

**Project Completion Report Year Three**

# **Improving Qualitative Journalism in Bangladesh, Phase II**

Report prepared by



*13 September 2022*

<b>Content</b>	<b>Page</b>
Background	3
Objective and Outcomes	3
Project period	4
Activity-1: Mentorship Programme <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Follow-up Conclave: Investigative Reporting on Corruption</li> <li>- Special Mentorship Programme on Public Interest Investigative Reporting</li> <li>- Exchange of Views &amp; Certificate Distribution Ceremony</li> <li>- Mentorship Programme: Training on Investigative Journalism</li> </ul>	4-7
Activity-2: Launching of Investigative Journalism Online Course	7
Activity 3: Promotion of online training courses	8
Activity-4: Safety & Security Training for Investigative Journalists	8
Activity-5: Consultation Meeting for Developing Gender Guideline	9
Activity-6: International Training Programme (ITP) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Gatekeeper engagement workshop: Advocacy for Enhanced Media Self-regulation in Bangladesh</li> <li>- Coordination workshop with Bangladesh Country ITP Team 1 &amp; 2</li> <li>- Methodology Finalization Workshop for Change Initiative</li> <li>- Focus Group Discussion Towards Sustainable Journalism</li> </ul>	10-11
Activity-7: Sweden visit of ITP Team & MRDI Staffs	11
Activity-8: Capacity building for Journalist Association <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Workshop on Investigative Journalism on Company Reporting</li> <li>- Training for Women Journalists: Safety &amp; Security in Investigative Reporting</li> <li>- Workshop for Camera Journalists: The Camera as Storyteller</li> <li>- Training on Use RTI Act in Investigative Reporting</li> </ul>	12-14
Activity-9: Journalist Training on Investigative Reporting	14
Activity-10: Improving Quality Reporting: Interaction with Mentors	15
Activity-11: Boot Camp for Reporters on Investigative Reporting	16
Activity-12: Investigative Journalism Partnership (IJP)	16
Activity-13: Investigative Journalism Helpdesk	16
Activity-14: GIJN Bangla	17
Activity-15: RTI Help Desk	17
Activity-16: Media Monitoring	17
Activity-17: Publication and Distribution	18
Challenges	18
Sustainability	19

## **Background:**

Journalism in Bangladesh has proliferated in recent times, so much so, that the number of journalists is unknown. There are more than 36 television channels and 3,222 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 1,323, of which 549 is published from Dhaka alone. The number of institutions is not enough to produce quality journalists. Most of the newsrooms run with young reporters without proper training or experience. Moreover, there is a shortage of quality leaders and mentors, trainers, and managers in the news outlets.

There is a strong need for initiatives to train professionals for improving of journalism in Bangladesh, building capacity of journalists, producing high quality in-depth reports of public interest. Issues like safety and security of journalists, conflict between media owners and other stakeholders, political and business conflicts also need to be addressed. The project intends to facilitate Bangladeshi news outlets in helping strengthen democracy, transparency, and freedom of expression. Our initiatives will strive to do so by reducing corruption, fostering gender equality, and contributing towards a sustainable society, with a particular focus on climate change.

It is in this context of Bangladesh’s complex media landscape that the project ‘Improving Qualitative Journalism in Bangladesh’ implemented jointly by Fojo Media Institute and MRDI has been undertaken to improve journalism in general and lift the quality of in-depth reporting to be specific. The project has completed its first phase (5 years) 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 improve the conditions for strengthening democracy, transparency, and freedom of expression, reducing corruption, fostering gender equality and contributing to build a sustainable society, through a particular focus on climate change.

### ***Specific objective***

Publishers and journalists produce investigative, sustainable journalism that holds political and economic power to account, increases transparency and supports right to information, addressing environment/climate change, diversity and gender equality, poverty, and democracy, thereby regaining trust and raising revenues.

### ***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 three was September 2021 - August 2022.

## Activities performed in Year 3 (Phase II):

Third 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: Mentorship Programme

#### i) Mentorship Follow-up Conclave: Investigative Reporting on Corruption

A three-day residential training was held at CCDB HOPE Center, Savar from 10 to 12 October 2021. Total 14 participants attended in the mentorship follow-up training, including one special correspondent, eight senior reporters, four staff reporters and one apprentice reporter from different media houses with 2 female reporters, who participated the previous residential conclave. Participants shared their draft stories with mentors, fixed a timeline and developed a 'to-do' list and participants tried to finalize their draft reports, what they were investigating.



ii) Special Mentorship Programme on Public Interest Investigative Reporting

A four-day long residential training was held at CCDB HOPE Centre, Savar from 19 to 22

December 2021. Total 15 participants attended in the special mentorship training for local correspondents, including senior reporters, staff reporters and district correspondents from different media houses with one female reporter, who were nominated by their respective media houses. Participants shared their story idea through a prescribed pitch form,



fixed a timeline and developed a ‘to-do’ list regarding their investigative stories in the residential training. Later, the same participants joined a three-day residential follow-up training in the same venue from 24-26 January 2022, where they reviewed the previous learnings and learned new tools-techniques of investigative journalism. Finally, they sit with their individual mentors

to finalize their investigative stories and get last guidance or final touch on their scripts. All 15 mentees completed their tasks and published or submitted their final reports to their media houses by end of February 2022 under the activity of special mentorship programme.



### iii) Exchange of Views & Certificate Distribution Ceremony

A half-day long exchange of views & certificate distribution ceremony was held at the YWCA auditorium, Mohammadpur, Dhaka on 29 March 2022. Sixteen mentees from both the mentorship programmes on



Corruption Investigative Reporting and Public Interest Investigative Reporting participated in the ceremony and received their certificates of successful completion against their assignments. Total 24 mentees out of 29 selected and nominated reporters from different media houses including 15 from outside Dhaka have successfully completed their tasks with productions of planned stories. The reporters have been mentored by 9 eminent journalists under the mentorship programmes started from June 2021.

Eleven media gatekeepers participated in the discussion and exchange their views on the possibilities of investigative journalism in the field level and dos. End of the programme Hasibur Rahman, Executive Director of MRDI distributed certificates to the mentees.



iv) Mentorship Programme: Training on Investigative Journalism



A four-day training was held at CCDB HOPE Centre, Savar, Dhaka from 2-5 July 2022 including two female reporters. Total 12 local correspondents working for different newspapers, television and online participated in the residential training. There is also a freelance journalist as the mentees were selected through an open call. MRDI team including head IJ help Desk have gone through an extensive selection process based on the story idea submitted by the applicants along with other criteria. A total of 76 application were submitted. Among the 12 selected, there are 5 Reporters from Newspapers, 4 from TV channels and 3 from online news portal. Among the 12 mentee journalists two were women.

The four-day training was designed in a such way so that every participant can focus on their story idea, develop it with the help of the facilitator, having insight from the trainers and finally three mentors appointed to complete their planned story. The session plan was developed to meet this purpose.

**Activity-2: Launching of Investigative Journalism Online Course**

The online training course on investigative journalism has been launched on November 3, 2021,



where sessions are conducted by four eminent journalists, teachers and instructors. In the first month of its launching, more than one thousand journalists, students and other professionals have enrolled for this course, who are interested to learn investigative journalism. Gradually, it has been increased at 1,441 including 346

participants achieved certificates with successful completion and another 194 have been progressing.

### Activity-3: Promotion of online training courses

Five workshops have been organized in Rajshahi, Chattogram, Khulna, Rangpur & Barishal respectively on 14 December 21, 2 January, 31 January, 6 February & 17 April 2022 as part of the promotional activities to introduce the online training course on investigative journalism to journalists and journalism teachers & students. 82 journalists participated in the journalists' workshops organized in the five cities and 81 students of Journalism Department of Rajshahi University and Chittagong University took part in the workshop organized in both universities. Project team including Executive Director of MRDI and Head of IJ Helpdesk visited the places and organized the meetings with journalists and students, where they exchanged their views regarding newly launched online course.



### Activity-4: Safety & Security Training for Investigative Journalists

A four-day residential training was organized at the CCDB HOPE Centre in Savar from 8 to 11 January 2022. Nine investigative journalists from print, online & television media, participated in the four-day long residential



training including chief reporter, editor of TV investigative show, special correspondent, senior reporter, and freelance journalist. Chris Post, Photographer and Safety Trainer from USA, and Mohammad Shahadat Hossain, Information Security Expert, conducted different sessions of the

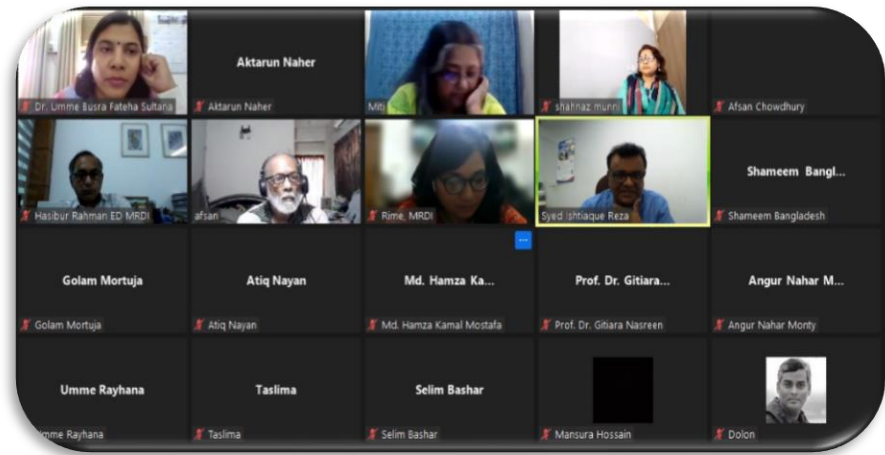


training, and Sarah Kate, Information Security Expert from USA connected virtually and conducted the sessions.



#### Activity-5: Consultation Meeting for Developing Gender Guideline

A half-day long consultation meeting was held on 22 February 2022 through zoom meeting room using digital platform under the activity of Gender Survey and Guideline Development, aiming to formulate a set of gender guidelines for media in Bangladesh. 10 experts including university teacher, editor-in-chief and chief news editor of television channels, Senior reporter, and senior sub-editor and development workers participated in the discussion and gave their expert opinions. Beginning of the discussion Qurratul-Ain-Tahmina, principal investigator of the survey made a presentation on her draft guidelines and pursued for comments, suggestions, and critiques from the participants.



## Activity-6: International Training Programme (ITP)

### i) Gatekeeper engagement workshop: Advocacy for Enhanced Media Self-regulation in Bangladesh

A half-day long gatekeeper engagement workshop on Advocacy for Enhanced Media Self-regulation in Bangladesh was held at the conference room of CCDB Hope Center, Savar Dhaka on 7 November 2021. Eleven gatekeepers from different print and TV media participated in the workshop. Six member of Bangladeshi ITP team also present in the programme. MRDI Executive Director welcomed all participants in the programme. He briefly talked about the ITP programme and its objective. A presentation on findings and recommendations of change initiative was made by the ITP team members. They presented their journey of change initiative so far.

### ii) Coordination workshop with Bangladesh Country ITP Team 1 & 2

A half-day long coordination workshop with ITP Team 1 & 2 was held at the YWCA Auditorium, Mohammadpur, Dhaka on 19 March 2022. Eleven country team members from previous and current teams along with national facilitators participated in the workshop.



Carolina Jemsby, ITP Programme Director, NIRAS conducted the workshop. At the beginning she made a presentation on the regulatory framework of Swedish Media system and tried

to make comparison with our country system through the open discussions. Second part of the workshop was focused on change initiatives by both groups. They plan to disseminate the recommendations of their change initiative with the Press Council and the Parliamentary Standing Committee. The workshop also highlighted the challenges to carry forward the change initiative process for its sustainability.

### iii) Methodology Finalization Workshop for Change Initiative

A Day long workshop with Bangladesh Country team members of ITP 2 was held at the YWCA Auditorium, Dhaka on 27 March 2022. Four country team members were present physically and two connected through zoom link.

The whole workshop was divided into seven sessions on sharing ITP experiences and update on change initiative formulation, context and situation analysis, problem analysis, stakeholder analysis, Vision, mission and objective, risk Analysis, tools analysis and activity & timeline based on proposed change initiative. The workshop was facilitated by Mir Attaqui Masrur Zaman, Director of Somashte and one of team members of ITP-1.

ITP Team members worked on the formats provided by NIRAS to develop the change initiative, finalized the activities for the Change Initiative, timeline of overall work, and responsibilities of the team members to implement.

iv) *Focus Group Discussion Towards Sustainable Journalism*

The project held discussions in and outside Dhaka with journalist leaders of major unions and associations in Dhaka, reporters and correspondents from Khulna and journalism faculties from University of Rajshahi and Varendra University, a private university in Rajshahi. These activities were conducted looking ahead at the change initiative report which is a part of the ITP (International Training Programme) 2021 on 29 June, 22 July, and 30 July 2022. Eight Journalist leaders including two women, 10 Journalists from different news outlets, both national and local, working in Khulna, and eight teachers, six from Rajshahi University's journalism department and two Varendra University's journalism department, participated in the FGDs. The discussion was designed to have reflections from the major stakeholders on some pre-determined talking points. The ITP Bangladesh team along with the country facilitator shared the concept of the change initiative and requested the discussants to share their point of view.

**Activity-7: Sweden visit of ITP Team & MRDI Staffs**

Under an advanced International Training Programme (ITP) on "Media Regulation in a Democratic Framework, a two-week visit to Sweden was arranged from 13 May to 28 May 2022. The Training Programme is organised jointly by NIRAS Sweden AB, Fojo Media Institute, Global Reporting, and International Media Support, on behalf of the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA).

The visit was as part of a year-long fellowship which is mainly organized digitally through zoom platform. There were 11 participants in two batches from Bangladesh under the ITP activity of IQJB Project, and MRDI is working as the country facilitator for the programme. The first batch has already completed their fellowship and shared their work with the ITP team in Sweden, while the second batch has just finalized their change initiative for the fellowship and shared their idea during the visit. Then the second batch were given feedback and insights from experts on their change initiative.

At the same time some of MRDI staffs participated in a study visit organized by Fojo Media institute to learn media trends of Sweden, a Training on Result Based Management (RBM), and also visited the Grab conference in Lulea.

## Activity-8: Capacity building for Journalist Association

Four trainings have been organized for three different journalist organization under the activity of Capacity Building for Journalist Association through the project year- two for Dhaka Reporters Unity (DRU), one for each of Television Camera Journalists' Association (TCA) and Economic Reporters' Forum (ERF) as stated below:

### *i) Workshop on Investigative Journalism on Company Reporting*



A day-long workshop on 'Investigative Journalism on Company Reporting' was held at Economic Reporter's Forum Auditorium, Paltan Tower, Dhaka on 12 February 2022 as part of the activity of capacity building for journalists' association. 50 member journalists participated in the training, who were selected by the organization. Senior Secretary of Ministry of Commerce, Senior Company lawyer, Financial Analyst and Journalist were present as resource person in the workshop, where reporters learned about how to investigate a company financial statement and dig out the irregularity in corporate sector.

### *ii) Training for Women Journalists: Safety & Security in Investigative Reporting*

A Day-long Training for Women Journalists on Safety & Security in Investigative Reporting was held at Nasrul Hamid auditorium of Dhaka Reporter's Unity on 1 April 2022. 23 women journalists from different print, television, online Media, and news agencies participated in the training facilitated by Angur Nahar Monty, Freelance Journalist, and coordinator of Women Journalist Network, Bangladesh (WJNB).



The training was divided into four sessions containing lectures & multimedia presentation. Participants also took part in a group work, where they identified safety risks and challenges, they faced and possible solutions. MRDI's publications on journalists' safety and security were also

distributed to the participants to facilitate them to understand the topics in depth.

iii) Workshop for Camera Journalists: The Camera as Storyteller

A day-long workshop for the members of TV Camera journalist Association-TCA was held at Bishwo Shahitto Kendro in Dhaka on 26 April 2022 as part of the activity of capacity building of journalists' association. Total 30



camera journalists from different media houses participated in the training, who were nominated by TCA. The training was conducted jointly by Julian Sher, Investigative Journalist & Trainer and Pierre Mainville, News & Documentary Cameraman from Canada focused on doing better in investigative filming.

The experts gave lessons on Planning, setting up characters, interview rules, illustrate communications, hidden camera techniques and some camera equipment tips. The sessions were both theoretical and practical. Camera journalists were curious and keen to know about the filming techniques for investigative journalism. They wish to use their knowledge from the sessions in their future work.

iv) Training on Use RTI Act in Investigative Reporting

A day-long training was held at Nasrul Hamid auditorium of Dhaka Reporter's Unity (DRU) in Segun Bagicha, Dhaka on 30th July 2022 for its members jointly organized by MRDI and DRU. 26 reporters attended including 6 female participants in the training who are staff reporters, senior reporters, and special correspondents of different media houses in Dhaka. The training was inaugurated by The Chief Information Commissioner of Bangladesh, Murtuza Ahmad. He said that journalists have the potential to shake up the society through investigative journalism and shine light into the darkness at the opening. He also told, the Information Commission will assist in doing investigative journalism using the Right to Information Act and will support DRU initiatives related to RTI and journalism.



Hasibur Rahman, Executive Director of MRDI, said that MRDI wants to be a partner in the field of investigative journalism and ready to extend cooperation in RTI related activities, if DRU plans. Resource persons conducted sessions regarding investigative reporting and details of using RTI act for investigations.

**Activity-9: Journalist Training on Investigative Reporting**

A Three-day residential training was held on 3-5 April 2022 at CCDB Hope Foundation, Savar, Dhaka. Total 13 participants attended in the training, who were submitted their investigative reports to DRU for the annual best reporting award of the organization, but not awarded. MRDI requested DRU to select their members who did investigative reports last year and need training to improve their investigative skills. There are 3 reporters from television, 5 from newspapers, and 5 from online news



portals including 4 female members of DRU.

A total of 10 sessions were conducted during 3-days training including some practical sessions and experts were from the field of investigative journalism and related issues. MRDI also used its own experts in the training, who are Badruddoza Babu, Head of IJ Helpdesk of MRDI, Qurratul-Ain-Tahmina, Journalist and Trainer and Hasibur Rahman, Executive Director of MRDI. Along with the experts the whole training was facilitated by Miraj Ahmed Chowdhury, Journalists, and trainer.

#### **Activity-10: Improving Quality Reporting: Interaction with Mentors**

A three-day interaction meeting was held on 10-12 April 2022 at the Conference Room of CCDB Hope Foundation, Savar, Dhaka with residential manner. A total of 11 participants attended in the interactive sessions, 2 of them were female.

The sessions were conducted through discussion and multimedia presentations. There are many



discussions on storytelling where reporters should follow certain structure and maintain clarity in writing, so that the story is easy to understand and engage the audience effectively. Mentors can guide them to

use appropriate language for the audience. The main points, evidence, and conclusion must be clear. There are few ethical standards including make the story gender balance, take all necessary steps to protect sources and commit no ethical violation. The reporters must be aware of not doing negative impacts on innocent persons and unnecessarily sensationalize.

## Activity-11: Boot Camp for Reporters on Investigative Reporting

A four-day residential training for 11 young reporters from different television channels was



held from 22-25 August 2022, who were selected by the IQJB project team from reporters nominated by their respective media houses. Following the boot camp, these 11 reporters will be given one-month mentorship support under the supervision of designated mentors to produce individual stories. Two former journalists conducted the boot camp as facilitators and

mentors under the leadership of Badruddoza Babu, Head of Capacity Building of MRDI. Through the bootcamp, participants learned the basics of television journalism with some new tools, techniques, and practical lessons, which will help them to produce good investigative reports under this mentorship programme & in future.

## Activity-12: Investigative Journalism Partnership (IJP)

The last year of the project started seeing some development in investigative journalism partnership - IJP. Although they could not resume their activities fully due to Covid pandemic restrictions and other causes like crisis in manpower and resources due to dwindling revenues from advertisement, there was still renewed interest in investigative journalism as well as digital transformation. Existing partners were interested to get training and other support, but production of investigative journalism needed much more active encouragement since it is such a resource-intensive initiative and engagement.

The positive side was that there were some encouraging developments with several new partner's interested 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 news 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 continued through the Investigative Journalism helpdesk.

## Activity-13: Investigative Journalism Helpdesk

Investigative Journalism helpdesk was active throughout the year. The helpdesk provided support on at least 189 instances. This is excluding the assistance under the mentorship programme which would increase the number even further. Around 74 reporters from TV, online and newspapers took support from the helpdesk in the project year. More than 35 reports have



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

#### Activity-14: 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 cutting-edge resource hub for the journalists, students, and academics of journalism since its inception. GIJN Bangla publishes and discusses guides, tip sheets, 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 2021 to August 2022, total 91 articles and 12 newsletters have been produced by GIJN Bangla. Our Facebook and Twitter pages are also being closely followed by 6681 and 1153 followers respectively.

#### Activity-15: Media Monitoring

There is a media monitoring team comprising two members to inform and strengthen organization with relevant data on targeted issues from targeted news outlets. The monitoring team is tracking investigative and in-depth reports of targeted media, as team can use those data for future reports of publication. The team selected 16 national news outlets that includes 7 newspapers, 5 televisions and 4 online news portals.

Sl.	Newspapers/ Portal	TV Channels
1.	Prothom Alo	BTV
2.	Ittefaq	ATN Bangla
3.	Samakal	NTV
4.	Kalerkantha	Ekattor TV
5.	Banik Barta	Independent TV
6.	Ajker Patrika	Somoy TV
7.	The Daily Star	Channel-i
8.	News Age	News24
9.	The Business Standard	Maasranga TV
10.	Dhaka Tribune	Jamuna TV
11.	<i>Bangla Tribune</i>	Bangla Vision
12.	<i>Jago News</i>	Channel 24
13.	<i>Bdnews24</i>	Nagorik TV
14.	<i>News Bangla</i>	

#### Activity-16: RTI Help Desk

In the last 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 40 journalists in this year. Number of total supports was 122.

## Activity-17: Publication and Distribution

Fact Checking & verification Handbook and other two publications including gender guidelines for media under gender survey of the project have been published and reprinted some of previous investigative journalism manuals, RTI Handbook and safety guidelines for journalists and distributed to the media personnel, reporters, and other stakeholders.



### Challenges:

- Training individual reporters from a number of outlets often does not have the desired impact of replication back in the newsrooms.
- Investigations are cost intensive and therefore often avoided just to keep operating costs low.
- Hands on training and workshop go a long way in connecting with journalists especially as was seen with the camera journalists.
- Building capacity at an organisation within a group of people pays off eventually as it is clear from the newly launched 'Unmochon', which clearly follows in the footsteps of 'Onushondhan' which was the original trailblazer.
- The programme has had to constantly extend time for the investigations/groundwork/research for mentees after their training sessions or workshops. This has been because in most of the cases the in-depth reports or investigations take longer, and editors are generally unwilling to allow so much time for one report especially for district correspondents or junior reporters who are often assigned to cover several events almost every day.

## Sustainability:

- Training a team of reporters within a single newsroom including news managers ensure teamwork and even buy-in from the gatekeepers of the newsroom and might prove to be more productive.
- It should be convincingly demonstrated to the news managers that good journalism and thereby, good content has a better chance of monetization through more efficient distribution across digital platforms.
- Arrange for practical hands-on workshop experience even it is for a short period to ensure maximum retention and potentially higher capacity building.
- Training or mentoring journalists might work better if that happens in a group so that the new knowledge is not lost if an individual leaves the organisation. In fact, future events could consider inviting at least two people from a single organisation so as to create better synergy.
- The result matrix will need to be consolidated in light of the planned activities as well as the targets. Changes required will have to be brought in the following year that may be reflected once the project files a revision with the local Bangladesh authority.
- Have a provision built into the programme to allow flexible extensions for genuine cases. The provision for payment of mentors and mentees should include conditions that it may be extended, but only if needed beyond the two months that the project typically allows. However, the provisions should be a matter of last resort only.
- Publications and online courses on Investigative Journalism and Safety & Security including Fact checking and verification handbook & Gender guideline or media will help the journalists to learn more and provide supportive resource materials for the journalists and students.