Harun Or Rashid	Executive Director, Light House, Bogura
9.	Akbarul Hasan Millat	Editor (Acting), Doinik Sonar Desh, Rajshahi
10.	Hasibur Rahman Bilu	Bureau Chief, Independent Television, Bogura
11.	Md. Kamal Uddin	General Secretary, Chapainawabganj Press club and Editor, Chapaichitro
12.	Liakat Ali	Editor, Sonali Sangbad
13.	Md. Hasib Hossain	Executive Director, Proyash and Editor, Gouro Bangla
14.	Md. Shahidur Rahman	Editor, Daily Notun Bishwo Barta
15.	Md. Monjed Ali	Executive Director, Jamuna Somaj Kollyan Songstha
16.	Noor-A-Zannat	Executive Director, SBMSS
17.	Omar Faruk	Naogaon Correspondent, Prothom Alo
18.	Pradip Kumar Panday	Associate Professor, Mass communication and journalism department Rajshahi University
19.	Prodip Bhattacharjee Shankar	Press Club President, Bogura
20.	Professor Md. Abdus Salam	President, Sonak, Rajshahi
21.	Rashed Ripon	Chief Executive, Poribartan
22.	Rezaul Karim Reza	Editor, Uttar kontho
23.	Sarwar-e-Kamal	Chief Executive, CCBVO
24.	Shahadul Islam Saju	Executive member, Jakos Foundation
25.	Shamima Laizu Neela	Executive Director, Alo
26.	Tosiqul Islam	Editor, Daily Sunshine

DHAKA PROGRAMME

1. Arifur Rahman   CEO, Young Power in Social Action (YPSA)
2. Ashish Saikat   Chief News Editor, Independent television
3. Avra Bhattacharjee   Director, Dialogue and outreach, Center for policy Dialogue
4. Dr. Iftekharuzzaman   Executive Director, Transparency International Bangladesh
5. Dr. Kaberi Gayen   Professor & Chairman, Mass Communication and Journalism Department Dhaka University
6. Dr. Rezwan Ul Alam   Director-Knowledge Management, ManusherJonno Foundation
7. Gouranga Nandy   Bureau Chief, Kaler Kontho, Khulna
8. Akbarul Hasan Millat   Editor (In-Charge), Sonar Desh, Rajshahi
9. Hasibur Rahman Bilu   Bureau Chief, Independent Television, Bogura
10. Kh. Ali Ar Raji   Associate Professor, Journalism and Mass communication, Chittagong University
11. Lazzat Enab Mahsi   Deputy Editor, Prothom Alo
12. Md. Rafiqul Islam Khan   Manager (Legal and Policy), INCIDIN Bangladesh
13. Mobinul Islam Mobin   Editor, GramerKagoj, Jashore
14. Md. Hasib Hossain   Executive Director, Proyash and Editor, Gouro Bangla
15. Mohon Kumar Mondal   Executive Director, Leaders, Satkhira
16. Mohsin Ali   Executive Director, Wave foundation
17. Monirul Islam Monu   Staff Reporter, Kaler Kontho, Bandarban
18. Philip Gain   Director, Society for Environment and Human Development (SHED)
19. Pradip Kumar Panday   Professor, Journalism and Mass communication, Rajshahi University
20. Reaz Ahmad   Executive Editor, United News Bangladesh
21. Rezaul Karim Reza   Editor, Uttar kontho
22. S M Touhidur Rahman   Secretary, Jashore press club
23. Shahnaz Munni   Chief News Editor, News 24
24. Shamim Zahedy   Executive Editor, The Independent
25. Sisir Dutta   Executive Director, Bangladesh Institute of Theatre Arts (BITA), Chittagong
26. Sukanta Gupta Alak   Editor, News and Current Affairs, Desh Television
27. Swapon Kumar Guho   Executive Director, Rupantor
28. Tahmina Rahman   Executive Director, Article 19
29. Zayedul Ahsan Pintu   Editor, DBC News

CSOs can shoulder a large burden of the systematic research that is required to make an objective and compelling news story or a series of stories, given the constraints of the media. On the flipside, journalists can also contribute to setting the agenda for CSOs. A partnership between the media and CSOs will eventually lead to better-researched and better-investigated stories. A lot of the good work done by CSOs is often lost in the cacophony of political news and propaganda and many projects never fulfill their potential because it has failed to reach the right ears. This is where collaboration with the media is vital.