

Project Annual Report Year Two

Improving Qualitative Journalism in Bangladesh, Phase II

Report prepared by



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Background:

Journalism in Bangladesh became massive and the number of journalists is unknown. There are more than 36 television channels and 3222 newspapers in Bangladesh up to May 2021. According to the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting (Department of Film and Publicity-DFP) the number of Daily Newspapers is 1323, of which 549 is published from the capital Dhaka only. Number of institution is not enough to produce quality journalists. Most of the Newsrooms are running with fresh low-cost reporters without proper training and experience. More over there is lack of quality leaders and mentors, trainers and managers in the media.

For the improvement of journalism in Bangladesh, building capacity of journalists, produce high quality in-depth reports on public interest there should be some initiatives. 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. The project has been completed it fifth year tenor with success, challenges and some lessons.

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.

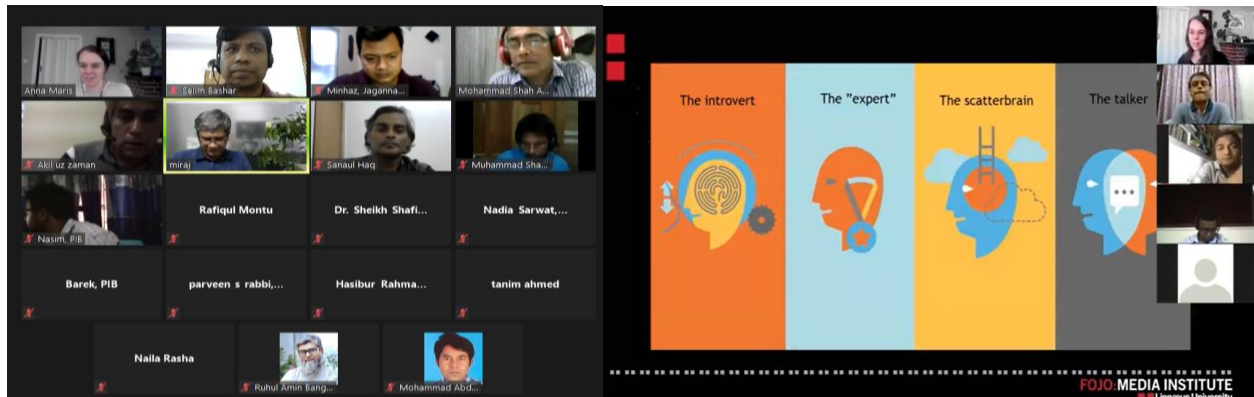
Duration of year one was September 2020 - August 2021.

Activities performed in Year 2 (Phase II):

Second year of phase II of the project performed a number of interactions, advocacy and capacity building activities to improve the situation of quality journalism and enhancing internal capacity building of media houses.

Activity-1: Training of Trainers (ToT) of PIB

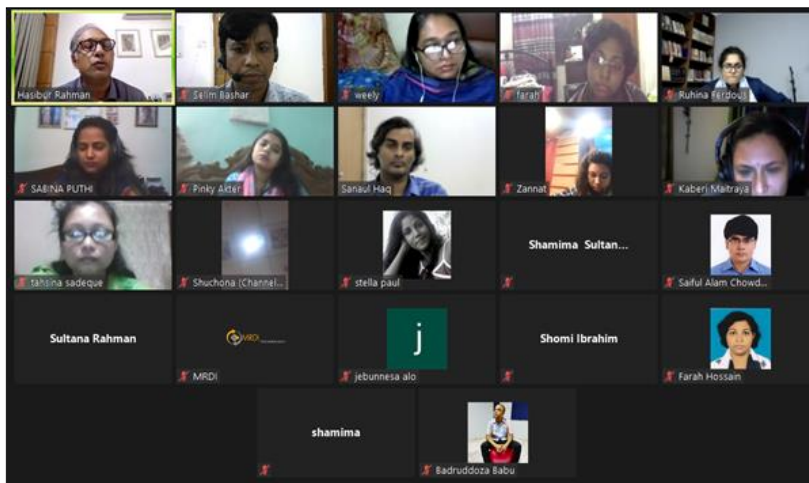
A 3-day training was held on into two episodes- one from 13 to 14 October and 2nd one was a follow-up meeting on 2 November, 2020 in Zoom Platform three and half hours on each day. Fifteen participants joined in the training programme including senior trainer, trainer, assistant trainer, reporter & sub-editor of PIB. Working journalists like Executive editor, Senior news editor, News editor, special correspondent of newspaper and television, a public health expert and Associate Professor & Assistant Professor of journalism department from public and private universities, have also been included in the panel of trainers of PIB, those who usually train journalists all over the country.



The workshop was conducted by Anna Maris, Programme Manager Bangladesh, Fojo Media Institute, Sweden.

Activity-2: Mentorship Programme on Investigative Reporting for Women Journalists

A four day-long online training was held in two parts on 9-10 & 15-16 November, 2020 using zoom meeting room. Total 12 participants attended in the women mentorship training, who were pitched their story



and previously selected from an open call applications with three to twelve years' experience in journalism. After review and examine their proposals, MRDI team choose 12 of them. They are working as a Staff reporter or Senior Reporter or Sub Editor in different televisions/newspapers.

The training was conducted by the mentors Stella Paul, Saiful Alam Chowdhury and Sultana Rahman and experts from MRDI team.

Activity 3: Workshop on Organizational Review for MRDI: Future Search Workshop

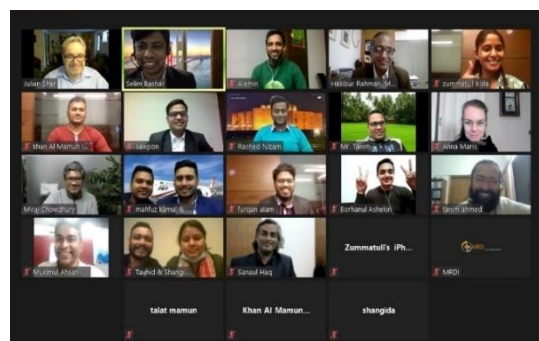
A 6-day residential workshop was held on for MRDI team members was held into two episodes- one from 8-11 January 2021 and 2nd one was a follow-up from 4-5 March 2021 in CCDB hope foundation, Savar. 13 team members of the organization were participated in the residential workshop including Executive Director, Advisor Planning & Development, Manager (Finance), Deputy Manager (Programme), Deputy Managers (Finance), Project coordinators, Senior Officer (HR & Admin), Senior Programme Officers and Training & Documentation Officer.



The first workshop was facilitated by Mir Mashruzaman, Senior news editor of Channel i.

Activity-4: Trainings on Editing and Managing Investigative Reports

The project had organized 3 separate online trainings on investigative journalism. Three trainings were held on within a month (from 16-18 January, 23-25 January and 24-26 February 2021) using online platform Zoom network. Each of the trainings was for three hours a day including sessions, groupworks and exercises.



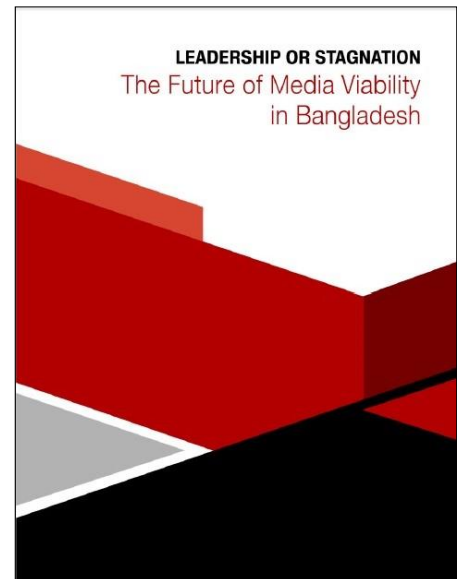
Total 39 participants attended in the online trainings from two partners (Jamuna Television and Channel 24) under the IJP programme of the project. The participants from both of the TV channel are including 5 Senior/Joint news editor, 3 Special correspondents, 22 Senior/staff reporters, 5 Senior/News room editors and 4 Special/senior/video journalists. Six of them are female journalists.

All the three IJ trainings were conducted by Julian Sher, eminent investigative journalist and trainer from Canada.

Activity-5: Report Launch and Discussion: The Future of Media Viability in Bangladesh

The project has launched the report on media viability, first of a kind study on the state of the media economy in Bangladesh. The report titled “*Leadership or Stagnation: The Future of Media Viability in Bangladesh*” analyzes media sustainability challenges and offers potential recommendations for changes for policy and newsroom practices.

The launching programme was on the digital platform due to the pandemic situation. More than Two hours long webinar discussion was held at 3:00 pm on 21st January 2021, and was also live on social media in the MRDI Facebook page [facebook.com/bdmrdi](https://www.facebook.com/bdmrdi). 19 panelists including Editor, Editor-in-Chief, Executive Editor, Executive Director, Head of News, Chief News Editor, Planning Editor, and Deputy Executive Editor from different media houses, and Country Head of an advertising agency, Chief Executives of Development/ Right’s Organizations,



and Chairman/ Head of Dept. from Journalism faculty of Public and private universities, participated in the webinar discussion and some of journalists and other professions joined the sessions as attendee through online registration. The webinar has over 1.8 thousand viewers on Facebook, who could also post their comment while the webinar was taking place online.

Activity-6: Women Mentorship Follow-up Training on Investigative Reporting

The project had organized a 4-day mentorship training earlier in November 2020, and planned for a follow-up training after two months. As per the plan a 3-day online training was held on 31 January-2 February, 2021 using online platform zoom meeting room. Total 12 participants attended in the women mentorship follow-up training, who were pitched their stories and previously selected from an open call applications and participated first training on this mentorship programme. They are working as Senior/Staff reporters or Sub Editor in different televisions/newspapers. After the training, they started working on their proposed stories in supervision of the mentors. They also participated in a lunch meeting in MRDI office on 16 January 2021, where they updated the progress of the stories.



Women Mentorship Follow-up Training on Investigative Reporting

Activity-7: Methodology Finalization Workshop for Change Initiative

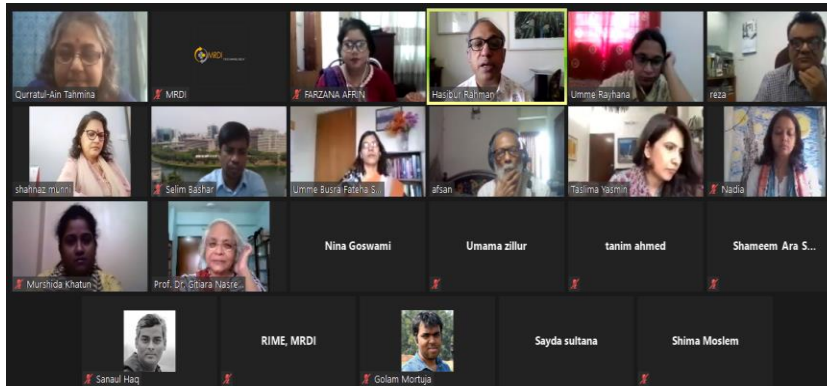
A two-day residential workshop was held from 26-27 February 2021 in CCDB Hope Foundation, Savar under the activity International Training Programme (ITP) of the project. 11 participants joined in the workshop including an executive director of a television channel, three directors and one assistant director of NGO's, a special correspondent of a newspaper, a lecturer of an university and executive director, head of programme & communication, head of IJ help desk and Deputy Manager Programme of MRDI. Some of them are also the ITP team members.



Activity-8: Meeting on Designing Media Content Analysis Tools and Setting Indicators

Under the project MRDI is conducting a research on media and gender. Core objective of the study is to formulate a set of guidelines for both print and broadcast media of Bangladesh. Before conducting media content analysis, MRDI arranged a discussion on designing media content analysis tools and setting indicators.

A half-day discussion was held from 10:00 am to 1:00 pm on 18th of April, 2021, through zoom meeting room. MRDI invited experts from several areas of the society so that chances of



lacking decreases and increases possibility to get various viewpoints on designing media content analysis tools and setting indicators. A total of 11 experts joined the discussion including university Professors, Senior Executives of NGOs, Writer and

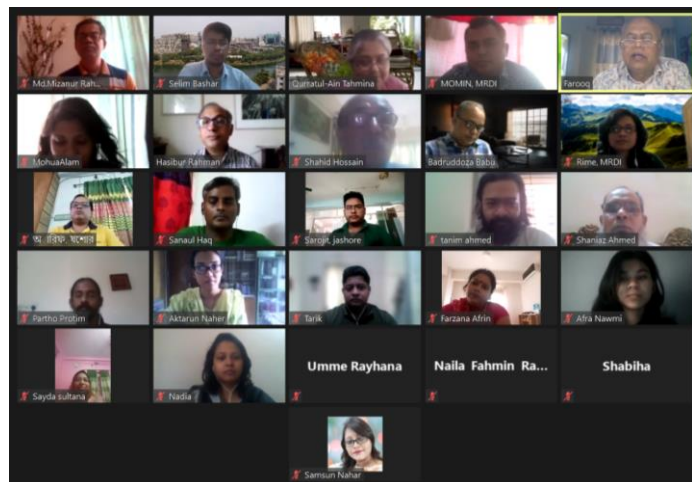
Researcher, Editor-in-Chief & Chief News Editor of electronic media, Senior Police officer and Senior Sub-editor of a national daily among whom 4 were male and 7 were female.

Qurratul-Ain-Tahmina, Principal Investigator of the study, presented the key points of the research and sought suggestions from the experts of the discussion.

Activity-9: Anti-corruption Workshop for MRDI

MRDI is committed to be transparent and accountable in its all activities and interventions. It values transparency and accountability within the organization and its management. The project feels to organize awareness workshop on anti-corruption for MRDI staffs including project staffs to make them responsive on the issue while implementing the project in its different stages.

A two-hours long workshop was organized on 3rd May 2021 through zoom network, where all the staff members of MRDI from programme and finance team, including the Executive Director of MRDI participated in the sessions. Among 26 participants, 14 are male and 12 are female. A chartered accountant with years of experience auditing development projects and NGOs, Muhammad Farooq, currently managing partner of Howladar Yunus, drew from his rich experience.



Activity-10: Media Gatekeeper Engagement Meeting

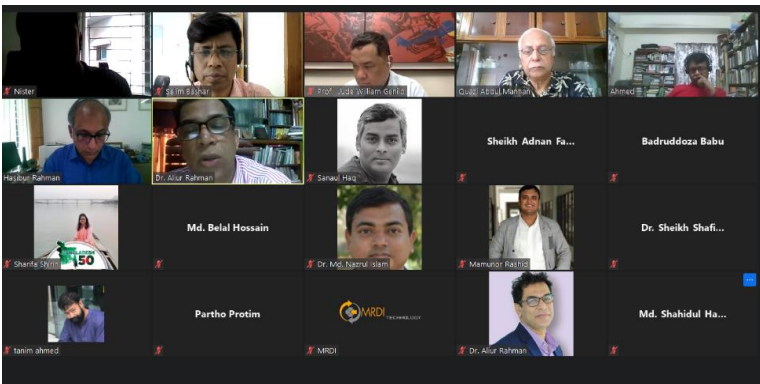
In the last year of the project, MRDI is developing a five-year strategic plan and have already finalized strategic objectives, core values, enabling objectives and cross-cutting issues of the organization. To share the strategic plan and the lessons learnt from the IQJB project MRDI has organized the meeting. The objective of the meeting is to find a way out how MRDI, can work with the journalists and our partner media organizations in future and to promote and facilitate qualitative journalism in Bangladesh.



More than two hours-long discussion meeting was held on 26th May 2021 at MRDI conference room from 11.00 am to 1.30 pm on 26 May 2021. 16 media gatekeepers from different print and electronic media participated in the meeting including editor, executive editor, executive director, deputy editor, deputy executive editor, head of news, chief news editor and news editor. Most of them are from the partner organizations in Investigative Journalism Partnership (IJP) programme of the project.

Activity-11: Interaction Meeting with Academics in Journalism

The project is at the end of its five year's activities. During this period there are successes



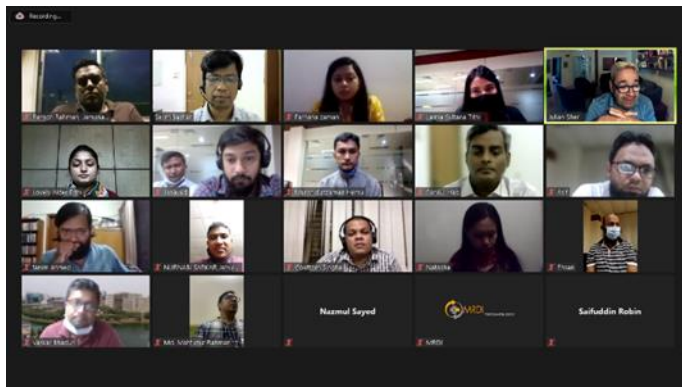
and good lessons, which contributed to develop journalism in Bangladesh. There are some challenges and obstacles also, which we did overcome with the help of partner media organizations and

journalists. To share the experiences and find a way forward, MRDI has arranged a interaction meeting with the academics in journalism. Chairman and head of the journalism schools of both public and private universities joined in the discussion.

The objective of the meeting is to find a way out how MRDI, journalism schools can work together in future to promote qualitative journalism in Bangladesh.

Activity-12: Follow-up Training Editing and Managing Investigative Report

The project has arranged a training on Editing and Managing Investigative Reports for our partner news outlets Channel 24 in January 2021 and a two trainings on same issue for Jamuna television in January and February of this year. Two follow-up of the trainings were organized on the same issue after three-four months. The trainings were held on 13 June and 17 June 2021. Both the follow-up trainings were day-long virtual session using zoom network due to the prevailing Covid 19 pandemic.



This program was originally designed for the News Managers, but we included reporters as well as technical persons (Cameraman and Video Editor) in the first three trainings. Total of 29 participants from both the news outlets, have participated in the trainings, who attended in the previous sessions in January and February. Among the 29 participants, 22 are male and 7 are female.

The training were conducted by Julian Sher, Investigative Journalist and Trainer from Canada. In the follow trainings, the project tried to understand the changes and development of the participants to produce quality investigative report.

Activity-13 Certificate giving ceremony of Women Mentorship programme

MRDI has started a four-month 'Mentorship Programme on Investigative Reporting for Women Journalists from 16 November 2020. The objective of the mentorship was to ensure further women representation and to encourage female reporters in investigative reporting. The mentorship took more than six months to complete their assignments of the mentees. Some of the stories already published and some of them are waiting.

Finally 9 of 12 participants of the mentorship programme successfully completed their tasks and invited to join the certificate giving ceremony. The certificate giving ceremony was held at 12:00 pm on 17 June 2021 in MRDI conference room followed by lunch. Seven out of nine successful mentees attended in the certificate giving ceremony, who had produced their planned reports under the mentorship programme.



It was an informal interaction between participants and the project team on their stories. Finally, certificates are distributed to the participants and all are joined in a photo session.

Activity-14: Mentorship Conclave: Investigative Reporting on Corruption

MRDI has invited applications for a four-month mentorship programme on Investigating corruption. An open call was launched for the journalists, working in newspaper, broadcast and online media. Objective of this programme is to develop the capacity of mid-career journalists in investigative journalism and encourage them to report on corruption related issues. In a 4-day residential programme the Journalists got the training on investigation and corruption reporting and finalized their plan under the supervision of 4 mentors.



Three days training was held on 26-28 June, 2021 at Conference Room, CCDB Hope Center, Savar, Dhaka. Date of the training was shifted 2 times due to country-wide lockdown in the pandemic situation. Finally, we could organize three days training (it was four days) as government called for a country-wide shut down again.

Total 14 participants attended in the mentorship training, who were submitted their ideas first. A total of 29 applicants submitted their story idea while applying for the mentorship. After review and examine their proposal MRDI team choose 14 of them. They submitted their idea in to prescribed story pitching form. There are 3 Reporters from Newspaper, 9 from TV channel and 1 from online. One freelancer has been selected. Among the 14 participants, 12 are male and 2 are female.

A total of 11 sessions were conducted during 3-days training including some exercise. The training was conducted by experts on both investigative journalism and corruption related issues including academics, journalists, government officials and development workers. Journalists got the support from their mentors to finalize their plan for investigating on their idea. They will investigate and produce their story in supervision with the mentors in four months.

Activity-15: Capacity building for Journalist Association

The project supports journalist associations for capacity building of the organizations, as well as its members. There are two different trainings for two organizations under the program capacity building of journalists association in August 2021. Objective of the training is to build skill and capacity of the reporters in certain area and the associations as well.



The first training was on the “Safety and Security” issue, for Women Journalist Network, Bangladesh-WJNB, the leading organization of women journalists in Bangladesh. A day-long training for WJNB was held on 22 August 2021 at YWCA auditorium. The training includes two sessions on physical safety and digital security with group works and open discussion on safety issues for women journalists. 20 women journalists participated in the training.



The second training under the programme capacity building of journalist association was on “In-depth reporting on Legal affairs” for the Law Reporters Forum, the prime organization of the journalists working with court and law issue. 25 journalists attended the full day training on 28 August 2021 at Hotel La Vinci, Dhaka.

Minister for Law and Parliamentary Affairs Anisul Huq was present as a resource person in the training along with two Judges of the Supreme court of Bangladesh Justice Obaidul Hasan and Justice M Enayetur Rahim. Five sessions was conducted on different laws, legal affairs and investigative journalism.

Activity-16: Publication of Investigative Journalism Manuals

Investigative journalism is the specialized and systematic way of doing journalism with some modern techniques. It has very few books and manuals in Bengali language. The project has started to translate internationally recognized books and manuals for journalists who want to learn more on investigative journalism in Bengali.



Two investigative journalism manuals have been published from the project this year. The manual “How to be the Mouthpiece of the people” was translated in to Bengali (*Kivabe Hoben Jonogoner Kanthaswar*) in last year but published in the first quarter as part of the last year activity. It is one of the famous manuals published by German organization KAS.

The second investigative journalism manual “Story Based Inquiry” in one of the renown and popular books published by UNESCO. The project has translated the book in to Bangla (*Story Nirvor Onusondhan*) and published it in the last month of the year.

Activity-17: Distribution of IJ Handbook and Safety Guideline

Investigative journalism is the main focus of the project and as there are huge demand of journalism books or manuals, the project has distributed around thousand copies of the manual “How to be the Mouthpiece of the people” (*Kivabe Hoben Jonogoner Kanthaswar*). The manuals were distributed to the journalists, faculty of journalism schools, experts and for the library of the universities. There is a plan for distributing the new manual “Story Based Inquiry” to the stakeholders very soon.

As the safety-security is a prime concern for the journalists and media houses. Handbook on safety and security was developed to discuss physical, digital, legal securities of journalist. 1000 copies of the handbook were reprinted to fulfill the additional demand of the journalist’s community.

Activity-18: Investigative Journalism Partnership (IJP)

In the last year of the project it seems to be some development in Investigative journalism partnership- IJP. But only in the first few months the partners were active in the partnership. Due to Covid-19 pandemic situation, and other causes like crisis in manpower and resources, digital transformation, the partners were not active as much as in the previous years. Existing partners were interested to get training and other support, rather than production of investigative journalism.

The positive side was some encouraging developments with several new partner’s interest in IJP, who asked for support in both investigative journalism and digital transformation or media convergence. This can be another significant avenue for the project. Several media outlets have expressed their interest in digital transformation, at least an initial assessment of their digital security and capability to transform. Support to the partners and individual reporters was continued through the Investigative Journalism helpdesk.

Activity-19: Investigative Journalism Helpdesk

Investigative Journalism helpdesk was active throughout the year. The helpdesk provided support on 225 instances. This is excluding the assistance under the mentorship programme which would increase the numbers even further. Although some newspaper reporters took support from the helpdesk, their reports have yet to be published. Together around 30 reporters from TV, online and newspapers took support from the helpdesk in a quarter. More

than 30 reports have been published in the media after taking support from the helpdesk this year on an average of 10 reports per quarter.

Activity-20: GIJN Bangla

GIJN Bangla continues to provide valuable knowledge and resources to journalists, Academics and students of Journalism departments. It has become most effective and helpful resource hub for the Journalist, students of Journalism and academics from the beginning. GIJN Bangla published and discuss tools and techniques of modern journalism and remarkable examples of investigative journalism, fellowship, grants and training related information to enhance the capacity of journalists.

In this year, from September 2020 to August 2021, total 100 articles and 12 newsletters were produced by GIJN Bangla. Our Facebook and twitter pages were also closely followed by this Journalism community. We've 5768 and 720 followers on Facebook and twitter respectively.

Activity-21: Media Monitoring

The project has updated its archive of mainstream Newspapers and primetime news bulletins of TV channels. Objective of this initiative is for the assess of qualitative and quantitative aspect of news reports published in Bangladeshi media. This archive can be used in the evaluation, research and analysis of media trends and for other purposes. Project continued the archiving 12 Newspapers and 12 TV channels in this year.

Sl.	Newspapers	TV Channels
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.	The Daily Star	News24
9.	News Age	Maasranga TV
10.	The Business Standard	Jamuna TV
11.	Financial Express	Bangla Vision
12.	Dhaka Tribune	Channel 24

Activity-22: RTI Help Desk

In the las year of the project, RTI help desk provided supports to journalists of national and local level and other professionals as well. Help desk gave the basic information and facilitated them to select appropriate designated officer and appellate authority and fill-up application, appeal and complaint forms. RTI helpdesk supported 55 journalists in this year. Number of total support was 298.

Activity-23: Feasibility Study of journalism training institute

MRDI is planning to broaden its horizon and uplift its capacity with establishing a Journalism Training Institute as a Center for Excellence in Bangladesh, and in the Asia region. Fojo and MRDI conducted a feasibility study that may support MRDI's strategic vision and mission.

The study had been carried out already and 1st draft of the report is submitted by the external consultant who proposed some possible options. Now it will be published after the review and discussions with MRDI and Fojo.

Activity-24: End-line Evaluation

The project has completed its 5 year in 31 August 2021. Before the ending there is an End-line evaluation of the whole project done by an external consultant. Report of the assessment was done. It shows that the project components and activities were all highly relevant to the context and the country's development agenda. Despite the challenging context and the pandemic, the project was highly effective and has already implemented most of the intended activities. Objectives and results are expected to be achieved, or partially achieved in few cases. It shows that the project has strong evidence of medium and longer-term impact. The project was impactful and there was a substantial amount of output.

Activity-25: Communication Strategy for MRDI

Under the project MRDI is developing its strategy for Communication and Knowledge Management. Consultants are working on the process and there were workshops, group discussions and several exercise on the communication policy or strategy. Knowledge management part is now in progress. After that there will be a complete communication and knowledge management strategy for the organization.

Challenges:

- Covid-19 pandemic was a great challenge to cope up with. Some of activities needed to revise and redesigned along with budget and some of activities needed to arrange over online.
- There are shortage of experts and consultants in Bangladesh related to the topics we deal with.
- Women participation in the training as participants and trainer was insignificant due to the less women journalists in Bangladeshi media.

Sustainability:

- Through the partnership media houses increased their capacity and professional practices. It will help them to ensure qualitative journalism in the future.
- The project initiated capacity building activities for journalists and organizations which will increase skills and capabilities of journalists in the long run.
- New approaches in Investigative journalism- tools and techniques, research, fact

checking and others make the journalism more up to date and let them think big in the future.

- Training of the trainers activities for training institutions and discussion with journalism faculties will roll on and trainers can disseminate their knowledge to the journalist.
- Safety and Security as the major concern in journalism, can be reduced through the training and awareness building. Knowledge on safety and security will reduce the level of risk for Journalists in future.
- Publication on Investigative Journalism and Safety and Security will help the journalists to learn more and provide supportive resource materials for the journalists and students.