

2018

ANNUAL REPORT



**NEWS
NETWORK**

*working for
social change and
empowering people*

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social change and
empowering people*

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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 2018, News Network activities were supported by the European Union and the High Commission of Canada in Dhaka. The European Union funded a three-year (2018-2020) project to build-up the capacity of rural human rights defenders, working for protecting and promoting women's and girls' rights. The defenders are; rural media people, including reporters, media gatekeepers and potential young women journalists, members of rural civil society organisations (CSOs) and non-government organisations (NGOs), and religious leaders. The EU funded project covered eight remote districts and most of them are adjacent to Indo-Bangla international border, where violation of women human rights take place all the time and most incidents go unreported. These defenders are not well protected and they face challenges such as risk and threats on regular basis.

As per the action plan of the year, News Network in cooperation of co-partners Udayankur Seba Sangstha (USS) organised several events like national level project launching ceremony and workshop, regional startup workshops and district level workshop, that were aimed at making people aware about the importance of the project activities. Organising the defenders locally and nationally, and break their isolation and their development were also part of the initiatives.

On development initiative, it has planned to sensitised and trained up the defenders on various issues of defending human rights,

international laws and charters, protecting victims, advocacy, lobby, etc., which will be implemented in phases during the project implementation period.

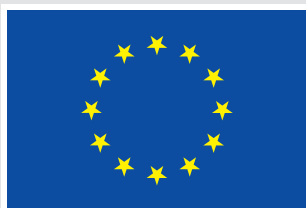
Besides, the High Commission of Canada, Dhaka funded a 7 months long programme to improve the professional ability of journalists to report on religious issues that has completed successfully in the reporting period. Journalists participated in the training have demonstrated better understanding on freedom of religion issues and the training also helped them to ensure accuracy of information while reporting or publishing news items.

The budget of the year was BDT 25,517,654/ USD 304321 and the expenditure stood at BDT 22,047,780/USD 262,934.

As News Network envisions a stable nation with citizens aware of their rights and enjoy freedom of expression, live with dignity in a gender-sensitive society and enjoy gender equality, the organisation contributed towards its values for yet another year and committed to do so in the years ahead.

Shahiduzzaman
Editor & Chief Executive Officer
News Network

Partners of the Year



The European Union

Activity supported by the
Canada Fund for Local Initiatives

Activité réalisée avec l'appui du
Fonds canadien d'initiatives locales

Canada 



A photo of distric level project startup workshop in Satkhira

PROJECTS AND EVENTS OF THE YEAR 2018

Projects	Supported by	Status
Programme for Supporting Journalists to Promote Freedom of Religion	High Commission of Canada, Dhaka	Completed
Supporting Human Rights Defenders Working for Women's and Girls' Rights in Bangladesh	The European Union	Ongoing



A group photo of participant journalists and guests of a training workshop on Religious Tolerance issues held on January 2018 in Jashore. Photo credit: NewsNetwork

Progress

Programme for Supporting Journalists to Promote Freedom of Religion

News Network observed there are lacks of understanding and professional skills among the rural journalists to report on religious issues. Often, they make mistakes and sometimes those reports create further unrest in the society. Sometimes it has been observed that their attitude and belief system buoyed by political divide influence their reporting. As a result, their reporting become opinionated rather than based on facts and reality. On the other hand, there are many incidents



*Participant journalists are in a training session on Religious Tolerance issues in Jashore.
Photo credit: NewsNetwork*

that the journalists were attacked while covering news on intolerance. To face such challenges, the project undertook several activities to sensitise them on the issues and strengthen the ability of journalists in project districts; Rangpur, Khulna and Jashore.



Participant journalists engaged in group work. Photo credit: NewsNetwork



A group photo of the journalists based in Khulna received awards for best reporting on religious issues. Begum Ferdousi Ali, Chief-in-Editor of The Daily Tribune, Programme Coordinator and senior journalists Sheikh Didarul Alam are also seen in the photo. Photo credit: NewsNetwork

A total of 74 reporters, working for local and national media and 28 local media gatekeepers were benefited from the project and were sensitised on freedom of religion. They also received skill development training.



A group photo of the journalists based in Rangpur received awards for best reporting on religious issues. Photo credit: NewsNetwork

Most journalists participated in such training workshop for the first time. Their level of understanding on freedom of religion developed and professional skills improved. The participants also responded well. They have shared their learning with colleagues and friends. It has also setup a trend among the participating journalists and their colleagues. Trained journalists published a good number of quality reports and news items. Of them, twenty-one reports on freedom of religion issues have been awarded.

News Network strongly believes that the beneficiaries will continue the initiative for social and national interest. The participating journalists have also formed a network to share information and support each other. Such a network is aimed at helping them if they receive threats, become victim of attack for reporting on the issues or in crisis situation.



Audrey Maillot Team Leader- Governance of the Delegation of the European Union to Bangladesh delivering her inaugural speech at CIRDAP Auditorium, Dhaka on 15 May 2018 during the launching ceremony of News Network project - 'Supporting Human Rights Defenders Working for Women's and Girls' rights in Bangladesh' - funded by the European Union. Photo credit: NewsNetwork

Supporting Human Rights Defenders Working for Women's and Girls' Rights in Bangladesh

News Network with the financial support from the European Union has been implementing the project in eight remote districts of the country, where the beneficiaries are rural women human rights defenders working for women's and girls' rights in Bangladesh. They are rural journalists, media gatekeepers, members of CSO and NGO, young women media practitioners, and religious leaders.

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Delegates from various levels including government official, experts, CSOs, NGOs, youth, students and journalists are seen in project launching ceremony. Photo credit: NewsNetwork

The beneficiaries are playing important role in the society but they are not well organised and lack necessary capacity to address the issues. In a recent assessment under the project, it was found that the rural defenders do not have enough and clear idea on human rights issues and protection mechanisms. Also, they do not have minimum knowledge



From left, Erika Hasznos, First Secretary (Political), Laila Jasmin Banu, Programme Manager - Governance and Human Rights, and Audrey Maillot Team Leader- Governance of Delegation of the European Union to Bangladesh, Ayesha Khanum, President of Bangladesh Mohila Parisad, Shahiduzzaman, Editor and Chief Executive Officer of News Network, Senior journalist Shamsuddin Ahmed are seen on the dais at the project launching ceremony. Photo credit: NewsNetwork



Participants from various sectors are seen in Kurigram district level workshop

on International Human Rights Organizations who work for Women's and girls' rights and beyond and no linkage with in-country and out-country human rights platform. Most of them never read Human Rights Declaration and Conventions. Considering all these, their capacity is considered as moderate sometimes and less than moderate mostly. as like - 30%. In very few areas, their achievement is termed as 'good' but they do not have more 40% achievement. On an average, more than 80% defenders do not have access to the documents as well knowledge they require.

The project has a provision to provide medical and psycho-social assistance, legal counseling and any other support to the rural human rights defenders, including to those placed in detention or in prison as well as to their relatives.

News Network in cooperation with Udayankur Seba Sangstha (USS) has been implementing the project. Its specific objectives are; (i) to recognise



A scene of a regional level project startup workshop in Rajshahi city

and promote the role of WHRDs in the protection and promotion of human rights and fundamental freedoms and to protect them addressing the challenges, risks and threats that they may face and (ii) to support and protect defenders at risk due to their work for the promotion and protection of the full enjoyment of women's and girls' rights;



A group photo of fellows of Human Rights Journalism Fellowship Programme in Rajshahi. Laila Jasmin Banu, Programme Manager - Governance and Human Rights, of Delegation of the European Union to Bangladesh and News Network Editor and CEO of News Network Shahiduzzaman are also seen. Photo credit: NewsNetwork



A view of the Certificate Giving Ceremony of the fellowship programme. Photo credit: NewsNetwork

To achieve the objectives, several activities have been undertaken and different activities will be implemented in phases during the project period. In reporting period, activities were to give better understanding on the importance of project to relevant stakeholders, government



Deputy Commissioner of Rajshahi S. M. Abdul Kader distributing certificate among the young women journalists who completed a four-month long fellowship programme on Human Rights Journalism in Rajshahi on 27 November 2018. Laila Jasmin Banu, Programme Manager - Governance and Human Rights, of Delegation of the European Union to Bangladesh also present as special guest in the occasion. The programme was supported by the European Union. Photo credit: NewsNetwork



Journalist in Dinajpur are participating in a training session on risk analysis and security planning. Photo credit: News Network

officials, opinion leaders and members of CSOs in nationally, regionally and locally. The activities also included identifying the beneficiaries/defenders and organising them in profession-based groups/caucus of rural journalists, CSOs and religious leaders locally and nationally. Gaps were also assessed and challenges identified that are faced by rural



Local media gatekeepers based in Shatkhira are seen in an interaction meeting on risk analysis and security planning issues. Photo credit: NewsNetwork



Group photo of local media gatekeepers, including editors, executive editors and news editors participated in a two-day interaction meeting in Rangpur on risk analysis and security planning. Photo credit: NewsNetwork

defenders in protecting women and girls' rights. Activities also included organising the defenders and strengthening their capacity through sensitization and training workshops and offering fellowships to young potential women on human rights journalism.



District Level Caucus (DLC) leaders are participating in a three-day Leadership and Management Capacity Building Training in Jashore. Photo credit: NewsNetwork

The project organised trainings for rural media on risk analysis and security planning. The participants include rural reporters, working for local and national media and media gatekeepers (publishers, editors, executive editors, news editors) of local newspapers.

A total of 240 media people were benefited through trainings organized in Satkhira, Jashore, Rangpur and Dinajpur. Reporters received 5-day and the media gatekeeper 2-daylong training.

It also conducted 3, 3-day organizational leadership and management training for the members of district level caucus (DLC) held in Rangpur, Nilphamari and Jashore. The DLC represents rural media people, CSOs and religious leaders. About 84 caucus members benefited from the training.

Under the project activities, News Network has completed a four-month fellowship on human rights journalism for 20 young potential women in



A group photo of DLC leaders. Photo credit: NewsNetwork



President of Central Caucus/ Bangladesh Human Rights Defenders Forum (BHRDF) Moshfeka Razzak delivering her speech in the Annual Conference held on 8 December 2018 at Rangpur city. Photo credit: NewsNetwork

Rajshahi. Its aim was to encourage women to choose journalism as their profession and play effective role to protect women's and girls' human rights through publishing reports in their respective media. This was the first time that such fellowship was organised in Rajshahi division. Since long, most newspapers in Rajshahi do not have much women reporters or editorial staffs. Rajshahi media houses are heavily male dominated. For them, getting a job in news media as a woman is too tough. But this time fellowship has made changes. Local newspapers editors are convinced to recruit women as journalists. The fellows received one-month inhouse training and three months internship in media houses. Some of them also joined in media as journalist.

In mid-June, representatives of project district level caucus (DLC) gathered in Rangpur district headquarters, aiming to form a central body of caucuses. Accordingly, a 24-general member with 9-member executive committees of the Central Caucus of the defenders has been



*Annual Conference of Central Caucus / BHRDF held on 8 December 2018 at Rangpur city.
Photo credit: NewsNetwork*

formed to raise voice and undertake action together to protect women's and girls' rights. The Central Caucus also named it as 'Bangladesh Human Rights Defenders Forum'. The opening session of caucus conference was inaugurated by Md. Mostafizur Rahman, Mayor of Rangpur City Corporation.

In the conference, the caucus members demanded to adapt a law to protect human rights defenders in Bangladesh by quoting a UN resolution that was adopted in 1998 to protect human rights defenders. The major media houses covered the conference. A copy of published report are attached below.

Caucus members are highly active and they have become vocal in defending human rights. They are either participating or organising meetings, organising human chain and visiting the spot, where violence or violation of human rights occurred. One of their action was to meet the Deputy Commissioner (DC), government chief executive office and Superintendent of Police (SP), head of police in each project district before the parliamentary election held in December. They handed over memorandum and demanded to ensure rights of religious minority people and women so that they can cast their vote peacefully on the Election Day.



Leaders of Central Caucus / BHRDF. Photo credit: NewsNetwork

Financial
Statement

NEWS NETWORK

RECEIPTS AND PAYMENTS ACCOUNT

FOR THE YEAR ENDED DECEMBER 31, 2018

PARTICULARS	Details	AMOUNT
RECEIPTS:		
OPENING BALANCE (01.01.2018)		
Cash in hand	99	
Cash at Bank	21,847,615.12	
		21,847,714.12
<u>FUND INFLOW</u>		
<u>Fund received from:</u>		
High Commission of Canada		1,674,904.10
Bank Interest		12,495.45
Sale of publication		683.73
Suscription from the Executive members		2,100
GRAND TOTAL BDT.		23537897.4
PAYMENTS:		
Program Cost		11,869,610
Administrative Support cost		10,216,869
Total expenditure		22,086,479
CLOSING BALANCE (31.12.2018)		
Cash In hand	425.83	
Cash at Bank	1450992.87	
		1451418.7
GRAND TOTAL BDT.		23,537,897



Chartered Accountants



CERTIFICATE GIVEN BY THE AUDITORS

We have audited the accounts of NEWS NETWORK Dhanmondi, Dhaka Registration no. FDR-922, dated 20.3.1995 for the Year ended 31st December, 2018 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 1st January, 2018 was Tk. 21,847,714.12
2. The foreign donation amounting to Tk. 1,674,904 was received by the organization during the period.
3. The balance of unutilized foreign donations by the organization at 31st December, 2018 Tk. 1,433,561.
4. Foreign donation amounting to Tk. 22,047,780 has been utilized for the following purposes (shown project wise).

NAME OF THE PROJECT:	1. Programme for Supporting Human Rights Defenders Working for Women's and Girl's Rights in Bangladesh. 2. Programme for Supporting Journalists to Promote Freedom of Religion.
FUNDING AGENCY:	1. European Union 2. High Commission of Canada

Name of the project (s)	Budget for this year	Amount spent this year	Difference
Programme for Supporting Human Rights Defenders Working for Women's and Girl's Rights in Bangladesh.	23,842,750	20,372,913	3,469,837
Programme for Supporting Journalists to Promote Freedom of Religion	1,674,904	1,674,867	37
Total Taka	25,517,654	22,047,780	3,469,874

Total expenditure in BDT. 22,047,780 (Equivalent to USD 262,934 / EURO 230,067)

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.

Date : 27.03.2019

Place : Dhaka

Pinaki Das
Pinaki Das, FCA

Senior Partner

Pinaki & Company

Chartered Accountants

AHSANDELL, 2/A Mymensingh Road
(2nd Floor), Shahbag, Dhaka-1000.

EXECUTIVE COUNCIL OF NEWS NETWORK

President

Shahriar Hossain, Ph. D

Vice-President

Kaiser Ali Talukder, Ph. D

Secretary General

Shahiduzzaman

Finance Secretary

Jalal Ahmed

Members

Rasada Akther

Sanchita Sharma

Taslima Tamanna

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

OUR AGENDA

- Promote freedom of expression, freedom of media, human rights and gender equality;
- Develop professional capacity of journalists;
- Encourage young women to take up journalism as a profession;
- Promote investigative journalism and right to information;
- Sensitise media on crucial social issues including Right to Information Act, democracy, good governance, transparency and promotion of access to justice;
- Motivate children and youths to make 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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