

Project Annual Report Year One

Improving Qualitative Journalism in Bangladesh, Phase II

Report prepared by



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Background:

Media in Bangladesh have grown geometrically in the last couple of years. There are 30 private television channels and 189 national newspapers. Newsrooms are mostly filled with fresh low-cost reporters without proper training and there is lack of quality leaders and mentors, as most of the managers have been promoted to these posts well before they should, to meet the bunch of new needs.

In the wake of the growth of media in recent years, it is strongly felt that proper interventions are needed for the journalists to enhance their ability to identify, produce and finally publish high quality in-depth reports on areas of public interest. Issues like safety and security of journalist, conflict between media owners and other stakeholders, political and business conflicts also need to be addressed.

In this context of landscape and scenario of media, Fojo-MRDI project ‘Improving Qualitative Journalism in Bangladesh’ has been taken initiative to improve the quality of reporting, particularly the depth and reliability of qualitative journalism up to a desired standard. After successful completion of the first phase of the project, it has been completed 1st year of it’s 2nd phase as well.

Objective and outcomes:

The project is based on the following objectives to reach the intermediate outcomes:

Overall objective

Contribute to improving the conditions for people to raise themselves out of poverty, strengthening democracy, respect for human rights and gender equality, and to contribute to sustainable development.

Specific objective

Media in Bangladesh contributes to strengthened democracy and gender equality, greater respect for human rights and freedom from oppression.

Intermediate Outcome

Targeted media houses and news providers publish qualitative investigative journalism, particularly on themes related to gender equality, labour rights, corruption and environmental impact and climate change.

Immediate outcome 1:

Targeted media houses and news providers identify, research and produce high quality investigative journalism, particularly on gender equality, labour rights, corruption and environmental impact and climate change.

Immediate outcome 2:

Targeted partners in the media sector collaborate to create a conducive environment for investigative journalism, particularly on gender equality, labour rights, corruption and environmental impact and climate change.

Project period:

Duration of year one was September 2019 - August 2020.

Activities performed in Year 1:

Year one of the project performed a number of advocacy and capacity building activities focused on improving the situation of quality reporting and enhancing internal capacity building of media houses.

Activity-1: Monitoring & Evaluation Training

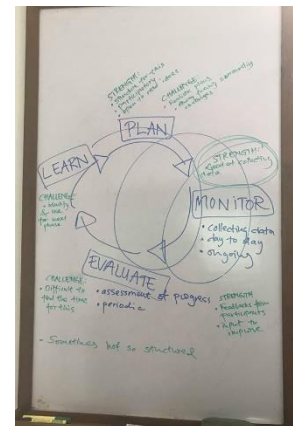
To make or develop the understanding of monitoring and evaluation a two- and half-day long training workshop was held. Nine selected employees from MRDI participated in the training



and Md. Shahid Hossain, Planning & Development Advisor of the organization, was present throughout the workshop as a facilitator. Hasibur Rahman, Executive Director of MRDI was also present at the workshop and shared his valuable thoughts & inputs with the participants. Programme

Manager, Deputy manager of communications and capacity building, Deputy manager of finance, Program officers and Media monitoring officers of MRDI, and other staffs of the Fojo project participated in the training.

Fojo's M&E advisor, Stina Oskarsson conducted a total of 7 sessions in the 3-day programme.



Activity-2: Interaction Meeting on Improving Qualitative Journalism in Bangladesh



To share resources and inviting for receiving supports from Investigative Journalism Partnership programme a half-day long meeting was held. Eleven newsroom managers including Executive Editor, Deputy-editor, Head of News, Chief News Editor and Chief Economic Correspondent from different media houses were present. Hasibur Rahman,

Executive Director of MRDI, Sofia Hultqvist, Program Manager Bangladesh of Fojo Media Institute and Miraj Ahmed Chowdhury, Head of programme and Communications of MRDI including other team members of the Fojo project were present at the meeting.



Activity-3: Interaction meeting: online course on Safety and Security of Journalists



A half-day meeting was held for consultation with experts on online training course of Safety and security of Journalists. Seven experts from different fields were present including Former Consultant Editor of a newspaper, Chief News Editors, Chief Reporter, Head of Program Development and Quality Department of development organization and Assistant Professor from

public University.

There were several recommendations by the participants which includes fixing the objective in three categories like, increasing knowledge level through instructions, case study analysis for skill development and attitude development through discussions and webinars.

Activity-4: Advanced Training on Fact Checking and Verification

To learn the advanced tools and techniques of fact checking, and verification of photos and videos used by the journalists, a four-day residential training was held. Total 10 participants attended in the training, who were participated in the first fact checking training held in last project year including Staff Reporters, Newsroom editor/Sub-editors from different media, one freelancer and one academic.



Karolin Schwarz, Journalist and Fact checking trainer from Germany, conducted all through the training programme.



Activity 5: Media Engagement Meeting on Journalists' Safety and Security

Two & half hours meeting was held in participation with 14 gatekeepers from different national media houses including Editor, Editor-in-Chief, Executive Editor, Head of News, Chief News Editor, Special News Editor and News Editor.

Participants discussed on various issues regarding current media scenario in Bangladesh, safety-security of journalists and requested to continue supports from MRDI.

Activity 6: Training on Editing and Managing Investigative Reports



There were two planned residential trainings on Editing and Managing Investigative Reports- one was for TV and another for newspaper/ online news portal in this year. First one was held residential in Savar with participation of eleven senior level news managers from five frontline newspapers of

Bangladesh including Special News Editor, Deputy News Editor, Additional News Editor, Assistant News Editor, Senior Sub-Editor, Sub-editor and Chief reporter with two female journalists. Michael Cooke, former Editor-in-Chief of Toronto Star and Murdoch Davis, former Executive Editor of the same daily, jointly conducted the sessions.

Second one was not possible to arrange with physical presence in the covid-19 pandemic situation. So, the training was held on online using zoom network, which was five-day online training on the same topic in two episodes three hours on each day. Total 9 participants from four partner televisions under the Investigative Journalism Partnership Programme attended in the training who are working as senior most news managers in the houses including Chief News Editor, Senior News editor, News editor, Joint news editor, Special correspondent and senior reporter. The training was conducted by Julian Sher, eminent investigative journalist from Canada.



Activity 7: Mentorship Conclave on Environment and Climate change

A five-day training was held in residential manner under the mentorship programme of the project. Total 11 participants attended in the mentorship training, who were pitched their story including Special Correspondents, Senior Reporter and Staff Reporters from Newspaper, online & TV media.

Lead Trainer of the training was Joydeep Gupta, renowned journalist from India, working for Climate change and Environment, who was assisted by two co-facilitators cum resource persons Abu Siddique and Rafiqul Islam Montu from Bangladesh. There were other mentors and resource persons including issue experts from Department of Environment and Water Development Board of Bangladesh Government, UNDP Climate Expert, Internationally recognized Environment lawyer and experts from MRDI.



At the last day of conclave, assigned mentors seated with their mentees and finalized their story ideas for the mentorship programme. Finally, seven participants produced 14 stories on the subject.

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Activity 8: Training of Trainers (ToT) of PIB



To train and enhance capacity of adult learning of PIB trainers, a three-day training was held. Sixteen participants joined the training including senior trainer, trainer, assistant trainer & reporter of PIB as well as working journalists like acting editor, special correspondent, Sub-editor of online news portal, TV channels and local dailies. Working journalists have also been included in the panel of trainers of PIB, those who usually train journalists all over the country.

Mohammad Abdur Rahman, Head of Programme Development and Quality (PDQ) of RDRS Bangladesh conducted the three-day sessions as the lead trainer of the training programme. In addition, Mir Attaqui Masruruzzaman,



Senior News Editor of Channel-i conducted two sessions for days.

Activity 9: FGD on Media Economy in Bangladesh



For making understanding of media business, startup challenges, fake news, public demands, insecurity issues and so on, a half day long focused group discussion was held, as part of the activity of Viability Study of Independent Media in Bangladesh by Ross Settles, Adjunct Professor of University of Hong Kong. Eight

participants joined in the programme from diverse fields of expertise including Executive Editor, Chief Strategist, Project Lead, Staff Reporter, and so on.

Activity-10: Safety Workshop for Journalist

A day-long workshop was held for women journalists in participation with sixteen women journalists from different print and electronic media participated in the workshop including special correspondent, senior reporter, staff reporter and freelancer reporter.



There was also another half-day safety workshop for 42 participants in sideline the annual conference of Broadcast Journalist Center-BJC.

Both the workshop was conducted by Tamara Bralo, renowned journalist and safety trainer, who worked for Al Jazeera as the Head of safety unit.

Activity-11: Training on Safety in Investigative Reporting



A three-day long residential training was held, where total 14 participants joined from 8 media houses with a combination of both reporting and news desk including Senior Reporters and Staff Reporters from Newspaper, & TV

channels. Lead Trainer for the training was also Tamara Bralo.

Activity-12: Webinar Series on Covid-19



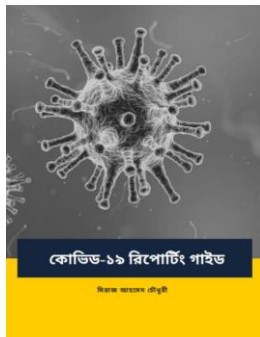
Eight different webinars were held in the series on different subjects of project's focused area to relate with covid-19 pandemic situation. The topics are including Safety-Security of journalists, Investigative Journalism, factchecking, gender sensitive reporting, using RTI act and Media Economy in Bangladesh. Total 307 attendees participated in the webinar series including Camera persons, reporter, gatekeepers of media houses and other professionals. The webinars have over 35 thousand viewers on Facebook, some of them also reacts and make their comments on the posts.



Activity-13: Web-meet with IJ Partners on How They Are Adapting with Covid-19

About one-hour long discussion was held using Zoom network with participation of 8 media gatekeepers including Editor, Executive Editor, Executive Director, Head of News, Chief News Editor and News Editor from eight partner media houses under the Investigative Journalism Partnership programme of the project.

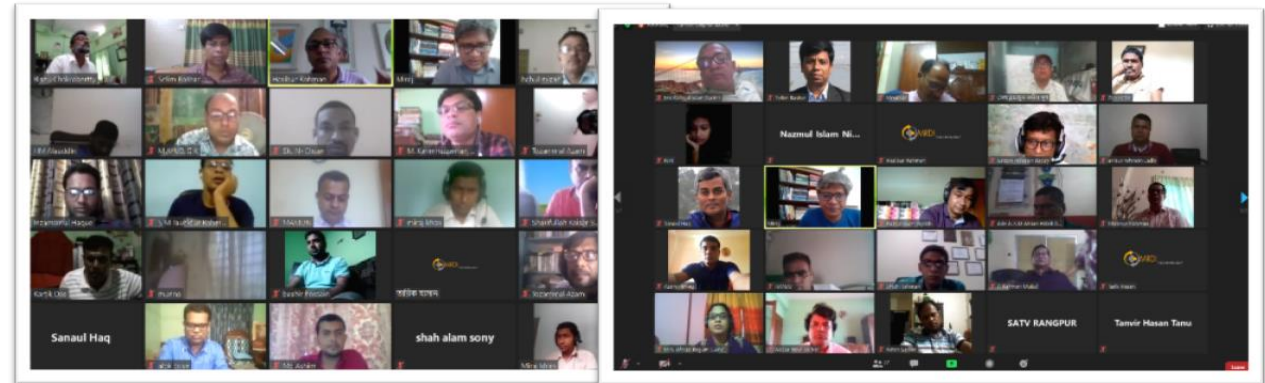
Activity-14: Covid-19 Reporting Guide



This guide has been created keeping in mind the journalists who are covering Covid-19. Necessary advices and tools regarding safety-security of journalists, information collection & verification and investigations have been gathered in one place from the sources of home and abroad. In each case a link to the relevant site or page has been provided, so that those who are interested can read the original archive by clicking on it.

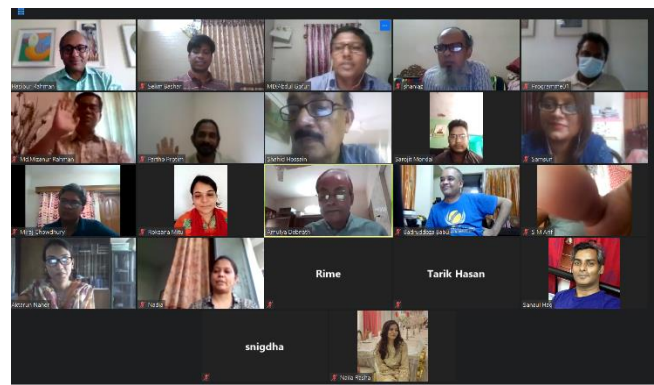
Activity-15: Training on Safety and Security for Journalists (Outside Dhaka)

Two online trainings were held using Zoom network each two-day long and four-hour lasting session on every day. Total 40 participants from 18 districts of Khulna & Rangpur divisions attended in the training who are working in the local offices of different national newspapers and TV channels as district correspondent, staff reporter, special correspondent or bureau chief.



Activity-16: Anti-corruption workshop for MRDI

A half day workshop was held on 26th July 2020 over online using zoom network. 21 participants, all programme and finance staff of MRDI along with Executive Director and Advisor Planning and Development were present in the workshop.



Activity-17: Safety and Security Handbook Reprint



Safety-security is a prime concern for the journalists and media houses. One handbook on safety and security was developed to discuss physical, digital, legal securities of journalist. Role of the media organizations in reducing the probability of risk

was also discussed. 500 copies of the handbook were reprinted to fulfill the additional demand of the journalist's community.

Activity-18: Investigative Journalism Partnership (IJP)

There were signed 9 IJP agreements including seven media houses, one factcheck group and one individual under the open call of the activity in the project year. Some of them didn't able to complete their planned activities because of covid-19 situation, but other completed. 31 investigative stories have been produced by the partners and BD FactCheck has published 55 factchecking stories mostly about the fake news regarding covid-19.

Activity-19: Investigative Journalism Helpdesk

After starting the helpdesk, it got huge responses from journalist community from the very beginning of the project year. It provides 248 supports to 142 reporters form different media houses, which helps to produce 42 stories within this time period.

Activity-20: GIJN Bangla

Since its launched in 2018, GIJN Bangla has become a helpful resource hub for the Journalist, students of Journalism and academics. It continues to publish and discuss tools and techniques of modern journalism and remarkable examples of investigative journalism, which surely motivate and inspire Journalists. It also provides fellowship, grants and training related information to enhance journalistic capacity. GIJN Bangla Facebook page has now over five thousand followers and counting.

Activity-21: Media Monitoring

To assess the qualitative and quantitative aspect of reports published over Bangladeshi media, project started archiving mainstream Newspapers and primetime news of TV channels.

This archive will be used during evaluation stage.

Activity-22: RTI Help Desk

During first year of the project's second phase, RTI help desk provided 60 supports to journalists of national and local level. Help desk facilitated them to select appropriate designated officer and appellate authority and fill-up application, appeal and complaint forms.

Sl. No	Print Media	TV Media
1.	Prothom Alo	BTV
2.	Ittefaq	ATN Bangla
3.	Samakal	NTV
4.	Kalerkantha	Ekattor TV
5.	Naya Diganta	Independent TV
6.	Janakantha	Somoy TV
7.	Jugantor	Channel-i
8.	Daily Star	News24
9.	News Age	Maaranga Television
10.	Independent	Jamuna TV
11.	Financial Express	Bangla Vision
12.	Dhaka Tribune	
13.	Daily Gramer Kagoj	

Challenges:

- Due to covid-19 situation some of activities needed to revise along with budget and some of activities needed to arrange over online.
- To ensure presence of international experts, some activities needed more time to organize than planned.

Sustainability:

Capacity building initiatives increased skills of journalists and introduced new tools and techniques of investigative journalism, research, fact checking for their future reporting. Trained reporters can disseminate their knowledge to others.

Awareness and knowledge on safety and security has been increased that will reduce the level of risk for Journalists in future.

Reprinted publication on safety and security and Covid-19 Reporting Guide will be used as supportive resource materials for the journalists.

Partner media houses enhanced their team capacity with the knowledge of international experts and their practices. It will help them to ensure qualitative journalism.

Moreover, success of the initiative will bring desired positive changes in the mindset of the media owners and the management.