

Annual Roprtrt 2007



NEWSNETWORK

Annual Report 2007

NEWS NETWORK

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Content

Preface	5
Summary of the report	6

Programmes

1. Projects at a glance	9
2. Major activities of the year	9
3. Actual outputs compared to planned outputs	10
4. Progress of the projects	11
4.1 Development Programme for Female Journalists	11
– Items of former fellows	13
4.2 Youths in Good Governance	20
4.3 Programme for Building Teenagers as Good Citizens	25
4.4 Fellowship Programme for Capacity Building of Young Journalists	26
5. New Programmes for 2008	27

Finance

1. Budget & Expenditure	32
2. Budget 2007	33
3. Expenditure in relation to budget 2006	34
4. Donor-wise Expenditure Projection	35
5. Certificate of the Auditor	36
6. Budget 2007	37

Preface

NewsNetwork is carrying out its programmes with the usual momentum to promote human rights, freedom of press and expression, democracy, good governance, gender equality, woman and child rights in Bangladesh. The other programmes taken for the skill development of local media people, organising conferences and workshops on important issues, and releasing news-features on various social issues are also going on.

The World Bank, Free Voice, UNESCO and the Danish Embassy in Dhaka are providing funds for this year's activities of the NewsNetwork. However, the budget and expenditure of the agency for 2007 were relatively higher than the previous year.

In this annual report, you will have a clear picture of the agency's detailed activities, achievements and expenditures of the year 2007. I thank the agency staff for their hard work in implementing the projects and the team members who helped me prepare and publish this annual report.

Shahiduzzaman
Editor, NewsNetwork
March 2008

Summary of the report

In 2007, NewsNetwork completed a project titled 'Youths in Good Governance' with support from the World Bank. This year Free Voice provided assistance for a two-year project 'Development Programme for Female Journalists' which was kicked off in February 2007. Besides, a 15-month project titled 'Programme for Building Teenagers as Good Citizens', funded by the Royal Danish Embassy in Dhaka, completed in February 2008. Besides, UNESCO is funding a one-year project titled 'Fellowship Programme for the Capacity Building of Young Journalists', will complete in April 2008.

Major objectives of the projects are:

1. To increase the number of skilled female journalists
2. To bring the ideas of youths on Bangladesh good governance in the limelight
3. Capacity building of the local journalists
4. Motivating school students for building themselves as good citizens

To achieve the objectives, the following activities were either implemented or under implementation:

- (i) Providing six-month fellowship to female graduates on practical journalism,
- (ii) Arranging motivational lectures for the 14 -15 age group school students on how to be good citizens
- (iii) Organising a nationwide essay competition on good governance and
- (iv) Arranging skill development training for the journalists working at the district level.

Please find the activity output chart in relation to the planned activities on page no 12

The progress of implementation of the projects is satisfactory, as most of the components have been completed successfully in time. The project on highlighting the ideas of youths on good governance is in fact a unique programme. Under the programme, a nationwide essay competition was completed. But, some of the activities of the competition like organising award distribution ceremony and report publications are yet to be completed.

Under the FreeVoice-assisted project, 40 female graduates were awarded fellowships. The project has proved to be highly effective and it earned the appreciation of Bangladesh media experts. It includes six-month skill development training aiming to motivate the female graduates to take up journalism as their profession and build up their courage. As part of their exercise, the trainees have to cover various events and file stories, particularly news-features. The news-features filed by the fellows were released to the newspapers and newsmagazines for publication. Two books, compiling the news-features, were published. By the time most of the fellows have joined various media houses and started their career as journalists.

NewsNetwork also maintains a website (). It's an initiative to provide backup information to the media people, experts, students and other interested people living both at home and abroad. The site is full of various information, reports, clippings and links to other websites. A search engine is also there on the website. Concerned staff members are updating it everyday. Besides, the keeps continues exchanging items with Women Feature Service, a New Delhi-based international feature agency.

The budget for the year was BDT 77,04,200 The budget was prepared on the basis of donors support and contributions of the NewsNetwork. During the period, the agency received a total of BDT. 80,05,040 Out of the amount, BDT. 34,50,000 came from the Royal Danish Embassy in Dhaka, BDT 45,55,040 from the Free Voice. At the end of the year, the total expenditure of the organisation stood at BDT. 76,83,524.



Programmes

1. Projects at a glance

Projects	Funded by	Implementing period
Development Programme for Female Journalists	Free Voice	February 2007 to January 2009
Youths in Good Governance	The World Bank	July 2006 to June 2007
Programme for Building Teenagers as Good Citizens	Danish Embassy	December 2006 to February 2008
Fellowship Programme for Capacity Building of Young Journalists	UNESCO	9 April 2007 to 8 April 2008

2. Major activities of the year:

1. A six-month fellowship programme on practical journalism for female graduates
2. Publishing books compiling the items filed by the fellow members
3. Arranging motivational lectures on good citizens and their responsibilities for secondary school students
4. Publishing a book compiling the selected essays on 'How to be a Good Citizen' written by secondary school students
5. Organising an award distribution ceremony for the winners (secondary school students) of the essay competition on 'How to be a Good Citizen' and publishing a report on the function
6. Organising month-long two training programmes for local journalists
7. Organising an award distribution ceremony for the winners (university students) of the essay competition on 'Good Governance in Bangladesh: My Thoughts'.

3. Actual outputs compared to planned outputs

Projects		Activities	Planned output	Actual output
Development Programme for Female Journalists	1	Fellowship	40	40
	2	Publication of a book with fellow-members' items	2	1
Youths in Good Governance	1	Organising award distribution ceremony of a nationwide essay competition	1	1
Programme for Building Teenagers as Good Citizens	1	Motivational lectures on how to be a good citizen for secondary school students &	64	64
	2	Essay competition on how to be a good citizen among secondary school students	1	1
	3	Organising award distribution ceremony	1	Will be organised in early 2008
Programme for Capacity Building of Young Journalists	1	Month-long skill development training on practical journalism will be held in two different district headquarters.	1	One programme completed in Khulna City another programme will be organised in Bogra town in early 2008

4. Progress of the Projects

4.1 Development Programme for Female Journalists

The main objective of this project component, funded by The Free Voice of the Netherlands, is to raise the number of female journalists in Bangladesh. It was a two-year programme and completed in January 2008. In 2007, 40 female graduates received training under the fellowship programme. Another 40 will be given training in 2009. Many of the trained fellows have already got jobs in various print and electronic media houses.

The fellow members who have completed their courses said they found the programme very effective and helpful in building their careers in journalism.

Major activities of the project are:

- Fellowship on practical journalism for female graduates/journalists
- Arranging programmes for interaction with female journalists and important personalities working in various fields
- Publishing books every year compiling items of the fellow members

Senior journalists conducted the courses that dealt with techniques of information gathering, taking interviews, field visits, covering assignments and filing stories. They are also motivated to develop the confidence that girls also have potentials to work in this profession.

Fellows are receiving training and motivation on;

- Ethics of journalism
 - Techniques of information gathering for hard news and news-features
 - Special orientation on techniques of investigative reporting/in-depth and its necessity
 - Lessons on internet use and browsing
 - Event coverage and field visits
 - Report writing & editing
 - Motivation on social commitment and sensible journalism
 - Still photography
-



Last batch of the fellows of 2007 are seen in the picture



After an interaction meeting on socioeconomic issues some fellows are seen with country's eminent economist Dr Atiur Rahman.

In 2007, the fellow-members submitted some 100 news-features and photo-features on good governance, human rights, women rights, corruption, gender and its related social issues, and most of the items were disseminated to the newspapers and subsequently published with due credit. The items were prepared both in English and Bengali. Some selected items were released to international media in cooperation with Women Feature Service (WFS).



Books published compiling the features of the fellows

In 2007, NewsNetwork published two books, titled "Miseries of Millions in Bangladesh" in English and "Shaharajoner Etikatha - (Tales of Millions) Volume III" in Bengali compiling the fellows' news-features.

Items of former fellows

Rural-based programmes to prevent environmental disasters

Yasmin Rimi

Mymensingh is 125 kilometres away from capital Dhaka. Another 30 kms deep into the district, there is a village named Dakatia. Once a barren village, Dakatia now looks different. It's now a wonderful village with lush green trees.

The credit for the rapid change goes to the students of Dakatia Girls' High School. An afforestation programme launched by the students has motivated the villagers to join their efforts to protect the environment.

The students started their campaign planting trees around their own school. Now it has got trees like margosa (Nim), jackfruit and different medicinal plants.

"When I was a student of class six, the school was in a bad shape," recalls Rita, now a class ten student. "We've got a large field, but it was barren. We, the students, have planted trees all around and we ourselves take care of the trees. We know it very well that a tree helps people in many ways."

Not only the schoolgirls, but also the farmers of the village have very good knowledge about environment and agriculture. "Once we had to spend a lot on farming as we had to buy fertilisers and other agri-inputs. But now it costs us much less because we know how to make organic fertilisers and how to apply it. We also know the necessity of organic fertilisers and the problems of chemical ones," says farmer Jamir Miah.

Asked where did they get the know-how, he says, "People from towns used to come here and tell us to plant trees. They've taught us how to make organic fertilisers and how to cultivate with that."

Nature Alliance, a local NGO, has long been working for the development of the village. Mohiuddin Babar, the executive director of this NGO, says, "Any development work should begin from villages. As people's real problems can be realised at the grassroots level, we've begun our current work on social afforestation from there. The country's overall development could be done by working for the rural people."

"We've started our work choosing 2-3 regions and have been trying for long five years to make rural people and schools understand as to how their livelihood is related to environment. We've been emphasising the need for plantation to improve the environment and change the lifestyle of the rural people."

Like Nature Alliance, many more organisations have been working for protecting the environment from degradation. Bangladesh Environment Journalists Forum, Bangladesh Environment Lawyers' Association, Society for Environment and Human Development, Bangladesh Paribesh Andolon, Citizens' Initiatives and Work for Better Environment are among them.

"Whenever we see any anti-environment activity we instantly wage a movement against it. We hold meetings and rallies, send press releases to media and lastly we raise the issue before the government," says Zahidur Rahman, an executive member of Bangladesh Paribesh Andolon (BAPA) that has long been campaigning against environmental pollution.

He says: "Other organisations need to join us to save the environment. Our environment is now at stake and forest resources are dwindling fast due to human greed, ignorance and fast growing population. We're facing more natural calamities than ever before. The rural population has to be made aware as there are 68,000 villages in Bangladesh."

According to available statistics, there are forests on 5,000 square miles of Bangladesh that is only 7 percent of the total land of the country. Experts say having forests only on 15 percent the country's total land is not adequate. It should be 25 percent.

And the forests, according to them, should be spread across the country in a balanced manner. But Bangladesh is far away from this ideal situation.

About 28 lakh acres of forestland, more than half of the total, are situated in the greater Chittagong Hill Tracts while more than one fourth of the total forestland or about 15 lakh acres is in Khulna district.

It is clear that Bangladesh's natural equilibrium is on the ruin for lack of trees. There is an apprehension Tsunami can strike Bangladesh any time although the country luckily escaped the wrath of Tsunami that hit Indonesia, Sri Lanka and African countries.

Besides, the number of multistoried buildings with central air-conditioning system and AC cars are on the rise and the hot air coming out of them are polluting the environment.

Economist Prof Mozaffer Ahmed, also an environmentalist, says, "If the slogan of 'plantation for environment' can be implemented then certainly the 25 per cent forestation, an aspiration of the country's 14 crore people, would be successful. If people can feel that trees are not only precious for the environment, but also helpful for their income generation then they will surely plant more and more saplings."

The Poverty Reduction Strategic Papers (PRSP) was repeatedly mentioned in the country's budget, but there is no mention in the strategic paper that plantation can make an enormous contribution towards poverty alleviation as many people have already changed their lots by planting trees.

Shefayet Hossain, public relations officer of the Ministry of Forest and Environment, says the government has undertaken extensive programmes on plantation and it is working as a liaison with those organisations working on the environment to check natural disasters.

To make the plantation programmes a success, Mohiuddin Babar says, "The rural people are indiscriminately logging trees to meet their small needs. There should be a campaign to reverse the situation. Rural people take things seriously when urban dwellers explain to them that the plantation is very essential. Therefore, urban people will have to work at the grassroots level."

"However, plantation is not the end of the story. It's imperative to take care of the plants so that they can grow," says another expert. ■

Disparity between earning and spending forces many honest officials to indulge in corruption

Fahmida Rahman

Latifur Rahman, a government official in his late 40s, is known as an honest man. Sincerity, devotion and dutifulness are among the qualities Rahman thinks a government official should have. But, his recent behaviour has made even his close colleagues suspicious. What happened to Mr Rahman?

Latifur Rahman (not his real name) lives in Mohammadpur area of Dhaka City. His monthly salary is around Tk 15,000 of which Tk 9,500 goes on house rent. With the remaining money, he cannot manage the other expenses of his seven-member family. He requires at least Tk 20,000 a month to fulfill his family's basic needs. Who will give him the remaining money? The gentleman lately started taking bribe to get the additional amount.

He says people do need food, clothes, shelter and medicine for survival. But, if the prices of these essential commodities keep going up it is very difficult indeed for the people of lower-income group to get on with life.

In recent months, the prices of essentials, from onion to edible oil, marked an all-time high, breaking the financial backbone of the commoners.

According to information provided by the Consumers Association of Bangladesh (CAB), the average rice price was Tk 29.06 per kg in January this year. In July, it went up to Tk 33.37, showing a 14.83 percent increase. Flour was sold at Tk 27.83 in January and now it was selling at Tk 33.33, posting a 19.76 percent rise. Similarly, the prices of lentil, edible oil, fish, meat, egg, spices and vegetables have gone up by 12.17 percent during January-July period.

Under the circumstances, many people are resorting to dishonest means to run their families because their monthly expenditure is more than income.

CAB secretary Kazi Faruk says, "Having failed to strike a balance between their earning and spending people are taking loans. When they are getting loans they are begging arm. And this is how the social discipline is shattered."

He says, "Two classes of the society have been hit hardest by the price hike. Firstly, the have-nots and the lower-class people who don't have even a shelter. Secondly, the middle-class people who can't come down a certain standard."

It is true that the recent unusual price hike of essentials has prompted many government officers and employees to resort to malpractice just to earn some extra money. Their pay structure is very weak which is why they can't strike a balance between earning and spending.

As the salary of government officials and employees is poor, they are either indulging in corruption or engaging themselves in other works. For example, a government college teacher tutors privately, doctors of government medical colleges are working in clinics and public university teachers are teaching at private universities or working in NGOs as consultants.

The number of private jobs has increased significantly in the country. And, private companies give much higher salaries than that of the government. When a BCS officer sees that despite being less qualified an employee of a multinational or mobile company leads a much better life he gets frustrated. And, this frustration makes him resort to corruption.

Dr Atiur Rahman, an eminent economist, says, "Government servicemen indulge in corruption just for survival. There are many officers and employees who simply can't maintain their families with their salaries. So, there should be a change in the pay structure."

According to available data, the inflation was 5.94 percent in January. Now, it's close to double digit. Until recently, the upward trend in inflation was only limited to food indicator. But, now it is seen in other aspects too. At present, a product worth Tk 100 has to be bought by Tk 108. Those who don't have the additional money have to buy less. Buying rice is the main problem for people. According to government statistics, 54 percent of income is spent on rice.

The spending for a five-member family that needs two and half kilos of rice a day has increased by Tk 12 to 15. So people with little income suffer more than the well-off ones.

As a remedial measure, Dr Atiur advocates for introducing a rationing system as in neighbouring India. "Therefore, any price hike can't affect the low-income group people."

Bangladesh Bank Governor Dr Salehuddin recently announced an advance monetary policy. According to his announcement, the inflation will be kept within the target of 6-7 percent in the first six months (From July to December) of 2007-08 fiscal.

He said controlling inflation is the main challenge of the monetary policy. Declaring to run the monetary policy more carefully for the next six months to keep inflation under control, he said

inflation would not come down all on a sudden. But, it would be bearable in the future. And to make that happen, Dr Salehuddin emphasised the need for having a government's revenue policy and increase in product supply.

In his various articles, Dr Atiur Rahman stated the reasons behind the price hike of essentials. He finds the lower supply than demand as the main reason behind the price hike.

The most harmful aspect of this is not to have a similarity between earning and spending. So, there is a financial crisis in public life and people's sufferings kept worsening. Among other reasons, there are interference in stockpiling, increase in transportation cost, fall in production both at home and abroad, import deficit, increase in fuel prices and profiteering by middlemen.

To solve the price-hike problem, Dr Atiur in one of his books wrote about the formation of a cell that would always monitor the movement of the prices of essentials. He says extortion in the transport sector will have to be stopped completely besides taking measures to monitor the prices of commodities on the international market. He feels that consumer rights organisations should be more vocal.

According to Dr Atiur, there is a necessity to formulate competition guidelines in addition to having price committees to find the reasons behind price hike.

He also underlines the need for changes in the existing policies and strategies to have an effective answer to the problem. ■

Amendments to existing Guardianship and Custodian Act is a must in the interest of mothers

Iffat Jarin

Sultana Yasmin, a 24-year-old pretty working woman, always hurries back home after office hours. She is hardly seen spending any light moment with anybody. She is always gloomy and depressed.

"I rarely have any spare time to spend with colleagues and friends. I'm always worried about my seven-year-old boy thinking what he is doing back at home," says Sultana, once a witty girl who has gradually withdrawn herself from everything.

What happened to Sultana? Why has she become so unsociable all off a sudden? These are the questions her neighbours and colleagues ask each other everyday.

Sultana was married off to Mozammel Haque, 34, an officer of a private firm, when she passed her HSC examination. Her family members arranged the marriage in a little bit haste and did not bother to properly enquire about Mozammel's education and family backgrounds.

After the marriage, Sultana came to know her hubby is an addict. Frustrated, one day Sultana left her husband with her baby boy and ultimately got separated. And this is how began her hard life. She had to work really hard to bring up the boy and complete her Master's degree. And then she managed a job in a private firm.

As Sultana began thinking 'the ordeal is over, her ex-husband started brewing a new trouble. Now he wants his son back. When Sultana asked the man how he could get the boy back although he has done nothing for him, Mozammel says, "I'm the boy's legal guardian."

When Bangladesh was under British rule, a law was enacted in 1890 barring women from enjoying the equal rights to the custody and property of their own children. Over the years, there have been extensive changes in the Guardianship and Custodian Act in Britain itself and now a British child is identified as per his or her mother's name.

Unfortunately, there has been no amendment to the law in Bangladesh since its enactment 117 years ago, meaning the women here are being deprived of the very rights they are entitled to.

Custody means the power or right to supervise an individual along with his or her property, who is unable to look after him/herself such as minors (under the age of 18) and mentally imbalanced ones. In most cases, the fight between divorced husbands and wives are over the custody of their children.

According to section 6 of the Guardianship and Custodian Act, if there is a question regarding the custody of a minor it has to be considered as per one's family law. There are three types of custody in the Muslim family law -- custody of children, custody of children's property and custody of children's marriage.

In Muslim family law, the father is the natural legal guardian of children. The mother cannot be the guardian. But, a mother can have her sons with her until they reach seven while she can have her daughters till their puberty, which is called 'hijana' (only responsibility). If the mother gets remarried, she will be deprived of the priority of her right, hijana.

As per this law, though the mother is not the real guardian, she can apply for the custody of the children if she feels that the real guardian cannot perform the responsibility. In that case, even the mother gets the custody it will only be 'hijana' and she will only get the right to take care of them. She will have no right to their property whatsoever.

In case of the custody of children's property, the Muslim family law in Bangladesh recognises three types of custody -- legal guardian, guardian determined by court and virtual guardian.

In case of a minor's property, the following people are recognised as guardians. A. Father B. An executor nominated by him through a will C. Grandfather D. An executor nominated by him through a will.

A virtual guardian is that person who willingly takes the physical responsibility of the children and their property with no right to buy or sell the property - both moveable and immovable ones. The mother, paternal uncle, brother and father-in-law can be the virtual guardians.

The Guardianship and Custodian Act, enacted by the British rulers, has been applied for 115 years without any amendment. It is applied in determining custody, supervision and dependency of children of all religions.

But the Bangladesh Constitution in its articles 26, 27, 28 and 29, especially article 27, clearly says all the citizens are equal in the eyes of law and everyone is entitled to equal rights.

Section 5 of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), adopted in 1979 by the UN General Assembly, states that the issue of recognition of identical responsibilities of both men and women in raising children and their development will have to be included in the family education properly considering motherhood as a social work keeping in mind 'the interests of children are the main important things'.

Salma Jabin, an official of Ain O Salish Kendra, an NGO, says, "Among all the laws that are discriminatory to women, the Custody Act is the worst. How come a mother who carries the child in her womb for 10 months and make him/her a complete person facing various odds, is not the guardian of the child. Nothing can be more painful than this."

Jabin says, "Today's women are miles ahead as the law was enacted in 1890. Nowadays, women are showing success by dint of their merits. They are capable enough to take decisions about anything. Unfortunately, we're walking back in an era of globalisation."

Dr Taslima Mansur, the chair of Dhaka University's Law Faculty, says, "There has been no amendment to the law yet simply because of chauvinist attitude. When a father enjoys all the rights, a mother is allowed to rear the children. Amendments to the law have been essential."

Advocate Maksuda Akhter of Bangladesh Mahila Parishad says in the laws of Bangladesh women hardly have any right to guardianship of their kids. "There is no harm in ensuring this right, this not a big deal."

Mosharraf Hossain, director of Bangladesh Children's Rights Forum, says, "The provision of equal right for the women relating to children's custody should be in the law so that a mother can be the guardian of children's physique and property in absence of their father."

Advocate Elina Khan, executive director of Human Rights Implementation Organisation, says, the country's policymakers will have to come forward to change the law, or else, the women will continue to suffer. ■

4.2 Youths in Good Governance:

Brief of the text will be taken from the project report

This project was taken with a view to highlighting the thoughts and ideas of the young generation for the country's progress and developments, and promoting good governance.

The project was implemented from July 2006 to June 2007.

Its activities were:

1. To organise a nationwide essay competition
2. To organise an award distribution ceremony
3. Documentation and dissemination of information (publishing a report on award distribution ceremony and releasing top 10 essays to newspapers/magazines)

All the activities were successfully implemented. Country Director of the World Bank attend the award distribution ceremony as chief guest, while TIB Trustee Board Chairman Prof Muzaffer Ahmad was the special guest at the function. They distributed the certificates and prize money among the best essay writers.

World Bank Country Director Xian Zhu expressed his satisfaction over the substantial number of participants in the competition. He was particularly impressed with the fact that the participants did not come to terms with academic concepts-but the way in which they put forward practical solutions. These essays, he said, were not just a list of the ills of corruption, nepotism and the failures of the rule of law. Rather, they set out clear ideas about how to create a better society, a better Bangladesh.

Zhu said the World Bank shares many of the ideas put forward by the participants, be it strengthening local government, civil service reforms or increased transparency and accountability. He said, "Good governance is not the end in itself; it's a way of creating the environment to achieve many other goals."



Xian Zhu

Quoting one of the winners, Miraj Hossain, he said without good governance, the benefits of public programmes will not reach their targets, especially the poor people.

He said several writers also pointed out that the concept of governance is not new; it is as old as human civilization. Good governance is something all societies strive towards. Bangladesh is not alone in attempting to tackle the problems of poor public services and corruption.

Quoting the winning essay of Jubaida Raushan, Zhu said many poor countries have started their journey to good governance and sound economic growth with fragile institutions. "I'm convinced that in Bangladesh this journey is now underway," he said, adding, "To ensure success of this journey, institutions must be strengthened.

That is why, Zhu said, strengthening Bangladesh's core governance process and institutions is one of the key goals of the World Bank's Country Assistance Strategy that will guide the Bank's operations here during the coming years. He said the World Bank is proud to be associated with News Network's efforts to enhance the voice of young people in the development process.

The World Bank Country Director said after listening to the speakers at the prize distribution ceremony he was again convinced of the creativity and enthusiasm of young Bangladeshis. He urged the essay competitors, particularly the winners, to become the torchbearers of good governance in Bangladesh.



Professor Muzaffer Ahmad

In his speech, Professor Ahmed mentioned several vital points, including lack of consciousness and courage of the people who matter in society and run the state affairs, for the failure to achieve good governance.

Quoting a judgment of a Supreme Court judge in the United States, he said, "No position in a Republic is more important than a citizen." He

said, "Our problem is we are not conscious citizens. If we had conscious citizenry, the issue of good governance would have vanished."

The Professor said: "In fact, if we want good governance and asking for some good institutionalised systems is not the right approach. And from that point of view, I say, those of you have written the prize winning essays and have taken recourse to publications by the World Bank and other authorities and look at the possible websites which are available, the approach from my point of view is upside down."

Prof Muzaffar said in his whole life he has asked himself and quoted US President Kennedy as saying, "What role I have played?"

Quoting some excerpts from the winning essays, Professor Ahmed said he was very pleased when the winner of the first prize competition has mentioned, "We have bad political parties because we have not consciously acted to protest what wrongs the political parties have done."

In his own words, he said, "Let us first ask, what we are doing? Ask, why we are keeping silence when the injustices have been done?"

Professor Ahmed, a renowned teacher of Dhaka University, said the right to information is one of the major elements to ensure good governance, but the people don't have the right of access to information. The Official Secrets Act has restricted that right. Even in Dhaka University, he said, there had been 40 inquiry committees since 1971, but no committee published its report.

Professor Ahmed, a champion of anti-corruption campaign, said the right of access to information ensures transparency in society, and transparency brings good governance.



In the picture, TIB Trustee Board Chairman Prof Muzaffer Ahmad (From left), World Bank Country Director Mr Xian Zhu, Prof Shakhawat Ali Khan of Dhaka University's Journalism Department, News Network Editor Shahiduzzaman and Dr Syed Tarique-Uz-Zaman are seen in a prize distribution ceremony of a World Bank-sponsored essay competition. Standing behind the winners of the competition. The function was held at the Goethe-Institut of German Cultural Centre in Dhaka on March 21, 2007.

"Last but not the least", the Professor said, "We've lost our courage. We've seen young Khudiram walking down the gallows without fear and we've seen school student Matiur's courage in embracing bullets. If we do not have the language of protests, we cannot get good governance. "

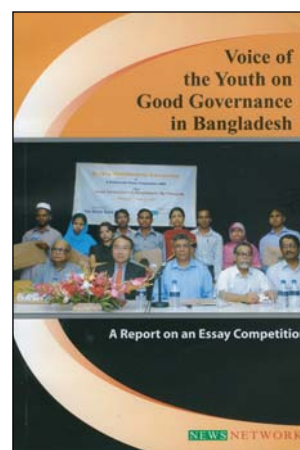
He asserted: "We'll have to be outspoken against bad governance. Here, citizens will have to play their part. I want to put emphasis on the role of citizens. Because, it's futile to expect good governance without good citizen."

The project has been able to create interest among the young people. It needs to be continued for multiple years with more components, including organising motivational workshops for youths in different districts, media campaign, national-level conferences, organising essay competitions and publishing a newsletter on good governance issues.

Recommendations

A set of recommendations were made in the winning essayists for establishing good governance in Bangladesh. The suggestions include reforms in various political systems, executive, judiciary and legislative branches and education system.

1. Political system must be overhauled with honest, competent, patriotic and visionary leadership through meaningful and effective reforms.
2. Freeing politics from ill clutches of power legacy or any kind of nepotism.
3. Zero tolerance to corruption by top leaders, including the Prime Minister and the Leader of the Opposition
4. Anti-Corruption Commission should extremely be empowered to initiate any kind of action on valid grounds against any person irrespective of alleged person's financial or social status.
5. Law enforcing agencies should be kept free from any political influence.
6. Ensuring complete independence of the Judiciary, Election Commission, local government institutions and Anti-Corruption Commission so the corruption within the government cannot impinge on them.
7. Parliament, Supreme Court, Election Commission as well as administrative and financial institutions should be made strengthened and effective.
8. Banning all activities, which go against public interests i.e. student politics, hartal, strike, blockade program etc.



Report of the award distribution ceremony.

9. Giving party nominations to honest, committed, energetic and patriot young people replacing those corrupt veteran politicians who are proved to be dishonest, self-centered and power greedy.
 10. Rectification of the faults and loopholes in the whole educational system of our country.
 11. Refinement of slipups in administrative infrastructure like local government.
 12. Establishing realistic rules and regulations for all public recruitment and promotion, and keep out administration, police etc from all types of influence.
 13. Freedom of mass media, both private and state-run ones in true sense. Establish parliamentary democracy and hold all discussions in Parliament.
 14. Ensuring the right to information repealing the Official Secrets Act to ensure transparency and accountability of the administration
 15. Major national issues concerning governance should be made open for opinions and votes.
 16. Regular survey and research to monitor public opinion on important issues and revising policies and decisions accordingly.
 17. Ensuring a high degree of transparency and accountability in public and corporate processes.
 18. Promotion of independent media (both visual & print) to disseminate information about each elected parliament member's wealth status from day one of his/her submission of nomination paper till the last day of his/her parliament membership.
 19. Ensuring decentralization of powers, responsiveness and adoptability of the government and removing 'red-tapism' in the administration.
 20. Strengthening local government and efficiency in managing resources.
 21. Training of all government officials and employees to make the administration dynamic and effective.
 22. Institutionalise a formal process for the private sector and civil society to participate in rule-making and government decision-making.
 23. Making people aware of their rights and strengthening and enforcing the election code of conduct.
 24. Appointing Ombudsmen, surprise visits by top executives to different institutions and places and report back to their respective authorities for immediate actions or corrections.
 25. Privatization of the institutions and service sectors for better management to boost economic growth, for instance Chittagong Seaport, Mongla Seaport, Bangladesh Biman, Bangladesh Railway, etc.
 26. A strong and comprehensive security should be in place to protect investment
 27. Ensuring human security and improving human rights condition
 28. Pro-active role by civil society, professional bodies, NGOs in making public awareness about their rights in society and conducting social campaign against misdeeds and corruption.
-

4.3 Programme for Building Teenagers as Good Citizens:

The project titled 'Building Teenagers as Good Citizens' was funded by the Royal Danish Embassy in Dhaka. It focused on secondary school students. This project was undertaken to make school students aware about human rights, child and woman rights, violence against women and other basic rights of the citizenry.

It covered 32 different secondary schools (equal number of boys and girls' schools) in eight districts. Some 5,000 students, preferably of class IX, brought under the project activities. The project started in December 2006 and completed in February 2008.

The project objective was to increase the level of awareness of school students on human rights issues, including child and woman rights, and motivating them for promoting peace and tolerance in the society. The project also advocated for incorporating human rights in school curricula.

The project Activities were:

1. Organising motivational lectures on human rights issues for school students
2. Arranging essay competition on human rights issues
3. Holding workshops and award distribution ceremony

The project was implemented in 32 schools of eight districts — Khulna, Bogra, Rangpur, Mymensingh, Barisal, Tangail, Comilla and Habigonj.

During the motivational lectures, some cartoons were used for increasing their civic sense.



Students of a school taking part in the essay competition

4.4 Fellowship Programme for the Capacity Building of Young Journalists

This programme was launched immediately after the signing of the contract with IPDC/UNESCO in October 2007 and continued till April 8, 2008. As per the project activities, News Network organized two one-month fellowship programmes — one in Khulna city, a southern divisional headquarters, and another in Bogra town, an important northern district headquarters.

The programme in Khulna was held in 2007 while the programme in Bogra from January-February 2008. A total of 50 journalists benefited from the programme.

Chief Editor of Bangladesh Sangbad Sangstha (BSS) Zaglul Ahmed Chowdhury attended the closing session of the programme in Khulna as chief guest. BSS is one of the largest news agencies of the country.



Chief Editor of Bangladesh Sangbad Sangstha (BSS) Zaglul Ahmed Chowdhury giving certificate to a participant of a month long training programme in Khulna.

During the training, the journalists were taught about ethics of journalism and motivated about human rights and social responsibilities of a journalist. It also included;

1. Discussion on press freedom and freedom of expression
2. Description of news and basics of reporting and report writing
3. Reporting on women and child rights issues, economic and environment issues
4. Techniques of information gathering, including taking interviews, covering press conferences and other events
5. Investigative report, its necessity and techniques of information gathering for it and report writing
6. News-feature writing.

Senior journalists of various media houses of the country are conducting the courses.

The programme has been able to draw the attention of various levels, particularly the media houses in Bangladesh and different local press clubs of the country.

5. New Programmes in 2008

Future programmes

1. Programme for Promoting Human Rights of Ethnic Minorities

There are 27 ethnic communities in Bangladesh who mainly live in the country's four regions -- the Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT), northwest, mid-north and the country's northern districts. There is always a human rights issue when it comes to the state of minority communities in Bangladesh, as they are victims of repression and deprivation. In the name of majority rule or democracy, they have been marginalized socially, politically and economically. They always suffer from a sense of insecurity.

To change the present odd situation, massive activities need to be taken for multiple years. However, News Network took up a 12-month project to identify the problems of these ethnic minorities, raise mass awareness about racial tolerance and promote their human and democratic rights.

The main objective of the project is to initiate a campaign and advocacy to identify the problems of the ethnic minorities, raise mass awareness about how they fall victims to continuous racial and intolerance, and promote their human and democratic rights.

Major activities of the project are to prepare profiles of the minorities. Taiwan Foundation for Democracy is providing support for this programme.

2. Education Programme for Harijan Children

Harijan people are one of the most politically and socially ignored minority groups in Bangladesh. They are also called 'Dalits' as they come from the lower cast of the Hindu community. The exact size of the harijan population in Bangladesh is not known. They are likely to be several millions scattered across the country.



Children of the harijan community are seen in the picture.

They are the poorest of the poor in Bangladesh. They are living in an inhuman condition, as they have no access to sanitation, healthcare and safe water. In most places, harijan people are living in a certain area locally known as mathor patty (Sweepers' Colony) since they earn livelihood working as sweepers. They have been doing this odd job for generations.

More worrying is that many poor Muslim people have started joining the odd job replacing the harijans. Losing the job, many harijan families are now begging from door to door.

In many areas, including Bogra, harijans are not allowed to eat in a restaurant visited by others because they are scheduled cast and untouchable. Many feel that the harijans deserve a better deal from the society, as one cannot forget that they are human beings too. The kids of these

harijan families remain uneducated, since there is no school for them. Harijans are also victims of social violence and intolerance with women and children being the worst victims.



A group of ethnic minority women selling their agricultural produces at a hill market.

News Network believes that their problems cannot be resolved overnight, but some steps need to be taken right now to change their lot. Therefore, the organisation

took up a project to educate their children because education is the key to development and change.

Initially, News Network wants to undertake a 12-month pilot project in Bogra, a northern important district town. Some 6000 Harijans live in different places of the town, 200 km off capital Dhaka.

News Network plans to set up two primary (elementary) schools for the Harijan children. The schools will be opened with class one for the 5 years olds and the classes will gradually be expanded the following years when the old batches will complete their initial classes. Every year after the first year another new class will be introduced until the schools have 5 classes. Then multidimensional activities can be undertaken under the project, if the fund is available.

Anne Frank-Founds will provide fund for implementing the programme.

3. Capacity building programme for young journalists

Media in Bangladesh are mainly categorised into two types: print media and electronic media. The print media is considered to be relatively free. The positive trend has prevailed since the restoration of democracy in 1990 when the government relaxed the process of newspapers declaration. But the



environment is still not fully conducive to press freedom. There are many laws and several sections under the Bangladesh Penal Code that affect the functioning of the press. The most important of them is perhaps the Official Secrets Act. This 19th century act, which might have served the purposes of colonial rule, is still in effect.

Besides, objective and sensible journalism, which the society expects from the media, cannot be pursued here for lack of skill and social commitment of journalists. As people from different disciplines enter the profession without having any orientation, they make mistakes in information gathering and filing reports. Objective reporting and maintaining neutrality in Bangladesh journalism are still far way off for lack of motivation of the journalists. Sometimes

newspapers and other media organizations face legal challenges due to non-professional reporting of the journalists. So, skill development training and motivation are very much essential for the young journalists in Bangladesh.

Keeping this view in mind, News Network will implement a one-month fellowship programme in three different divisions/district headquarters (outside capital Dhaka), where newspapers have grown more than any other places. Seventy-five young journalists within 30 years of age will be awarded fellowships under the programme. Female journalists will be given preference. This skill development programme will motivate the local journalists to be more professional and sensible, and thus media houses will be benefited.

The 12-month project will be implemented with financial assistance from UNESCO.

Finance

1. Budget & Expenditure

The budget for the year 2007 was BDT 70,80,200 But later NewsNetwork received a new fund from UNESCO. Therefore, it was revised and stood at amount BDT 77,04,200 Besides, the total expenditure in the year stood at BDT 76,83,524

1. Project-wise budget and expenditure. —————

Project (s)	Budget	Expenditure	Variation
Development Programme for Female Journalists, funded by The Free Voice	40,88,600	40,61,039	+ 2,7,561
Youths in Good Governance, Funded by The World Bank	2,66,700	2,62,671	+ 4,029
Building Teenagers as Good Citizens Funded by Royal Danish Embassy	26,44,000	26,54,128	- 10,128
Fellowship Programme for Capacity Building of Young Journalists Funded by UNESCO	6,24,000	6,26,490	- 2,490
NewsNetwork	80,900	79,196	+1,704
Total BDT.	<u>77,04,200</u>	<u>76,83,524</u>	<u>+20,676</u>

2. Budget 2007 (revised)

SL.	Heads of Account	Free voice	Danish	The World Bank	Unesco	News Network	Total
1	Interenship programme for female journalists	2,535,500	0	0	618,500	0	3,154,000
2	Interaction with the female journalists and important personalities	44,000	0	0	0	0	44,000
3	Publishing Books	100,000	0	80,000	0	15,000	195,000
4	Motivational lectures on human rights and other related issues	0	988,000	0	0	0	988,000
5	Eassay competition	0	1,160,000	0	0	0	1,160,000
6	Workshop and award distribution ceremony for the students	0	20,000	0	0	0	20,000
7	Honorarium for the jury members	0	0	5,500	0	0	5,500
8	Cost of award ceremony event	0	0	150,000	0	0	150,000
9	Cost of award & crest	0	0	30000	0	0	30000
10	Telephone, fax, postage & other utilities	157,100	100,000	0	3,500	29,900	290,500
11	Office supplies & conveyance	232,100	100,000	1,200	2,000	21,000	356,300
12	Office rent	308,000	0	0	0	0	308,000
13	Salary and honorarium	554,400	276,000	0	0	0	830,400
14	Office equipment	157,500	0	0	0	0	157,500
15	Audit fee	0	0	0	0	15,000	15000
	Total	4,088,600	2,644,000	266,700	624,000	80,900	7,704,200
Financial Arrangement							
	HEADS	COST IN BDT					
	Total project cost	77,04,200					
	Donor's contribution	76,23,300					
	News Network contribution	80,900					

3. Expenditure in relation to budget

NEWS NETWORK RECEIPTS AND PAYMENTS ACCOUNT FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31ST DECEMBER, 2007

PARTICULARS	DETAILS	AMOUNT
RECEIPTS:		
OPENING BALANCE (01.01.2007)		
Cash in hand	2,008.10	
Cash in Bank	<u>2,63,980.14</u>	
		2,65,988.24
FUND INFLOW		
Fund received from:		
The Danish Embassy	34,50,000.00	
Free Voice, Netherlands	<u>45,55,040.25</u>	
		80,05,040.25
Temporary loan from the editor		2,72,000.00
Temporary loan from the Danish project		3,55,000.00
Sales of various publications		68,628.08
Bank interest		12,049.41
Subscriptions from the Executive members		<u>2,100.00</u>
TOTAL TK.		<u>89,80,805.98</u>
PAYMENTS:		
FUND OUTFLOW		
Honorarium for jury members		5,000.00
Cost of award & crest		1,50,000.00
Holding award ceremony event		29,640.00
Publication		1,73,500.00
Editing		15,000.00
Dissemination		4,550.00
Telephone, postage, internet & utilities, Communications etc.		2,85,515.00
Office supplies & maintenance		2,70,085.08
Conveyance		79,275.00
Audit fee		10,000.00
Salaries		8,30,400.00
Office equipment		1,55,000.00
Internship		31,58,284.00
Office rent		3,08,000.00
Interaction with female journalists and important personalities		41,289.00
Motivation lectures on human rights		9,82,637.00
Essay competition		11,58,450.00
Workshop & award ceremony for the students		20,000.00
Temporary loan to the Unesco project		3,55,000.00
Bank Charge		6,899.00
CLOSING BALANCE (31.12.2007)		
Cash in hand	8,261.10	
Cash in Bank	<u>9,34,020.80</u>	
		9,42,281.90
TOTAL TK.		<u>89,80,805.98</u>

4. Donor-wise Expenditure Projection

AT A GLANCE VIEW OF THE PROJECT AND EXPENDITURE PROJECTION: PERIOD: JANUARY TO DECEMBER, 2007

HEADS	World Bank	Free voice	Danish embassy	UNESCO	NEWS NETWORK	TOTAL
Honorarium for jury members	5,000.00	-----	-----	-----	-----	5,000.00
Cost of award & crest	1,50,000.00	-----	-----	-----	-----	1,50,000.00
Holding award ceremony event	29,640.00	-----	-----	-----	-----	29,640.00
Publication	75,000.00	98,500.00	-----	-----	-----	1,73,500.00
Editing	-----	-----	-----	-----	15,000.00	15,000.00
Dissemination	-----	-----	-----	-----	4,550.00	4,550.00
Telephone, postage, internet & utilities, Communications etc.	-----	1,51,963.92	1,04,088.00	940.00	28,523.08	2,85,515.00
Office supplies & maintenance	3,030.42	1,38,472.00	1,08,198.51	7,800.00	12,584.15	2,70,085.08
Conveyance	-----	79,275.00	-----	-----	-----	79,275.00
Audit fee	-----	-----	-----	-----	10,000.00	10,000.00
Salaries	-----	5,54,400.00	2,76,000.00	-----	-----	8,30,400.00
Office equipment	-----	1,55,000.00	-----	-----	-----	1,55,000.00
Internship	-----	25,32,784.00	-----	6,16,960.92	8,539.08	31,58,284.00
Office rent	-----	3,08,000.00	-----	-----	-----	3,08,000.00
Interaction with female journalists and important personalities	-----	41,289.00	-----	-----	-----	41,289.00
Motivation lectures on human rights	-----	-----	9,82,637.00	-----	-----	9,82,637.00
Essay competition	-----	-----	11,58,450.00	-----	-----	11,58,450.00
Workshop & award ceremony for students	-----	-----	20,000.00	-----	-----	20,000.00
Bank Charge	-----	1,355.00	4,755.00	789.00	-----	6,899.00
Total	2,62,670.42	40,61,038.92	26,54,128.51	6,26,489.92	79,196.31	76,83,524.08

5. Fund received in 2007:

	FUND INFLOW		
	Fund received from:		
	Danish Embassy	34,50,000.00	
	FreeVoice Netherland	45,55,040.25	
			80,05,040.25

6. Certificate of the Auditor



Chartered Accountants



FORM FD-4

We have audited the accounts of News Network, Dhanmondi, Dhaka. Registration no. FDR -922, dated 20.3.1995, for the year ended December 31, 2007 examined all relevant books and vouchers and certifies that according to the audited accounts:

1. The brought forward Foreign Donations at the beginning of the year 1st January 2007 was TK. 107727.52
2. The Foreign Donations amounting to Tk. 80,05,040.25 was received by the organization during the period.
3. The balance of unutilized Foreign Donation was Tk. 5,08,440/-.
4. Foreign donation amounting to TK. 76,04,327.77 have been utilized for the following purposes (shown project wise).

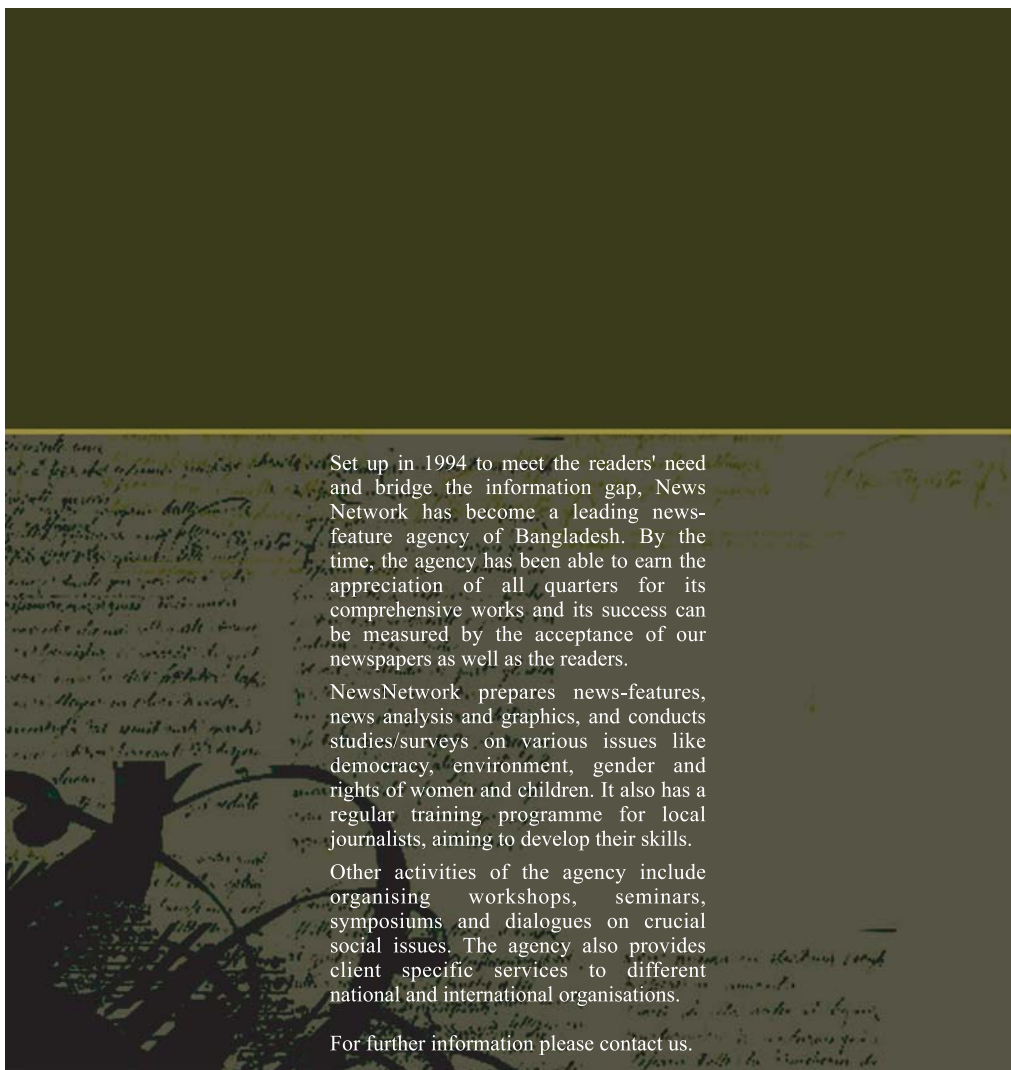
NAME OF THE PROJECTS	1.Fellowship programme for capacity building of young journalists. 2. Programme for building teenager as good citizen. 3. Development programme for female journalists. 4. Youth in good governance.
FUNDING AGENCY	1. Unesco New Delhi 2. Royal Danish Embassy 3. Free voice Netherlands 4. The World Bank
GOVT. APPROVAL MEMO NO.	1. ABIBU A-4/ Network /29-20/2007/ dated 29.01.2008 2. ABIBU A-4/ Network /29-18/2007/ dated 1.03.2007 3. ABIBU A-4/ Network /29-19/2007/ dated 19.04.2007 4. ABIBU A-4/ Network /29-17/2007/ dated 16.07.2006

Name of the projects	Budget for this year	Amount spent this year	Difference
Fellowship programme for capacity building of young journalists	624,000.00	626,489.92	-2,489.92
Programme for building teenager as good citizen	2,644,000.00	2,654,128.51	-10,128.51
Development programme for female journalists	4,088,600.00	4,061,038.92	27,561.08
Youth in good governance	266,700.00	262,670.42	4,029.58
News Network	80,900.00	79,196.31	1,703.69
Total Taka	7,704,200.00	7,683,524.08	20,675.92

5. Certified that 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.

Pinak Das
Pinaki Das, FCA 10308
Partner

Page 6 of 9



Set up in 1994 to meet the readers' need and bridge the information gap, NewsNetwork has become a leading news-feature agency of Bangladesh. By the time, the agency has been able to earn the appreciation of all quarters for its comprehensive works and its success can be measured by the acceptance of our newspapers as well as the readers.

NewsNetwork prepares news-features, news analysis and graphics, and conducts studies/surveys on various issues like democracy, environment, gender and rights of women and children. It also has a regular training programme for local journalists, aiming to develop their skills.

Other activities of the agency include organising workshops, seminars, symposiums and dialogues on crucial social issues. The agency also provides client specific services to different national and international organisations.

For further information please contact us.

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