

First Yearly Report
(16 August 2022- 15 August 2023)

Climate, energy and the media

Prepared by



04 October 2023

Context

Bangladesh, a fast-growing economy in Asia, is on a trajectory to become a middle-income country and striving to become a developed nation by 2041. Its impressive growth performance that has averaged close to 6 percent per annum since the turn of the century fuelled by rising exports, remittances and a booming private sector. Investment, the principal driver of growth has risen from 24 percent of GDP to 32 percent in two decades, according to the World Bank.

Bangladesh aspires to achieve SDG 7 by 2030 and contingent on the steady growth of clean energy. It also has a national target of increasing the share of renewable energy by 20 percent of total consumption within 2030. According to Sustainable & Renewable Energy Development Authority (SREDA), the share of renewable energy was 3.25 percent in 2019, and according to Energy Tracker, renewable energy in Bangladesh needs US \$70 billion in power investment by 2035 to achieve its renewable energy goals.

The challenge is formidable, but it is rarely discussed in media, while it can play a significant role in not only promoting the clean energy but also to hold the authority and businesses accountable for every dollar invested in this sector. Media coverage around this issue remained limited within post-editorials, occasional reporting of new green ventures and publishing press releases by the government and the companies. But the dire need of diversifying energy sources, the impact of fossil fuel on environment, climate change, and above all, life - is yet underreported.

Strong role of media on promoting renewable energy can foster the pace of adopting new green technologies in power generation, increase use of clean energy in industrial and other productions and also help mitigate the impact of climate change and environmental degradation. This opportunity to translate this critical issue into everyday reporting is often marred by the lack of capacity and resources in the media as a whole, and lack of skills to produce engaging contents to create demand among its audience. Neither there is much collaboration between media and civil society on renewable energy that is observed in many other countries.

Thus, the project targets media and journalists to have greater capacity and a positive mind-set to produce quality stories on climate change, impact of fossil fuel use on environment, the need for clean energy for sustainable development, and ensure transparency and accountability in renewable energy investments.

Project Objective

To bring the sustainable energy goals in policy discussions through engagement of media to play its due role.

Reporting period: 16 August 2022 - 15 August 2023

Activity Performed

Activity 1- Research

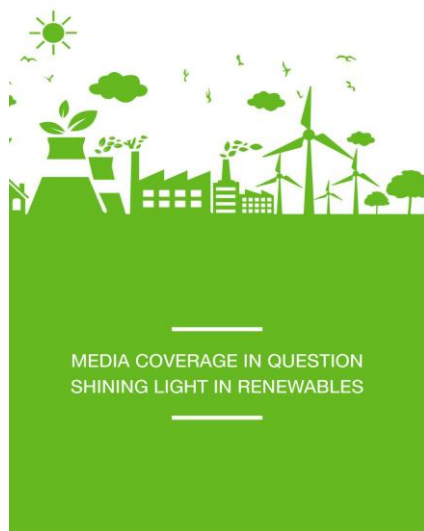
MRDI conducted a comprehensive research assessing the current status of media coverage regarding renewable energy, fossil-fuel-based energy, environmental issues, and climate change in Bangladesh with support from Digitally Right, a research organization. The research used a diverse methodology, including existing literature review, media monitoring, focus group discussions, and interviews with key informants. It also analysed news reports, published between 2020 and 2022, from a total of 10 news outlets, including print, television, and online portals.

As part of this research, a Focus Group Discussion (FGD) was organized, involving nine journalists from leading news outlets specialised in energy and environmental issues, along with a communications expert. Furthermore, interviews were conducted with six experts representing various sectors, including media, academia, and civil society.

The research report provides insights and recommendations for enhancing coverage of both renewable and non-renewable energy sources, as well as critical issues related to climate change.

The insights are crucial for bringing important topics and concerns to the attention of the public and decision-makers alike. Outcomes of this study is expected to serve as a valuable guide for news organizations, editorial teams, and media development professionals.

Key findings of the report:



- Environmental and climate change related news received the highest media attention compared to non-renewable and renewable energy. The share on renewable energy in the coverage was only 4%.
- Newspapers (print editions) account for 75% coverage on the issues.
- Television channels provided better treatment to energy and environment related stories than newspapers.
- Only a quarter of the coverage could make it to the first and last page of the newspaper, considered as the placeholder for most important stories.
- Solar and biogas accounted for half of the news coverage on renewable energy.
- Renewable energy as a reporting issue is largely ignored at the local level.
- In-depth and investigative stories are rare, and those are mostly related to environment and climate change.
- Quality of reporting is constrained by poor and inadequate sourcing of information and lack of journalistic rigor.

- Overall score in gender sensitiveness was low as only 3% of the stories could offer diverse gender representation and perspectives.

Recommendations

- Develop a pool of journalists with relevant knowledge.
- Develop specialized online-based information hubs.
- Offer hands-on training, prioritise young, enthusiastic journalists for the capacity development.

Activity 2 - Publication of the research report

A total of 500 copies were published and 146 of them were distributed to news organizations, news managers, and media development professionals.

Activity 3 - Report Sharing Workshop and Training Content Development Meeting

Considering the busy schedules of news gatekeepers, the project team combined two separate events into a single gathering instead of holding separate sessions for the report sharing workshop and training content development meeting. It was organised on March 2, 2023.

The Report Sharing Workshop brought together gatekeepers from 12 news organizations and a representative from an international collaborative network of communications professionals specialised in climate, energy, and environmental topics.



On the same day, a meeting was convened with the resource persons to discuss and finalise training content and session plan for an upcoming training. During this meeting, a preliminary version of the training content was distributed to guests and their feedback was sought. The

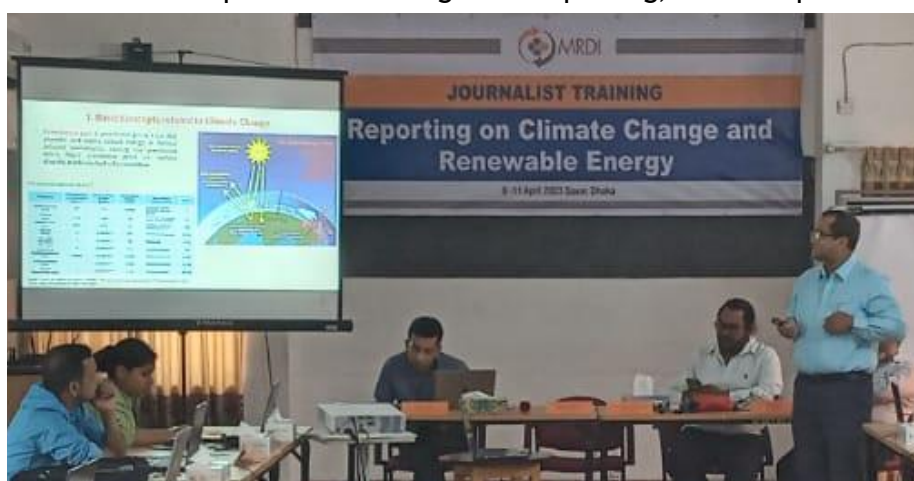
session began with a presentation of the research findings, highlighting challenges and recommendations related to media coverage in four specific thematic areas.

Miraj Ahmed Chowdhury, managing director of Digitally Rights, facilitated this discussion and also incorporated input from the participants. Following this, the attendees engaged in discussions about the draft session plan and brainstormed potential resource persons.

Activity 4 - Three-Day Residential Training on Climate Change and Renewable Energy Reporting

From 09-11 April 2023, a three-day residential training was arranged to enhance the capabilities of young and promising journalists to strengthen the capacity of the Bangladeshi news media and its journalists to effectively contribute to the sustainable energy goals.

This training offered sessions on in-depth and investigative reporting, with a particular emphasis on subjects such as climate change, the adverse effects of fossil energy on various aspects of society, including the economy, health, agriculture, and sustainable development, as well as issues related to renewable energy.



Organised at CCDB Hope Centre, Savar, Dhaka, the training facilitated learning of a fresh group of young reporters to equip them with the skills necessary to produce in-depth and investigative coverage on these crucial themes.

A total of 15 reporters took part in this training and submitted their story ideas for mentorship.

Participants:

Fifteen young and promising reporters participated in the training. The participants were nominated by the respective media houses, in response to a MRDI request. Among the 15, 20% were female reporters.

Session methods:

Exercises, lectures, and multimedia presentations were used to conduct the training. Every day includes question-and-answer sessions, group discussions, and hands-on activities. The training also included evaluation of the training.

Evaluation and observation:

Participants agreed that the training fulfilled their expectation, with four participants putting a score of 6 out of a 1-6 scale and nine others gave a score of 5 out of 6. All the participants

agreed the information given during the training programme was useful & relevant, including seven putting a score of 6 out of 6 scoring and eight others putting a five out of six scoring.

Nine out of 15 participants agreed that the trainers were competent & helpful while remaining ones scored five points mark. Eight participants and seven participants scored six points and five points respectively regarding their satisfaction about venue, food, and other facilities.

Recommendations

- Three days is the absolute minimal amount of time, especially for beginners training.
- Similar capacity-building training must be conducted more frequently, with an extended duration.
- Training can be organized with a focus on only energy reporting.
- Trainers with practical expertise on climate change reporting will be beneficial.

Activity 5 - Mentorship support to 15 Reporters

Aimed to strengthen the capacity of Bangladeshi news media and journalists to effectively contribute to attaining sustainable energy objectives, MRDI awarded mentorship opportunities to 15 reporters as an way to assist them in developing and producing in-depth and investigative stories related to energy, specifically focusing on renewable energy. The mentorship began on May 1 and extended through August 15.

Under this initiative, each mentees worked closely under a mentor who offered valuable advice and direction. The mentors guided them on how to develop the stories and apply the skills acquired during the earlier three-day residential training.

As a result of this mentorship program, a total of 15 stories from 14 news outlets were published/ on-aired during the specified reporting period.

Activity 6 - News Managers Engagement Meeting



In order to foster a positive perspective regarding the significance of renewable energy, MRDI organised a News Managers Engagement Meeting on August 3 at its office. Editors and newsroom managers from different news outlets, including from

print, online, and television media, represented a total of 13 news outlets, along with a communication professional specialised in climate, energy, and environmental topics.

During the meeting, the participants engaged in discussions about the key roles that editors and newsroom managers hold as primary stakeholders in shaping the media's support for the transition to renewable energy. The key focus was on encouraging these gatekeepers to actively contribute to the cause by promoting a favorable perspective on the importance of renewable energy. This effort is a potential way to bring policy attention and drive positive change in relevant areas.

Challenges faced:

Many of the reports produced under mentorship support faced delays in publication because reporters were occupied with current issue-based assignments. The project team had to extend and revise the timeline to ensure participants could fulfill their assignments effectively.

Sustainability

- The research report will serve as a reference for news organizations, editorial teams, and media development professionals.
- MRDI website's online resource repository will be enriched with materials acquired from this project, ensuring journalists have access to valuable information regarding renewable energy reporting.
- Newsroom gatekeepers will promote advocating for transition to renewable energy through their reporting and editorial content.
- Participants are now connected to IJ Help Desk and RTI Help Desk at MRDI. They will continue to receive guidance from help desks in future.

Future Plans

Subject to the availability of funds or project extensions, the project team aims to:

- Enhance the skills and expertise of the previously trained group of reporters
- Continue ongoing engagement with experts through study circles
- Provide capacity-building opportunities for district correspondents
- Establish a knowledge hub to assist journalists in accessing relevant data
- Produce a glossary to facilitate a better understanding of terminologies regarding energy sector