

NEWS
NETWORK

working for
social change and
empowering people



Annual Report 2016



News Network

House 10B, Road 9

Dhanmondi

Dhaka 1205, Bangladesh

Phone: +88 02 9141678

Fax: + 88 02 9141652

E-mail: info@newswork-bd.org

www.newsnetwork-bd.org

facebook.com/newsnetworkbangladesh

<https://twitter.com/nnbangladesh/>

<http://bd.linkedin.com/in/newsnetworkbd>

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Md. Nazmul Alam

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News Network envisions a stable nation, where citizens are aware of their rights, enjoy freedom of expression, live with dignity and enjoy gender equality and where the media is free.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In the reporting year, News Network with assistance from The United Nations Democracy Fund (UNDEF) continued the initiative to improve the professional ability of rural media people, CSO/NGO representatives for promoting democracy and human rights in Bangladesh.

It was a two-year long project launched in December 2014 and completed successfully in November 2016. It was the first-ever initiative of its kind in Bangladesh that was aimed at improving the professional ability of rural journalists and CSOs to make people aware about human rights issues through media reporting and sharing information with the public. The project covered 12 remote districts of the country. Rural journalists, - editors of local media houses and CSO/NGO representatives-- were its direct beneficiaries.

In 2016, News Network also built a cooperation with Inter Press Service- (IPS), a Rome-based international news agency. The organisation extended support to implement IPS' two different programmes in Bangladesh, which were ; journalists training –workshop on SDGs and knowledge sharing workshop with UN IFAD partners.

News Network received a total of BDT 54,33,525 (USD 70,565) as grant in 2016 from the funding agencies and the expenditure stood at BDT 8,423,307 (USD 109,394).

Shahiduzzaman
Editor, News Network

The Defenders of Democracy



Participants of an interaction meeting was held in Rajshahi

PROJECTS AND EVENTS OF THE YEAR 2016

Projects	Support
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rural Media Development Programme for Promoting Democracy and Human Rights 	The United Nations Democracy Fund(UNDEF)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Journalists training – workshop on reporting Sustainable Development Goals 	Inter Press Service
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Knowledge sharing workshop with IFAD partners in Bangladesh 	Inter Press Service

Progress of the Projects

1. Rural Media Development Programme for Promoting Democracy and Human Rights

UNDEF



The United Nations
Democracy Fund

These days, violations of democratic principles and human rights are very much visible in every aspect of Bangladesh's social life. Frustrations among people are growing as there is a lack of democracy within political parties as well as society.

Enforced disappearances, extra-judicial killings and violence against young girls and women have marked a rise. Access to healthcare, social security, education, justice and information for the poor is limited. Furthermore, the past couple of years have seen the emergence of extreme fundamentalist groups and parties, endangering democracy, women empowerment and human rights.

Human rights violations are mostly taking place in rural areas, where 80 percent of the population live. Eighty-five percent of these people are poor, unaware and have limited understanding of even their basic rights. Their rights are violated at every step. The reluctance of law enforcement agencies when it comes to the protection of the poor is also noticeable.

The existing media houses and CSOs are playing an important role in protecting democracy and human rights but their activities are mainly based in capital Dhaka and a few other big cities. Therefore, rural people are less protected and insecure, and many serious incidents go unreported. The major reasons are: lack of professional skill and understanding of rights-



Journalists are completing their group works in Barisal

based issues among the journalists working outside the capital city as they do not have strong educational background and have limited access to skill development training. Besides, they have a traditional outlook not to get exposed to training; they often make mistakes in reporting as are not aware of their professional safety and ethical issues.

Many of those causes are also applicable to local media houses, publishing from remote districts and sub-districts.

Very few of the editors/publishers and journalists have the requisite professional training. Furthermore, their level of understanding of democracy and human rights issues is limited and such news items, if reported, are not given the proper attention or published with less care. Thus they often face legal threats (from the individuals, groups, companies, institutions and government) for publishing incomplete reports. They also suffer from financial constraints to arrange training for their journalists.

Local CSOs/NGOs also have huge limitations. They are not well organised and do not have sufficient skills in reporting, conducting case studies, investigations and campaigns to defend democracy and human rights.

News Network has thus given emphasis in this project on the development of the skills of rural media and CSOs so that they can highlight right-based issues and thus develop general awareness and public opinion in favour of strengthening democracy and human rights in society. This was the first-ever programme of its kind in Bangladesh.

The two-year project was launched in the country's 12 remote districts; Dinajpur, Brahmanbaria, Bogra, Khulna, Rajshahi, Sylhet, Rangpur, Barisal, Jessore, Cox's Bazar, Habiganj and Mymensingh. But in 2016 it covered the following districts: Barisal, Cox's Bazar, Sylhet, Hobiganj, Jessore and Rajshahi.

Project key activities

- Training workshop for rural journalists
- Commissioning reports to trained journalists
- Reporting competition
- Networking meetings with editors of local media houses
- Media training for local CSOs and NGOs
- Interactive meetings with CSOs and journalists



A participant receiving her certificate from Md. Jamal Uddin Ahmed, Divisional Commissioner of Sylhet

1.1 Training workshop for rural journalists

It has been found that the rural journalists lack professional skills and do not have enough knowledge about democracy and human rights. Therefore, the training programmes conducted to give them a better understanding on the project issues and make them aware of its positive impact in the society. Trained journalists published a number of reports based on field visits arranged during the training. Most of them were on human rights, child and women, and the sufferings of the poor and marginal people.

In the reporting year, six 5-day training workshops were organised to improve the professional ability of the journalists. A total of 140 journalists participated in the training.

The training highlighted issues on understanding democracy and human rights elements; group works and presentation; analysis of the current style of news reporting; ethical issues of journalism; report writing, group works, story planning and presentation.



Participant journalists in Cox's Bazar are pasting their presentation



A session of a journalists training on going in Hobiganj

The journalists found the training very effective and they became more sensible, particularly their level of understanding on democracy and human rights has increased, careful about the accuracy of information and following the ethical issues of reporting.

1.2 Commissioning reports

News Network circulated a request for item proposal on human rights issues among the trained journalists. They responded well to the call and submitted more than 130 proposals. After evaluation, the organisation commissioned 30 potential items to report, which was completed and published in their respective print and electronic media in time. The reports mostly focused on suffering of marginal and minority people, child education, health and basic rights based issues. As part of social responsibility, trained journalists keep continuing to report on the issues. It is helping to raise public awareness and opinion. Advocacy and pressure groups are benefited from media reporting. More reporting also then incite local authorities, public representative and policy planners to be more active to engage in remedial action.

1.3 Reporting competition

The organisation introduced reporting competition but it was limited to trained journalists only. Sixteen journalists were awarded for best reporting at two different times of the year. A Jury Board selected them from 200 published reports. It has setup an example and encourages journalists to report more to promote and defend the issues.



A group photo of the journalists awarded for best reporting 2015. They are; Golam Rabbani Surov, Bahumatik.com; Hedait Hossain, The Daily Jugantor; Amit Roy, Jugantor; Shihab Uddin Bipu, NTV; Rashidul Islam, Manabzamin; Maksud Ali, The Daily Probaha; Mohammad Ali, Dainik Deshbarata, Dinajpur; Abdur Razzak, Dainik Sangram.



The Award Winners of 2016: Ashik Mannan, Maasranga TV; Mohammad Ali, Dainik Aiker Deshbarata; Morjina Begum, Dainik Barisal Shomoy; Abdur Razzak Rana, Dainik Sangram; Sunil Barua, Maasranga TV; Md. Al-A min Mondul (Biplob), Dainik Inqilab; Shihab Uddin Bipu, NTV; Khaled Ahmed, Dainik Jalalabad.

1.4 Networking meeting with editors of local media houses

Few editors and publishers of local media houses are professional journalists and their understanding and awareness on democratic and human rights issues and news sense are not good enough. Under this initiative, 12 networking meetings were organised with the local media gatekeepers, including editors, publishers, executive editors and news editors in the project areas. The objectives were: (i) to sensitise and encourage them to publish quality items on the issues, (ii) find and avoid fake news, (iii) play the due role in promoting and defend democracy and human rights for public interest and (iv) for giving a unity among them to face the challenges against freedom of expression and freedom of press. 80 media gatekeepers attended the meetings. They expressed their vow to defend and promote the issues in the greater interest through media actions.



A scene of a networking meeting with the editors of local newspapers published from Jessore

1.5 Media training for local CSOs and NGOs

Local CSOs have limited capacity to report and provide an analysis of human rights situation as their lack of understanding of the values and principles of democracy and human rights are limited. To overcome the situation, News Network organised six, 4-day media training programmes for 120 CSO and NGO representatives in the project areas. It tried to develop their skills to report, conduct case studies, investigations and prepare press releases, circulars, campaign materials and templates. This is how it built their expertise to share information with the mainstream media and social media.



A group photo of COS/NGO representatives, participated in a media training workshop was held in Jessore district town



A session of a media training for CSOs in Rajshahi ongoing

1.6 Interaction meeting with the CSOs/NGOs and journalists

There exist the differences of opinions and communication gaps between CSOs and journalists. But both of the groups are working for social development. News Network feels they should have a close cooperation and must supplement to each other, particularly in promoting and protecting democracy and human rights. Interactive meetings successfully broke the ice in project areas, which are now following in some neighbouring districts. The meetings helped improve cooperation and build a network among them.

2. Some results of the programmes

- Improved journalists' understanding, knowledge, courage and confidence, and professional ability to deliver better reports on democracy and human rights. Their number of quality reports on the issues also increased.
- Trained journalists are now much careful about the accuracy of information and in following the ethical issues of journalism
- Improved CSOs/NGOs communication and reporting skill and sharing information with media. Many of them are sharing information in their social media.
- Local media gatekeepers (editors and news policy makers) sensitized and received understanding their role in publishing authentic news stories and articles on the issues with respect to human rights.
- The participating media editors and news policymakers often encourage their reporters and news room editors to address the issues effectively and public more in-depth news items.

Important feedbacks from participants:

The participant journalists and CSOs/ NGO staffs found the programme highly effective to build their capacity to address the issues. They have put forward several recommendations and requested to undertake follow-up programmes and expand the activities in other districts too. Some of them are;

- Methods of trainings were excellent
- Trainers were knowledgeable, communicative and conducted well
- Training materials and handouts were relevant and useful
- Field visits, group works, and practical for report writing were very much effective for professional improvement

Comment and recommendations from the media gatekeepers;

- Needs follow-up training and expand the programmes to other districts
- Introduce reporting competition locally and nationally
- Needs to arrange media tour on the issues in different part of the country
- Needs small grant for rural newspapers to cover the issues effectively
- Needs development programme for female journalists in remote districts



Journalists from Cox's Bazar participated in a training programme

*News Network success story***Bangladesh's Women Journalists Rise Against the Odds**

By Mahfuzur Rahman

DHAKA, 11 Jan 2017 (IPS)- Journalism is a profession that attracts both sexes, but social taboos and hostile office climates have kept the numbers of women working



Wahida Zaman

in Bangladesh's media sector dismally low. Still, a new generation of women is stepping up, with the support of their path-breaking colleagues.

According to an October 2016 report by senior female journalist Shahnaz Munni of News 24, a private TV channel in Bangladesh, women journalists in Bangladesh's media industry account for only 5 percent in print and 25 percent in electronic media.

"You have to face some obstacles, some real challenges. And they start straight from your own home." --Wahida Zaman

Braving these odds and obstacles, young female graduates are increasingly joining the profession. Wahida Zaman, for example, recently joined United News of Bangladesh (UNB), an independent wire service, as an apprentice sub-editor.

"Unlike many other classmates of mine, both male and female, I chose to study journalism by choice. Before being a journalist, I was actually a photographer. Nothing thrills me more than the thought that journalism can give me all these opportunities in one package," Zaman told IPS.

"I can go to places, meet new people, get to know new stories — stories of both successful and unsuccessful people, and of course take lots of photographs. That's how my dream of being a journalist started blooming."

But, she said, being a woman and a journalist at the same time is not so easy in real life. "You have to face some obstacles, some real challenges. And they start straight from your own home," Zaman added.

Find more in following link;

<http://www.ipsnews.net/2017/01/bangladeshs-women-journalists-rise-against-the-odds/>



Seated, from left to right: Nicholas Kotch, Lead trainer, Dr Kholiqzaman, Chairman Palli Karma Sahayak Samity (PKSF), Farhana Haque Rahman, Director General IPS, Mr Abul Maal A Muhith, Finance Minister of Bangladesh, Mr Shahiduzzaman, Senior Advisor and IPS representative South Asia, Mr Robert Watkins, UN Representative and UNDP Resident Coordinator. Credit: Mauro Teodori/IPS

Support to Inter Press Service - IPS

In 2016, News Network supported Inter Press Service – IPS, a Rome based international news agency to organize their two different programmes in Dhaka. Those were;

- Media Training Workshop on Reporting on Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).
- Communicating for Development: Rural Transformation

A media training-workshop was held in Dhaka from 18 to 19 December 2016 at CIRDAP Conference Room, Topkhana Road, Dhaka. Finance Minister Abul Maal A Muhith inaugurated the training,



Abul Maal A Muhith

where UNDP Resident Coordinator to Bangladesh, Robert D. Watkins was the keynote speaker. The goal of it was to equip journalists with the information and tools required to understand and file substantive reports related to the SDGs, its processes, substance, thematic trusts, targets and indicators of the 2030 Agenda.



Robert D. Watkins

Twenty journalists from major print and electronic media participated in the programme. IPS Director General Farhana Haque Rahman; Dr Debapriya Bhattacharya, Chair, Southern Voice on Post-MDG International Development Goals and Distinguished Fellow of Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD), Dr. Zahid Hussain, Lead Economist, The World Bank, Dhaka Office; Shahiduzzaman, IPS South Asia Representative and Editor of News Network Shaheen

Anam, Executive Director, Manusher Jonno Foundation; Dr. Atiq Rahman, Executive Director, Bangladesh Centre for Advanced Studies (BCAS), Dhaka, Bangladesh; Moazeem Hossain, Editor of The Financial Express, Dhaka; Fakrul Ahsan, Project Manager, UNDP supported project on sustainable and inclusive planning, delivered speeches in the workshop. The IPS programme was supported by UN Foundation.



Training ongoing



A session of the knowledge sharing meeting

Communicating for Development: Rural Transformation

It was a multi-stakeholder knowledge-sharing meeting with the UN IFAD partners in Bangladesh. Forty participants of IFAD-funded government and non-government partners' representatives around the country participated in the meeting held in Dhaka on 20th December. Professor Abul Barkat, Department of Economics of Dhaka University, attended as special guest in the event. The programme started with the opening speech by IPS Director General Farhana Haque Rahman. Associate Professor Shamim Ahmed, Department of Journalism and Communication of Dhaka University and communication expert Nick Kotch conducted the sessions.



Farhana Haque Rahman

The objective of the event were: (i) to highlight IFAD interventions in Bangladesh to reduce poverty and contributions in securing food security and (ii) identify knowledge-sharing mechanism within the project and with other stakeholders to achieve the overall goals of the projects.

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Financial Statement & Auditor's Certificate 2016

FINANCIAL STATEMENT

FOR THE YEAR ENDED DECEMBER 31, 2016

PARTICULARS		AMOUNT IN BDT.
RECEIPTS:		
OPENING BALANCE (01.01.2016)		
Cash in hand	4,743.73	
Cash at Bank	2,852,068.28	
		2,856,812.01
FUND INFLOW		
Fund received from:		
United Nations Democracy Fund (UNDEF)		5,433,525.00
Sale of publication		2,485.27
Bank Interest		9,911.74
Advance recovery		165,000.00
Subscription from the Executive members		2,100.00
TOTAL BDT.		8,469,834.02
PAYMENTS:		
1. PROGRAM COST:		
Preparing guideline, folder & brochure		310
Training workshop for rural journalists		2,092,646
Commissioning for reportings		454,017
Report competitions for trained journalists		314,857
Network / workshop events for editors		298,407
Media training workshops for CSO staffs		1,545,281
Interaction meeting with CSO & journalists / editors		581,831
Monitoring		206,380.00
News Network Website development		160,160.00
Trainers honorarium		372,200
Local Coordinator honorarium		317,300.00
Intern honorarium		166,210
Total Program Cost		6,509,599
2. ADMINISTRATIVE COST:		
Salaries		1,058,572.00
Travel cost		348,202.00
Camera		1,714.00
Office rent		333,138
Bank charge		10,334
Internet & telephone		42,929
Electricity		47,599.00
Office supplies & stationery		34,620.00
Audit fee		34,500
Entertainment		2,100
Total Administrative cost		1,913,708
Total (1 + 2)		8,423,306.85
Closing balance (31.12.2016)		
Cash in hand	99.00	
Cash at Bank	46,428.17	
		46,527.17
GRAND TOTAL		8,469,834.02

Total expenditure in BDT. 8,423,307 (Equivalent USD 109,394 / EURO 101,486)

CERTIFICATE GIVEN BY THE AUDITORS'

We have audited the accounts of NEWS NETWORK Road-09, House-10/B, Dhanmondi Dhaka Registration no. FDR-922, dated 20.3.1995 for the year ended 31 December 2016 and examined all relevant books and vouchers and certifies that according to audited accounts.

1. The brought forward foreign donation at the beginning of year 01 January 2016 was Tk. 3,021,812.01
2. The foreign donation amounting to Tk. 5,448,022.01 was received by the organization during the period.
3. The balance of unutilized foreign donations by the organization at 31 December 2016 Tk. 46,527.17
4. Foreign donation amounting to Tk. 8,423,306.85 has been utilized for the following purposes (shown project wise).

NAME OF THE PROJECT:	1. Rural Media Development for Promoting Democracy and Human Rights in Bangladesh.
FUNDING AGENCY:	1. UNITED NATIONS DEMOCRACY FUND (UNDEF)

Name of the project (s)	Budget for this year	Amount spent this year	Difference
Rural Media Development for Promoting Democracy and Human Rights in Bangladesh	8,469,834.02	8,423,306.85	46,527.17
Total Taka	8,469,834.02	8,423,306.85	46,527.17

Total expenditure in BDT. 8,423,306.85 (Equivalent USD 109,394 / EURO 101,486)

5. Certified the organization has maintained the accounts of Foreign Donations and records relating thereto in the manner specified as in section 5 of the Foreign Donations (voluntary activities) Regulations Ordinance, 1978 read with rule 6 and 7 to the said ordinance.
6. The information furnished above is correct and checked by us.

Dated: 22.02.2017



Krishnendu Deb Roy
 Partner
Pinaki & Company
 Chartered Accountants
 Ahsandell, 2/A Mymensingh Road,
 (2nd Floor), Shahbag, Dhaka-1000.



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EXECUTIVE COUNCIL OF NEWS NETWORK

President

Arifur Rahman Siddiqui, Ph. D

Vice-President

Kaiser Ali Talukder, Ph. D

Secretary General

Shahiduzzaman

Finance Secretary

Jalal Ahmed

Members

Shahriar Hossain, Ph. D

Rasada Akther

Enamul Haque

OUR AGENDA

- Promotion of freedom of expression, freedom of media, human rights and gender equality.
- Work for developing the professional capacity of journalists, promotion of investigative journalism.
- Encourage young women to take up journalism as a profession.
Promoting investigative journalism and right to Information.
- Sensitise media people on crucial social issues including Right to Information Act, democracy, good governance, transparency and promotion of access to justice.
- Motivate children and youths to build themselves as good citizens.
- Promote secularism, tolerance and peace in the society, and also the rights of ethnic and indigenous people of the country.
- Organise dialogues, seminars, workshops and discussion meeting on issues of national importance.

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