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Rural Media Development for Promoting Democracy and Human Rights in Bangladesh



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For a nation to live with dignity and honour, it is important to uphold democracy and human rights. Bangladesh constitution also endorses these principles. But the country still has to go a long way in the establishment of democracy and ensuring human rights enshrined in the constitution.

We believe multidimensional initiatives are necessary for strengthening democratic values and principles.

Media has an important role to play to make a society truly democratic and respectful to human rights. In democracy, media is considered the fourth branch (fourth estate) of the government. It plays this role by monitoring the policies and activities of the government, government leaders and politicians. It ensures people's access to information so they can make informed choice, an essential ingredient of democracy.

With this understanding News Network has launched the project titled, 'Rural Media Development for Promoting Democracy and Human Rights in Bangladesh', supported by The United Nations Democracy Fund (UNDEF). In Bangladesh where journalists and media workers, especially in rural districts, lack in proper knowledge and application of democratic values, this project is relevant and a timely initiative. It is aiming to enhance knowledge and capacity of rural journalists and CSO/NGO activists in greater understanding and application of issues related to democracy and promotion of human rights of the citizens.

Launched in December 2014, the project will continue for next two years. It will cover 12 districts of the country. It has number of activities and most of those are focused on rural areas, where people are less aware of their rights. Violence and violation of human rights issues are reportedly higher in rural areas than in urban society.

The project's overall goal: Improve respect for democracy and human rights in Bangladesh society.

Objectives: To improve the media and civil society organisations' ability in rural areas to report on democracy and human rights issues and thereby raising public awareness of their rights.

Project strategy: It has been observed that most of the journalists working in remote districts and sub-districts have inadequate understanding and skills to write quality reports. CSO activists and staff officials also suffer a lack of proper understanding and capacity in information gathering and sharing, campaign and advocacy on these issues. So, many

serious incidents of human rights violation often go unreported.

To overcome these challenges the project aims at implementing the following initiatives:

Training and sensitizing rural journalists on democracy and human rights issues.

The activity seeks to improve the rural journalists' professional skills and adequate knowledge about democracy and human rights and their violation. It is expected that their reports will help raise general public awareness and opinion.

Commissioning items to train journalists

Reporting competitions for trained journalists

Media training for CSO staff: Local CSOs have limited capacity to report and provide an analysis of the human rights situation. Their understanding of the values of democracy and human rights is limited. The project strategy is to develop their skills to better report, conduct case studies, investigations and prepare press releases, circulars, campaign materials and templates. It will also build their expertise to share information with journalists and social media.

Network building among trained journalists and CSOs: Interactive meetings will be organized among the trained journalists and CSO officials and workers in each project district to improve information sharing and cooperation among these groups working to defend democracy and human rights issues.



Network events for editors of local media houses:

To arrange workshop with the editors to get better understanding on democratic and human rights issues and the effective role and responsibility of local media houses.

Website advocacy for promoting democracy and human rights: The News Network will develop a website to publish the issues related to the project and provide materials to a wider audience.

These are the ways we seek to work for promoting democracy and human rights so the citizens of Bangladesh become more aware about their basic rights and how to get those in building a better life.

The programme is supported by

The United Nations Democracy Fund



OUR AGENDA

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

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 are free.

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