

2019

ANNUAL REPORT



NEWS
NETWORK

*working for
social change and
empowering people*

www.newsnetwork-bd.org

facebook.com/newsnetworkbangladesh



*working for
social change and
empowering people*

News Network

Road 2, House 8, Dhanmondi

Dhaka 1205, Bangladesh

Phone: +88 02 55166239

Fax: + 88 02 55166238

E-mail: info@newswork-bd.org

www.newsnetwork-bd.org

facebook.com/newsnetworkbangladesh

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

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

Report Published

July 2020

© News Network

Design & Graphics

Md. Nazmul Alam

Content

Acronyms	iii
Executive Summary	01
Partners of the Year	03
Projects and Events of the Year 2019	04
Progress of Projects	05
Programme for Supporting Human Rights Defenders Working for Women's and Girls' Rights in Bangladesh	05
Training on Risk Analysis Security Planning for Journalists	08
Defenders Training on National and International Laws Standard to Protect Women's and Girls' Rights	10
Fellowship on Human Rights Journalism	12
Annual Conference of Central Caucus	15
Strengthening Capacity of Journalists to Promote Freedom of Religion and Peace	17
Financial Statement	18
Auditor's Certificate	20
Executive Council of News Network	21
Our Agenda	22

Acronyms

EU	: European Union
HRDs	: Human Rights Defenders
W/HRDs	: Women Human Rights Defenders
CSOs	: Civil society organisations
NGOs	: Non-government organisations
RRLs	: Rural religious leaders
RMPs	: Rural media people
USS	: Udayankur Seba Sangstha
CC	: Central Caucus
DLC	: District Level Caucus
BHRDF	: Bangladesh Human Rights Defenders Forum
DC	: Deputy Commissioner
SP	: Superintendent of Police

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

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

News Network has been implementing a three-year (2018-2020) project with financial assistance from the European Union (EU). The project aims at strengthening the capacity of rural women/human rights defenders (W/HRDs), who are working to protect and promote women's and girls' rights in Bangladesh. They are the target groups of the project. The defenders are: rural media people (RMPs) including reporters, media gatekeepers and potential young women journalists, representatives of rural civil society organisations (CSOs), non-government organisations (NGOs), and rural religious leaders (RRLs).

The project covers eight remote districts, mostly adjacent to Bangladesh-India international border, where violation of women human rights is rampant and most of the incidents go unreported. The districts include Jashore, Satkhira, Rajshahi, Rangpur, Dinajpur, Nilphamari, Lalmonirhat and Kurigramme. To protect their rights, the rural human rights defenders very often face challenges like physical attack, intimidation, violence, life threat and murders. The rural defenders are not well organised to face the challenges and very much unprotected.

In the second year (2019), the News Network successfully continued its project initiatives in cooperation with co-partner -- Udayankur Seba Sangstha (USS). Early in the reporting year, News Network has also conducted a study titled; 'An Assessment to Identify Advocacy Capacity Gaps of Rural Women Human Rights Defenders

in Defending Rural Women's and Girl's Rights'. The study identified the weaknesses of advocacy capacity of W/HRDs in protecting the women human rights. Following the findings and recommendation of the study several training manuals, modules and guidelines were developed and applied to strengthen the capacity of the W/HRDs. A good number of programmes including 'Risk analysis and security planning training for local journalists' and 'Sensitise human rights defenders on national and international laws to protect women and girls' rights' were also held. The News Network provided a four-month fellowship on human rights journalism to young women. Besides, it arranged the second annual conference of Central Caucus (CC) popularly known as Bangladesh Human Rights Defenders Forum (BHRDF) in 2019.

In last quarter, News Network signed a project agreement with the High Commission of Canada to Bangladesh aimed at developing the professional skills of local journalists, working for local and national news media to promote freedom of religion and peace. The project designed to focus on Mymensingh division will be officially launched in January 2020.

The budget of the year 2019 was BDT. 26,039,313 (USD313,727) and the expenditure stood at BDT. 13,425,819 (USD 161,757).



Shahiduzzaman

Editor and 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



The picture shows a certificate giving ceremony of a 4-month fellowship programme on human rights journalism for young women journalists. The programme was held on December 17, 2019 at Rangpur divisional headquarters. Objectives of the programme were to promote gender equality in journalism and encourage fellows to highlight more on women and girls' rights-based issues in public. NewsNetwork implemented the programme with support from the European Union. Photo credit: NewsNetwork

Projects and Events of the Year 2019

Projects	Support	Status
Supporting Human Rights Defenders Working for Women's and Girls' Rights in Bangladesh	European Union	Ongoing
Strengthening Capacity of Journalists to Promote Freedom of Religion and Peace	High Commission of Canada	Ongoing



A snap short of a training session on risk analysis and security planning for journalists working from Kurigram district. The programme was supported by the European Union. Photo credit: NewsNetwork

Progress of Projects

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



Since 2018, News Network has been executing a three-year project styled, "Supporting Human Rights Defenders Working for Women's and Girls' Rights in Bangladesh". Financed by the European Union the project is being implemented in eight



A group photo of human rights defenders participated in a training programme on national and international laws standard to protect women's and girls' rights. The programme was held in Dinajpur district town and supported by the European Union. Photo credit: NewsNetwork

remote frontier districts of the country. The beneficiaries of the project are rural women/human rights defenders (W/HRDs) who are working to protect women's and girls' rights in Bangladesh. The other beneficiaries include rural media practitioners (RMPs) particularly reporters and media gatekeepers of local newspapers, members of rural CSOs and NGOs, rural religious leaders (RRLs) and young potential women journalists. The objectives of the initiative are (i) to recognise and promote the role of W/HRDs in protection and promotion of human rights and fundamental freedoms and help them addressing the challenges like intimidation, harassment, life risks and threats (ii) to support and protect the 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 Rajshahi-based journalists, working for local and national print and electronic media, participated in a 5- day training programme on risk analysis and security planning. The programme was supported by the European Union. Photo credit: NewsNetwork

Though the defenders are playing an important role to protect women's and girls' rights their capacity to address the issues are not good enough. Even the W/HRDs are disorganised and have less understanding on issues like women human rights the project initiatives are gradually changing the scenario. During the reporting period, the organisation also conducted another study titled "An Assessment to Identify Advocacy Capacity Gaps of Rural Women Human Rights Defenders in Defending Rural Women's and Girl's Rights". It will help undertake more effective measures for further improvement of professional ability of defenders. Moreover, a good number of initiatives taken in 2018 also continued in 2019.



A group photo of local journalists based in Nilphamari district participated in a risk and security planning training programme.

Training on Risk Analysis Security Planning for Journalists

The risk analysis security planning training for journalists began in 2018 in four northern districts of the country. The districts include Nilphamari, Lalmonirhat, Kurigram and Rajshahi. About 240 Journalists including rural news reporters working for various local and national news media and media gatekeepers from local newspapers participated in the training. It was for the first time they took part in such kind of a program. The objective of the program was to build up their professional ability and capacity to manage risk and security in crucial time or in crisis situation. High officials of local administrations like Deputy Commissioners



Editors of local newspapers of Kurigram participated in a 2-day interaction meeting on risk analysis and security planning for journalists, supported by the European Union. Photo credit: NewsNetwork

(DCs), District Superintendent of Police (SP) and sub-district executive officer/Upazila Nirbahi Officer (UNO), Social Welfare Officer, public representatives i.e. chairman of zila Parishad/district council, chairman of upazila parishad/sub-district and leaders of local journalists' unions and press clubs attended either in the opening or closing events of the programmes.



A snap short of a training session for human rights defenders on national and international laws standard to protect women's and girls' rights was held in Dinajpur district town and was supported by the European Union. Photo credit: NewsNetwork

Defenders Training on National and International Laws Standard to Protect Women's and Girls' Rights

An assessment conducted by News Network found that most of the rural defenders have limited knowledge on existing rules, laws and policies to protect the women rights. Many of them also do not have access to relevant international laws and right-based charters and mandates. To address the issues the project has undertaken a programme for providing training to mix group of defenders including local journalists (RMPs), CSOs and RRLs. Objective of the programme is to sensitise them on national and international laws standard to protect women rights.



A participant of the defenders' training programme presenting their group works for discussion. Photo credit: NewsNetwork

During the reporting period such a training was held in Dinajpur district headquarters. About 100 defenders participated in the three-day training on the issues. Participants found the programme more interesting and helpful and acknowledged that it encouraged them further. Apart from the training, various knowledge building materials were also distributed among the participants. Well reputed trainers and experts conducted the training programs.



A participant of the defenders' training programme receiving his certificate from Mohammad Anwar Hossain, Superintendent of Police (SP) of Dinajpur. Photo credit: NewsNetwork



Group photo of News Network's Rangpur fellowship programme for young women journalists on human rights journalism. Twenty women journalists were awarded for the 4- month programme, supported by the European Union. Photo credit: NewsNetwork

Fellowship on Human Rights Journalism

Fellowship on Human Rights Journalism was undertaken with a view to encouraging young potential women to choose journalism as their career and play effective role to protect women's and girls' human rights



A fellow from Rangpur receiving her certificate after successful completion of the fellowship form Md. Asif Ahasan, Deputy Commissioner of Rangpur. Photo credit: NewsNetwork



Group photo of News Network's Jashore fellowship programme for young women journalists on human rights journalism. Twenty women journalists were awarded for the four-month fellowship programme, supported by the European Union. Photo credit: NewsNetwork

through publishing reports in their respective media. In 2018, News Network offered a 4-month fellowship on human rights journalism to 20 young women in Rajshahi, which was successfully completed. Some of those fellows joined in various media outlets as journalists. This year, News Network also provided a 4-month fellowship to 40 young potential women in Rangpur and Jashore districts. The fellows received one-month in-house training and three months internship in various media houses. This was for the first time such fellowship was organised in district level.



A fellow of Jashore fellowship programme receiving her certificate following successful completion of the fellowship form Ms. Shammi Islam, Additional Deputy Commissioner (Education & ICT) of Jashore district. Photo credit: NewsNetwork

In Bangladesh most of the local newspapers are very much male dominated. And due to the traditional outlook, they are reluctant to recruit female journalists. But this time, we hope, the fellowship will bring a change. During their internship many of the fellows have proved their professional excellence while working as journalists. During the certificate distribution ceremonies in both the districts newspaper editors highly appreciated the initiative and expressed their willingness to recruit more women as journalists in near future.



A group photo of Central Caucus / Bangladesh Human Rights Defenders Forum (BHRDF) leaders and delegates of District Level Caucus (DLC) attended in the Annual Conference held on December 24, 2019 in Jashore, supported by the European Union Photo credit: NewsNetwork

Annual Conference of Central Caucus

One of the major challenges the News Network faced in recent days was to organise the women/human rights defenders (W/HRDs). The task was too hard because most of the W/HRDs are disorganised and scattered.



Ms. Mosfeka Razzak, President of Central Caucus /Bangladesh Human Rights Defenders Forum (BHRDF) delivering her speech in the conference



Habibur Rahman Milon, Secretary General of Central Caucus, presenting the Annual Report in the conference

Despite the difficulties, the project has been successful in organising them in project districts. By this time defenders formed their district level caucus (DLC) and Central Caucus (CC) and meet regularly for policy planning and actions. The Central Caucus is also named as Bangladesh Human Rights Defenders Forum (BHRDF).

On December 23, 2020, the Second Annual Conference of Central Casus was held successfully in Jashore district headquarters. As usual DLC delegates including CSOs, religious leaders and journalists joined the conference. They discussed in details on their achievement and failures as well as what could be done in following days and adopted plan of actions for 2020. Mentioning the UN resolution 1998 to protect human rights defenders, the conference reiterated its demand and urged the government to promulgate a law to protect the human rights defenders in Bangladesh. The BHRDF leaders also highlighted the urgency for expansion of the network in other districts and building up cooperation with other like-minded forums, CSOs and organisations involved in advocacy lobbying.

Strengthening Capacity of Journalists to Promote Freedom of Religion and Peace

Activity supported by the
Canada Fund for Local Initiatives
Activité réalisée avec l'appui du
Fonds canadien d'initiatives locales



In November 2019, the High Commission of Canada to Bangladesh and News Network signed a project agreement for the second time to support local journalists for promoting freedom of religious belief and combating intolerance. We hope to launch the programme in January 2020 which will cover three districts of Mymensingh division. About 100 journalists, including news reporters and local media gatekeepers i.e. editors, executive editors, news editors will be benefited from the programme.

The project is quite relevant in present-day context. Since long News Network observes that due to lack of news reporting skills and understanding on issues like freedom of religious affairs, very often, journalists mistake in reporting and make the situation more complicated and sensational. To the face the challenges, the project has undertaken several initiatives including, sensitising media persons on the issues and strengthen their capacity.

With supports from the High Commission of Canada, News Network undertook such an initiative in 2018 and the activities of the project were implemented successfully in Rangpur, Khulna and Jashore districts.

ANNUAL
REPORT

2019



Financial Statement

NEWS NETWORK

RECEIPTS AND PAYMENTS ACCOUNT
FOR THE YEAR ENDED DECEMBER 31, 2019

PARTICULARS	DETAILS	AMOUNT
RECEIPTS:		
OPENING BALANCE (01.01.2019)		
Cash in hand	426.00	
Cash at Bank	1,450,993.00	
		1,451,419.00
FUND INFLOW		
High Commission of Canada		1,477,638.00
European Union		21,047,102.00
Bank Interest		24,049.00
Subscription from the Executive Members		2,100.00
GRAND TOTAL BDT.		24,002,308.00
PAYMENTS:		
FUND OUTFLOW		
Program cost		7,274,703.00
Administrative cost		6,151,116.00
TOTAL EXPENDITURE		13,425,819.00
Advance outstanding		13,000.00
CLOSING BALANCE (31.12.2019)		
Cash in hand	673.00	
Cash at Bank	10,562,816.00	
		10,563,489.00
GRAND TOTAL BDT.		24,002,308.00



পিনাকী এণ্ড কোম্পানী
Pinaki & Company

Chartered Accountants



CERTIFICATE GIVEN BY THE AUDITORS

We have audited the accounts of NEWS NETWORK Dhanmondi, Dhaka Registration no. FDR-922, dated 20.03.1995 for the Year ended 31st December, 2019 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, 2019 was Tk. 14,33,561
2. The foreign donation amounting to Tk. 22,524,740 was received by the organization during the period.
3. The balance of unutilized foreign donations by the organization at 31st December, 2019 Tk. 10,576,489
4. Foreign donation amounting to Tk. 13,425,819 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. Strengthening the Capacity of Journalists to Promote Freedom of Religion and Peace
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.	24,286,972	13,421,783	10,865,189
Strengthening the Capacity of Journalists to Promote Freedom of Religion and Peace.	1,748,305	-	1,748,305
News Network Own Fund	4,036	4,036	-
Total Taka	26,039,313	13,425,819	12,613,494

Total Expenditure in BDT. 13,425,819 (Equivalent to USD 161,757/ EURO 147,181)

5. The organization has maintained the accounts of the Foreign Donations in accordance with the Foreign Donation (Voluntary Activities) Regulations Act, 2016.
6. The information furnished above is correct and checked by us.

Dhaka

Date: 01.03.2020

Pinaki Das
Pinaki Das, FCA

Senior Partner

Pinaki & Company

Chartered Accountants

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

Registered Office : AHSANDELL, 2/A, Mymensingh Road (2nd Floor), Shahbag, Dhaka-1000, Bangladesh

Tel # 966-0944, 966-5095, 967-2726, Cell: 01317-201224, 01711-106302, E-mail : pinaki_co@yahoo.com website: www.pinaki.com.bd

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 steady and prosperous nation where the citizens are aware of their rights, enjoy freedom of expression and live with dignity and gender equality and where the media is free.

OUR AGENDA

- To promote freedom of expression, freedom of media, human rights and gender equality;
- To improve professional ability of journalists;
- To encourage young women to take up journalism as profession;
- To promote investigative journalism and ensure right to information;
- To promote safety and security of journalists;
- To promote activities relating to disaster management, climate change and environment;
- To sensitise media on crucial social issues including Right to Information Act, democracy, good governance, transparency and promoting access to justice;
- To support human rights defenders to protect and promote democracy, good governance, transparency and accountability;
To motivate children and youths to make themselves as good citizens;
- To promote secularism, tolerance and peace in the society, and also the rights of ethnic and indigenous people of the country;
- To organise dialogues, seminars, workshops and discussion meeting on issues of national importance.

**NEWS
NETWORK**

*working for
social change and
empowering people*

info@newsnetwork-bd.org
www.newsnetwork-bd.org

facebook.com/newsnetworkbangladesh