

Second Yearly Report
(16 August 2023- 15 August 2024)

Climate, energy and the media

Prepared by



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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 to post-editorials, occasional reporting of new green ventures and publishing press releases by the government and the companies. But the dire need to diversify energy sources, the impact of fossil fuel on the 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 2023 - 15 August 2024

Activity Performed

Activity 1- Lesson Learnt Workshop and Certificate Giving Ceremony



A Lesson Learnt Workshop and Certificate Giving Ceremony was organised at MRDI office on 28 September 2023 for journalists who earlier underwent training and mentorship on climate change and renewable energy reporting. This event facilitated the exchange of insights and experiences from the production-based capacity building initiatives among the participants.

At the programme, a total of 11 journalists representing various media platforms including print, online and TV, shared their valuable lessons learned through these capacity development activities. MRDI also briefed participants about upcoming project activities.

Finally, certificates were awarded to the participants in recognition of their successful completion of the training and mentorship program on climate change and renewable energy reporting.

Activity 2 - Interaction Session with Experts and Reporters



Two study circles were organised to facilitate journalists' understanding on topics related to renewable energy. In both the interactions, MRDI invited participants who underwent training and mentorship on climate change and renewable energy reporting and introduced them to an issue expert to sharpen their knowledge.

The first study circle was organised on 01 October 2023 at MRDI office. A total of 16 journalists from print, online, and TV attended the study circle led by Dr Khondaker Golam Moazzem, Research Director, Centre for Policy Dialogue.

The resource person helped participants identify loopholes in their stories and offered suggestions on how to improve reporting that are themed on renewable energy. He also sheds light on different aspects of renewable energy to help participants develop new story ideas.

The second study circle was organised on 14 October 2023 at MRDI office. A total of 15 journalists representing various media platforms attended the study circle led by Prof. Khosru

Mohammad Salim, Professor, Department of Electrical and Electronic Engineering, and also Director, Green Energy Research Centre, Independent University Bangladesh.

The expert shared with the journalists how fossil fuel and renewable energy powered power plant projects operate. He also discussed many conceptual problems with the energy sector and clarified the main jargons used there.

Activity 3- Energy Glossary



As part of the project, MRDI has a plan to publish a glossary for journalists with relevant terminologies and their explanations, frequently used words, and important sources/resources related to energy linked with climate change and environment.

Under this intervention, an interaction was organised at MRDI office to discuss the methodology and draft content for the planned glossary. Three experts in the

field of renewable energy actively participated in this interactive meeting.

Activity 4- Media Monitoring

A media monitoring activity has begun in February to facilitate journalists and stakeholders' access to information on what is happening surrounding renewable energy in Bangladesh and beyond in a common space using reports published in mainstream news outlets.

A total of nine news outlets are being monitored to identify stories, editorials, opinions and interviews related to renewable energy.

Activity 5- Study Circle



A study circle was organised at MRDI office on May 5 where participants, who underwent training and mentorship on climate change and renewable energy reporting, renewed their understanding on topics related to renewable energy.

Led by a resource person, the study circle was attended by 10 journalists from national news outlets. The expert at the study circle responded to different questions from participants on

renewable energy reporting and highlighted various sources for reporting along with providing insights into accessing essential local and regional data.

He also offered participants with a compilation of resources, including websites offering information and data on energy transition and renewable energy sources.

Activity 6: Content Development Meeting for Journalist



Under the project, MRDI will organise three training programmes - a training for 20 district correspondents, a residential bootcamp for 12 selected journalists with mentorship for story production, and an advanced residential training and mentorship for 12 journalists previously trained in renewable energy reporting.

As part of the capacity building efforts, MRDI signed terms of reference with three-member journalism expert panel and a technical expert in April 2024 who will work together to implement the capacity building part of the project including training content development for the residential programme, and act as facilitators, resource persons, and mentors.

A preparatory meeting for training content development was held on 18 April 2024 at MRDI office where the expert group, along with a technical expert discussed process for session plan development, possible sessions for three training sessions, and prospective timelines etc.

Finally, a training content development meeting was held on 23 May 2024 at the MRDI conference room where a brief overview of the initiative and structure of the three training and bootcamp was shared with the gatekeepers of national news outlet, senior journalists and experts in the energy domain.

Six gatekeepers of national news outlets, four members of a journalism expert group involved in this initiative, a technical expert involved in this initiative, and a communications expert attended the meeting along with MRDI team.

Activity 7- District Correspondents Training on Climate Change and Renewable Energy Reporting

MRDI organized a two-day training between 2-3 June 2024 at the YWCA Bhaban, Mohammadpur, Dhaka participated by 20 district correspondents from national news outlets.

The training aimed to improve the journalists' abilities to produce quality stories about the effects of climate change, prospects of renewable energy, and other related topics. The training covered 10 sessions including lectures and group activities. A four-member expert panel- three from journalism and a technical expert, who are involved in this initiative for capacity building took the sessions.



Following the training, participants were requested to submit their ideas as an application to a two-month long mentorship programme. A total of 12 participants were selected based on relevance of their story, evaluation of mentors, and classroom performance for a bootcamp where they will be awarded mentorship for execution of their story ideas.

Participants:

Twenty district-level reporters, selected based on the significance of their districts in the energy sector and nominated by their respective news outlets in response to an MRDI request, participated in the training.

Session methods:

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

Recommendations

- Two 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.
- Follow-up sessions can be organized
- Incorporating a field visit to climate change hotspot regions as part of training can help further improve the quality of energy reporting.