

# **2nd Yearly Report**

**(1 January 2024 - 31 December 2024)**

## **Promoting Fact Checking to Counter Misinformation in Bangladesh**

Prepared by



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## Context

The prevalence of fake news and misinformation poses a significant challenge to the free flow of accurate information in today's world. While fact-checking teams and professionals exist in other countries' media landscapes, Bangladesh has yet to fully recognize their importance. Furthermore, fact-checking remains absent from the journalism education curriculum, leading to a lack of emphasis on this crucial skill among aspiring journalists and students.

Addressing this issue, it is imperative to cultivate a pool of competent journalists in Bangladesh's news media who possess fact-checking expertise. Simultaneously, it becomes essential to provide training to university professors so they can effectively teach journalism students about this subject.

In light of these needs, the ***"Promoting Fact Checking to Counter Misinformation in Bangladesh"*** project, supported by *Internews*, has been developed with the primary goal of enhancing the fact-checking skills of journalists, young individuals, and university professors. Through this initiative, the aim is to foster a responsive society that can effectively combat misinformation.

The overarching objective of this endeavor is to contribute to Bangladesh's development in alignment with the government's Vision 2041, the Eighth Five-year Plan, and the UN Sustainable Development Goals.

## Project Objective

To create a responsive society against misinformation through capacity building of journalists, journalism teachers, and youths on fact checking.

**Reporting period:** 1 January 2024 - 31 December 2024

## Activity Update

### Activity-1: Approval from NGOAB on revised FD-6

MRDI in consultation with Internews planned some new activities and changed some existing activities in the project keeping the overall budget and period of the project same. According to the government rule, revised FD6 was submitted to the NGO Affairs Bureau on their prescribed format and got approval on 8 February 2024.

### Activity-2: Developing Content for Communication Material

MRDI team along with three issue experts developed two separate contents for the communication materials on fact-checking and digital hygiene. These communication materials will be distributed among journalism students of 13 public and private universities in and outside Dhaka while organizing training on fact-checking.

### **Activity-3: Experience Sharing by Teachers**

#### ***Future Search Workshop: Fact-checking for Journalism Students***

MRDI organized Future Search Workshop: Fact-checking for Journalism Students on 27 March 2024 at Azimur Rahman Conference Hall, The Daily Star, Dhaka.

Seventeen teachers of journalism department of 10 public and private universities in and outside Dhaka participated in the discussion

regarding the action plan to enhance journalism students' capacity in fact-checking.

These teachers earlier participated in MRDI's 'Fact-checking Training for Teachers' and conducted follow-on sessions in their respective departments.

MRDI's Executive Director Hasibur Rahman welcomed the participating teachers and opened the floor for discussion.



In this meeting, they also shared their experience of the follow-on sessions with their students. And all the teachers agreed on to carry on the fact-checking lesson in their classroom through training, course or organizing a national camp.

Shameem Ara Sheuli, Country Representative Bangladesh, Internews wrapped up the programme with a hope to work with the teachers in developing journalism students' capacity on fact-checking in future.

### **Activity-4: Fact-checking Training for Digital News Platform Gatekeepers**

Under this project, MRDI organized a three-day residential “Fact-checking Training for Digital News Platform Gatekeepers,” which was of advanced level, to develop their capacity on fact-checking to combat the spread of misinformation. The three-day training officially began on 2 April and ended on 4 April at CCDB Hope Centre, Savar, Dhaka.



Nineteen gatekeepers of online news platforms including news managers, head of digital platforms, copy editors and reporters participated in the training. Among them, 10 of them had understating on information disorder and how to combat it through trainings of MRDI earlier while the remaining had basic understanding of the topic.

About 31.58% of the participants were female.

The training started on 1 April with an introductory session where the Executive Director of MRDI, Hasibur Rahman, explained the journalists the program's purpose and what was expected of them at the end. He also briefly discussed the session plan of the fact-checking training.

The program spanning three days was designed to provide participants with not just theoretical knowledge or lectures, but also hands-on activities, group discussions, and presentations. The training covered 12 sessions along with practical and group activities, with MD Saiful Alam Chowdhury, Associate Professor at Department of Mass Communication & Journalism, University of Dhaka facilitating the training. Qadaruddin Shishir, the Bangladesh Editor of AFP Factcheck, conducted the sessions as resource person out of his expertise in fact-checking. The training covered 12 sessions on fact-checking, AI detection and deepfakes, including practical and group activities.



Exercises, lectures, and multimedia presentations were used to conduct the training. Question-and-answer sessions, group discussions and hands-on activities were applied to make the sessions participatory and interesting. Pre and post training knowledge assessment and the training evaluation made the outcome and quality of the training visible.

Knowledge assessment was conducted with the training participants before and after the training session using the same set of questionnaire.

The assessment questionnaire was developed based on the issues discussed in the sessions.

The assessment result shows improvement of knowledge on the topics discussed. Aggregate score of the participants increased from 111 in the pre assessment to 159 in the post.



### Activity-5: Fact-checking Training for University Correspondents

A three-day residential “Fact-checking Training for University Correspondents,” to develop their capacity on fact-checking to combat the spread of misinformation from 28 May to 30 May 2024 at CCDB Hope Centre, Savar, Dhaka.

Twenty correspondents for universities of national new outlets participated in the training. They were nominated by the respective news outlets, in response to a request by MRDI. All the participants were male.

The training started on 28 May with an introductory session led by Md. Badruddoza Babu, Head of Capacity Building and IJ Help Desk at MRDI, and MD Saiful Alam Chowdhury, Associate Professor at the Department of Mass Communication and Journalism, University of Dhaka. They explained the purpose of the programme and its significance in the field of journalism. Badruddoza Babu shared his experience, emphasizing the need for fact-checking skills to enhance the quality of reports, even from behind a desk. They also briefly outlined the session plan and stressed the importance of punctuality for all participants to attend each session on time.



The program spanning three days was designed to provide participants with not just theoretical knowledge or lectures, but also hands-on activities, group discussions, and presentations. The training covered nine sessions along with practical and group activities, with MD Saiful Alam Chowdhury facilitating the training. Qadaruddin Shishir, the Bangladesh Editor of AFP Factcheck, conducted the sessions as resource

person out of his expertise in fact-checking. The training covered nine sessions on information disorder, online abuse, ethics of fact-checking, verification tools and geolocation including practical and group activities.

Knowledge assessment was conducted with the training participants before and after the training session using the same set of questionnaire. The assessment questionnaire was developed based on the issues discussed in the sessions. The assessment result shows improvement of knowledge on the topics discussed. Aggregate score of the participants increased from 140 in the pre assessment to 189 in the post.

## **Activity-6: Training on fact-checking & misinformation for journalism students and youths**

MRDI has planned to organize a series of orientation programmes for Journalism students on Fact-checking & Digital Hygiene at the journalism departments of 13 public and private universities of the countries. During this period, this programme was organized in 10 public and private universities-- four universities in Dhaka and six outside Dhaka, where 479 students participated.

### ***Orientation of Journalism Students: Fact-checking & Digital Hygiene Session at Jagannath University***



MRDI organized an orientation programme for Journalism students on Fact-checking & Digital Hygiene at Jagannath University on 27 June 2024 at the Virtual Classroom of Computer Science and Engineering Department from 9.00 am to 1.00 pm. About 46 students of the Mass Communication and Journalism

Department participated in this programme.

The chairperson of the Mass Communication and Journalism Department and Associate Professor Dr. Md. Asraful Alam welcomed the students and explained the initiative and purpose of the programme.



The session titled 'Digital Hygiene' was conducted by Hasibur Rahman, Executive Director, MRDI and the session titled 'Fact-checking' was conducted by MD Saiful Alam Chowdhury, Associate Professor, Department of Mass Communication and Journalism, University of Dhaka.

The session titled 'Digital Hygiene' discussed in detail what it is, how students can keep themselves safe through digital media, how to maintain cyber security and what to do in this regard. It is also advisable to develop digital habits such as using strong passwords, encrypting data, downloading software from trusted sources, etc. to keep yourself safe.



In the session titled 'Fact-checking', lesson was given on how information is misplaced, how and who spreads rumors, how to do fact-checking and verification.

Vice Chancellor Sadeka Halim, PhD was present as the Chief Guest at the closing session. The other teachers of the department were also present during the programme.

At the end of the session, knowledge assessment was conducted.

### ***Orientation of Journalism Students: Fact-checking & Digital Hygiene Session at Jahangirnagar University:***

The second orientation programme for Journalism students on Fact-checking & Digital Hygiene was organized at the hall room of Department of Journalism and Media Studies of Jahangirnagar University on 29 June 2024 from 9.00 am to 1.00 pm. About 44 students of Journalism and Media Studies Department participated in the session.



The chairperson of the department and Associate Professor Rakib Ahmed welcomed the students and explained the initiative and purpose of the programme.

The session titled 'Digital Hygiene' was conducted by Hasibur Rahman, Executive Director, MRDI and the session titled 'Fact-checking' was conducted by MD Saiful Alam Chowdhury, Associate Professor, Department of Mass Communication and Journalism, University of Dhaka.





At the end of the session, knowledge assessment was conducted.

Uzzwal Kumar Mondal, Associate Professor, and Md. Sayeed Al-Zaman, Assistant Professor, were also present during the sessions.

### ***Orientation of Journalism Students: Fact-checking & Digital Hygiene Session at Daffodil International University (DIU)***

MRDI organized an orientation programme for Journalism students on Fact-checking & Digital Hygiene at the Department of Journalism, Media, and Communication of Daffodil International University (DIU) on 12 September 2024, Thursday from 10am to 2pm. About 48 students of the department participated in this programme.



Dr. Md. Abdul Kabil Khan, Associate Professor of the department, delivered a welcome note and briefed the students regarding the session.

Hasibur Rahman, Executive Director of MRDI, conducted the session on digital hygiene and Minhaj Aman, Research Coordinator at Digitally Right Limited (DRL), led fact-checking session.

The session titled 'Digital Hygiene' discussed in detail what it is, how students can keep themselves safe through digital media, how to maintain cyber security and what to do in this regard. It is also advisable to develop digital habits such as using strong passwords, encrypting data, downloading software from trusted sources, etc. to keep yourself safe.





In the session titled 'Fact-checking', lesson was given on how information is misplaced, how and who spreads rumors, how to do fact-checking and verification.

The session was wrapped up with a closing remarks from Aftab Hossain, Assistant Professor and Head of the department. Other faculties were also present during the session.

At the end of the session, knowledge assessment was conducted.

### ***Orientation of Journalism Students: Fact-checking & Digital Hygiene Session at University of Rajshahi***



MRDI organized an orientation programme for Journalism students on Fact-checking & Digital Hygiene at the Department of Mass Communication and Journalism of University of Rajshahi on 3<sup>rd</sup> November 2024, Sunday from 9:30am to 1pm. About 65 students of the department participated in this programme. (Annex-2: Participants List)

Dr. Md. Mozammel Hossain Bokul, professor and chairperson of the department, delivered a welcome note and briefed the students regarding the session.

Hasibur Rahman, Executive Director of MRDI, conducted the session on digital hygiene. The session titled 'Fact-checking' was conducted by MD Saiful Alam Chowdhury, Associate Professor, Department of Mass Communication and Journalism, University of Dhaka.



The session titled 'Digital Hygiene' discussed in detail what it is, how students can keep themselves safe through digital media, how to maintain cyber security and what to do in this regard. It is also advisable to develop digital habits such as using strong passwords, encrypting data, downloading software from trusted sources, etc. to keep yourself safe.

In the session titled 'Fact-checking', lesson was given on how information is misplaced, how and who spreads rumors, how to do fact-checking and verification.

The session was wrapped up with a closing remark from Md. Mashihur Rahman, professor of the department. Other faculties were also present during the session.

At the end of the session, knowledge assessment was conducted.



### ***Orientation of Journalism Students: Fact-checking & Digital Hygiene Session at North Bengal International University***



The second orientation programme for Journalism students on Fact-checking & Digital Hygiene was organized at the conference room of Department of Communication & Journalism Studies North Bengal International University on 4<sup>th</sup> November 2024, Monday from 9.30 am to 1.00 pm. About 42 students of the Communication & Journalism Studies Department participated in the session. (Annex-5: Participants List)

Vice-Chancellor (VC) Professor Dr. Bidhan Chandra Das and Professor Md. Ansar Uddin, Treasurer of the university welcomed the students and explained the initiative and purpose of the programme.

The session titled 'Digital Hygiene' was conducted by Hasibur Rahman, Executive Director, MRDI and the session titled 'Fact-checking' was conducted by MD Saiful Alam Chowdhury, Associate Professor, Department of Mass Communication and Journalism, University of Dhaka.







At the end of the session, knowledge assessment was conducted.

The VC and Md. Anisur Rahman, lecturer and head of the department, wrapped up the programme with closing remarks.

Abujur, Assistant Professor, and Dr. Jannatul Jahan, lecturer, were also present during the sessions.

### ***Orientation of University Students: Fact-checking & Digital Hygiene Session at Khulna University***

MRDI organized an orientation programme for university students on Fact-checking & Digital Hygiene at the Department of Mass Communication and Journalism of Khulna University on 7<sup>th</sup> November 2024, Thursday from 9:30am to 1pm. About 40 students from the department and eight SAVE members studying at this university participated in this programme. Sara Monami Hossain, associate professor and head of the department, delivered a welcome note and briefed the students regarding the session.



Hasibur Rahman, Executive Director of MRDI, conducted the session on digital hygiene. The session titled 'Fact-checking' was conducted by MD Saiful Alam Chowdhury, Associate Professor, Department of Mass Communication and Journalism, University of Dhaka.



The session titled 'Digital Hygiene' discussed in detail what it is, how students can keep themselves safe through digital media, how to maintain cyber security and what to do in this regard. It is also advisable to develop digital habits such as using strong passwords, encrypting data, downloading software from trusted sources, etc. to keep yourself safe.





In the session titled 'Fact-checking', lesson was given on how information is misplaced, how and who spreads rumors, how to do fact-checking and verification.

The session was wrapped up with a closing remark from the department head. Other faculties were also

present during the session.

At the end of the session, knowledge assessment was conducted.

### ***Orientation of University Students: Fact-checking & Digital Hygiene Session at Barishal University***



The second orientation programme for university students on Fact-checking & Digital Hygiene was organized at Department of Mass Communication and Journalism Barishal University on 14<sup>th</sup> November 2024, Thursday from 9.30 am to 1.00 pm. About 40 students from the department and seven SAVE members studying at this university

participated in the session.

Emran Hossain, assistant professor and chairperson of the department, welcomed the students and explained the initiative and purpose of the programme.



The session titled 'Digital Hygiene' was conducted by Hasibur Rahman, Executive Director, MRDI and the session titled 'Fact-checking' was conducted by MD Saiful Alam Chowdhury, Associate Professor, Department of Mass Communication and Journalism, University of Dhaka.

At the end of the session, knowledge assessment was conducted.

The session was wrapped up with a closing remark from the department head. Other faculties were also present during the session.



**Knowledge Assessment:** Knowledge assessment was conducted with the training participants before and after the training session using the same set of questionnaires. The assessment questionnaire was developed based on the issues to be discussed

in the sessions.

### ***Orientation of University Students: Fact-checking & Digital Hygiene at University of Dhaka***

MRDI organized an orientation programme for university students on Fact-checking & Digital Hygiene at the Department of Television, Film & Photography of University of Dhaka on 28<sup>th</sup> November 2024, Thursday from 9:30am to 1pm. About 31 students from the department and ten SAVE members studying at this university participated in this programme.

SM Imran Hossain, Assistant Professor & Chairman of the department, delivered a welcome note and briefed the students regarding the session.

Hasibur Rahman, Executive Director of MRDI, conducted the session on digital hygiene. The session titled 'Fact-checking' was conducted by MD Saiful Alam Chowdhury, Associate Professor, Department of Mass Communication and Journalism, University of Dhaka.



The session titled 'Digital Hygiene' discussed in detail what it is, how students can keep themselves safe through digital media, how to maintain cyber security and what to do in this regard. It is also advisable to develop digital habits such as using strong passwords, encrypting data, downloading software from trusted sources, etc. to keep yourself safe.

In the session titled 'Fact-checking', lesson was given on how information is misplaced, how and who spreads rumors, how to do fact-checking and verification.

The session was wrapped up with a closing remark from the department head.





At the end of the session, knowledge assessment was conducted.

### ***Orientation of Journalism Students: Fact-checking & Digital Hygiene at Begum Rokeya University, Rangpur***

The orientation programme for journalism students on Fact-checking & Digital Hygiene was organized at the Department of Mass Communication and Journalism of Begum Rokeya University, Rangpur (BRUR) on 4<sup>th</sup> December 2024, Wednesday from 9.30 am to 1.00 pm. All 50 students from the department participated in the session.

Ten SAVE youth members studying at this university were also supposed to participate. However, due to the political turmoil inside BRUR campus, the SAVE members could not attend the session raising the safety concerns. To tackle this crisis, the project team immediately asked Journalism department head to provide more students from his department.



Tabiur Rahman Prodhan, Associate Professor & Department Head of the department, welcomed the students and explained the initiative and purpose of the programme. Professor Dr. Md. Showkat Ali, Vice Chancellor, Begum Rokeya University, Rangpur, was present at the session as chief guest and

appreciated this initiative.

The session titled 'Digital Hygiene' was conducted by Hasibur Rahman, Executive Director, MRDI and the session titled 'Fact-checking' was conducted by MD Saiful Alam Chowdhury, Associate Professor, Department of Mass Communication and Journalism, University of Dhaka.



At the end of the session, knowledge assessment was conducted.



The session was wrapped up with a closing remark from the department head. Other faculties were also present during the session.

### ***Orientation of Journalism Students: Fact-checking & Digital Hygiene at Comilla University***



The orientation programme for journalism students on Fact-checking & Digital Hygiene was organized at the Department of Mass Communication and Journalism of Comilla University on 18 December 2024, Wednesday from 9.30 am to 1.00 pm. 48 students from the department participated in the session.

Mahmudul Hasan, Assistant Professor & Head of the department, welcomed the students and explained the initiative and purpose of the programme.

The session titled 'Digital Hygiene' was conducted by Hasibur Rahman, Executive Director, MRDI and the session titled 'Fact-checking' was conducted by MD Saiful Alam Chowdhury, Associate Professor, Department of Mass Communication and Journalism, University of Dhaka.



At the end of the session, knowledge assessment was conducted.

The session was wrapped up with a closing remark from the department head. Other faculties were also present during the session.

### **Activity-7: Revised FD-6 Approval from NGOAB**

According to the government rule, the project, with cost extension following the July uprising, was submitted to NGO Affairs Bureau based on their prescribed format and got approval on 9 October 2024. There had been some changes in activity timeline for smooth implementation and ensuring proper outcome.